

Sociology Curriculum in a South African University: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the alleged problem of ‘academic dependency’, on the part of South African sociologists, on western scholarship. The stated problem is said to undermine South African sociologists’ ability to set their own intellectual and epistemological agenda. Sociology in South Africa is characterised by two issues: ‘negations’ and theoretical ‘extraversion’. In the light of the foregoing claim, the study sought to investigate the underlying epistemological features of sociology curriculum in one of the South African universities. In investigating these issues, the thesis relies on the notion of ‘authentic interlocutors’ put forward by Archie Mafeje. Literature on transformation of the social sciences in (South) Africa was reviewed. Methodologically, the study assumes a qualitative approach. In order comprehensively to understand the problem under investigation, in-depth interviews were conducted along with a review of course outlines of the selected department of sociology; these, in turn, were subjected to content analysis. Interviewees included, respectively, academic members of staff and postgraduate students. The study concludes by highlighting the ‘ontological disconnect’, on the part of South African sociologists, not only with their immediate environment but the rest of the African continent. In maintaining this view, it argues that their ontological and epistemological standpoints only succeed in highlighting their cultural affinity with Euro-American perspectives. The said ontological disconnect and cultural affinity, it is argued, lead to extraverted curricula.

DECLARATION

I declare that *Sociology Curriculum in a South African University: A Case Study* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name...Bongani Nyoka..... Date.....

Signed.....



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Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter starts on a biographical note. The first section talks about how this author came to conduct this study. It speaks, in particular, about how the author experienced his undergraduate and honours education. In doing so, it provides background to the study. The second section of this chapter states the research problem. The third section outlines the research question and its subsidiaries and there follows, in section four, an outline of the objectives of this study. The fifth section provides motivation for the study. This sixth section makes a brief note on methods adopted and the path taken in conducting this study. The remainder of this chapter gives a general outline and overview of the thesis.

1.1 Background: Biographical Notes

In my undergraduate and honours years, nearly every module on which I enrolled – except for two and I shall talk about these below – consisted largely of writings by European and North American scholars. The readings were prescribed to us without due regard to context; it is as though they were applicable to all societies across space and time. Module after module the reading list consisted of material from outside of the African continent. So much so that some of us thought Africa had no scholars worth reading. As a result, I knew more about western scholars than I did about African scholars. To the extent that Africa was mentioned, it was mostly in pessimistic and pejorative terms – all of that was done under the notion of ‘critical reasoning’. Just to give an example of how Eurocentric the materials were, even for a module on ‘Africa’: In the third term of my first year I enrolled on a module in ‘African Politics’: the reading material, largely written by western scholars, was so alienating as to constitute a fundamental erasure of my personal history and lived experiences.¹ African governments, and therefore societies, were portrayed as irrational wantons – words like ‘corruption’, ‘kleptocracy’, ‘prebandalism’,

¹ Of all the scholars on the reading list, Mahmood Mamdani was the only one who made sense to some of us.

'incompetent', 'failed states', 'predatory states' etc. were common. In the first year sociology class, undergraduates were kept on a fulsome diet of unambiguously British ideas via Haralambos, Holborn and Heald's textbook – *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. The first of the two modules which took (South) African sociologists (scholars) seriously was, in my first year, the 'Sociology of Violence' – it was taught by a very passionate and dedicated lecturer. The reading material was at once intellectually stimulating and provocative and it truly spoke to issues to which we could relate.

Such intellectual stimulation was, however, short-lived. For even in modules where South Africa was used as a 'case study', the readings were still written by western scholars. More often than not theories were made to fit our societies, if the theory did not fit, so the logic went, there was something the matter with Africa – and therefore Africans – and not the theory itself. Stereotypes were/are perpetuated in the name of 'critical thought', so that by the end of the module, you feel disinclined to 'affirm' your locale, but simply wish to 'negate' it. Instances of such erasure abound.

While my undergraduate and honours education was largely suffused with the foregoing Eurocentrism, there were interesting interludes – as stated earlier. The second interlude is, I am inclined to think, amply worth telling. On 16 August 2006, in the third term of my second year, at another university, Prof Jimi Adesina delivered his Professorial Inaugural Lecture, aptly entitled 'Sociology, Endogeneity and the Challenge of Transformation'. I was not, at that time, aware of the significance of an inaugural lecture. Nor had I any plans to attend the abovementioned inaugural lecture. My attendance was purely accidental in that I was nudged (only a few minutes before the lecture) by a friend of mine who had (and still does) a penchant for attending public lectures. While the theoretical and meta-theoretical issues raised in the lecture went over my head – I was only in my second year – the substantive issues were reassuring. This was, in the Mafejean sense, an 'authentic interlocution'. For the first time in eighteen months at university someone was 'telling my story'. Among the intellectuals whose ideas were cited include Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Steve Biko and Ruth First. I had not, hitherto, known that they were intellectuals (men and women in the currency of ideas) who had produced sociological texts – I only knew them as 'activists' and 'freedom fighters'.

Added to the foregoing list, I heard for the first time the names of African sociologists such as Archie Mafeje, Ben Magubane, Ibn Khaldun and Omafume Onoge among others. About a week later, a transcript of the lecture was posted on the university website. I, of course, read it, consulted its bibliography, and tried to follow up on the works cited therein. I read, in my spare time, the little I could find since the university did not subscribe to some of the journals cited. Nor were some of the books cited housed in the university library. Prof Adesina was not, at that time, my lecturer, though he was to teach me in the following year, 2007, a module on Research Methodology. It was during this module that I encountered, for the first time, the works of Ifi Amadiume, Oyeronke Oyewumi and Akinsola Akiwowo just to name but a few. That was it by way of African scholars in my undergraduate and honours curricula. In 2009 and 2010 I worked as junior researcher at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). It was during these two years that I began in earnest to read African scholarship and therefore to unlearn much of the Eurocentric material I was subjected to at university. If it means anything, I did not repudiate everything I learned – I have tried to preserve standards of rigour and clarity.

It was also during my stay at the HSRC, in particular at the conference, ‘Bernard M. Magubane at 80: A Celebration of a Life’, 26-28 August 2010, hosted by the same organisation in Pretoria, that I decided to apply for a master’s degree – which I started in February of 2011. Listening to some of the papers presented there (especially at the ‘Postgraduate Roundtable Session’ of the conference, where most of the students expressed what I had suspected all along, *viz.* Eurocentric curricula) I was inspired to apply for a master’s degree in sociology, so that I could conduct my research on issues relating to curricula transformation and African scholarship – hence this thesis. (As an aside: it was at the same conference that I bought a copy of Prof Magubane’s book, *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* (2007), which he signed and inscribed on it the words: ‘For Bongani, with best wishes, 28.08.2010’). Apart from my own trajectory, I had heard of a case of undergraduate sociology students, at one of the ‘leading’ South African universities, who protested (during a lecture) against the fact that they were taught, almost exclusively, about ‘dead European men’ (perhaps with the exception of Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva or some such Euro-American feminists) and not, as they had hoped, African scholarship. This incident was in line with certain of the themes emerging from the

writings of some African sociologists – at least those who were calling for transformation – which I was busy reading.

1.2 The Research Problem

It is probably clear from the foregoing remarks that the major problem with the social sciences, and thus curriculum, in South Africa is that it is characterised by West-centred theories and conceptual frameworks. To the extent that these theories explain South Africa, so it is argued, they only succeed in presenting it from the perspective of western scholars (Hendricks, 2006; Thaver, 2002). The problem is that of ‘academic dependence’ (Alatas and Sinha 2001; Alatas, 2003; Hendricks, 2006) on western categories (paradigms and theories). Simply put, academic dependency is ‘a condition in which the social sciences of certain countries are conditioned by the development and growth of the social sciences of other countries to which the former is subjected’ (Alatas 2003: 603). This problem has two interrelated features. These are what Mafeje (1992, 2000a, 2001a, 2001b) terms, respectively, ‘negations’ and, following Hountondji (1997), ‘extraverted discourses’ or ‘extraversion’ for short. In addition, while western scholars engage in meta-theoretical and theoretical research, African scholars engage in empirical research (Alatas 2003: 607). This in turn entails global intellectual division of labour in the social sciences. African social scientists, so it is argued, export empirical data to the North and then simply import theories to the continent without due regard as to whether such theories fit or not. Interestingly, western scholars tend to conduct studies both of their own countries and of other countries (academic imperialism?) while Third World scholars tend to limit their studies to their own countries (Alatas 2003: 608). Yet in spite of being confined to their locales, Third World scholars have no problem importing theories instead of generating their own.

The above notwithstanding, Mafeje’s and Magubane’s attempt, along with Adesina and a few others, is to build a case for a ‘home-grown’ approach to sociology in South Africa. Correctly, they do so in an attempt to do away with the practice of importing theories from the North and using them uncritically to analyse local data and conditions. The practice of academic dependency, it has been argued, has the unintended consequence of producing graduates who have no critical understanding of their own societies (Adesina 2005). Further, as Mamdani (1998a, 1998b) points out, it encourages the idea that Africa has no intellectuals or that it has

produced no scholarly work worth reading. The call for endogenous knowledge is especially important in this regard insofar as curriculum and pedagogic issues are concerned. Curriculum which is epistemologically grounded in Africa has the potential to inspire graduates to search for alternatives even on matters outside of the academy – especially in a country like South Africa, where the nation is still trying to find itself. Perhaps this is part of what Mafeje (2001c: 6) had in mind when he said: ‘South Africa is not only a divided society but a society that is not aware of itself.’

1.3 Research Question

The literature on curriculum transformation suggests that the social sciences in South Africa rely heavily on western epistemological assumptions, so that the input of African scholars is conspicuous only by its absence (Adesina, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Hendricks, 2006; Lebakeng, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2010; Mafeje, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1991, 1997a, 1997b, 2000a, 2001a, 2001b; Seepe, 2004; Thaver, 2002). And where such input is found, it is usually written in terms so inaccurate to the point of being misleading.² This study, it should be noted, is not about, nor is it devoted to, the impossible task of investigating all of the social sciences. It is limited to the academic discipline of sociology. More precisely, we shall investigate our problem via a case study of a department of sociology in a South African university.

This thesis, then, is structured around the empirical question: How, if at all, is sociology curriculum transforming in the department of sociology in a South African university? Related questions are as follows:

- i. To what extent do sociology lecturers teach the works or writings of (South) African sociologists?

² Think, respectively, of Mbembe’s (2001, [2000]2002) and Appiah’s (1992) work, two African scholars who are much loved in the South African academy. Theoretically, nothing binds the two of them, of course. The latter is an analytic philosopher while the former relies heavily on continental theorists – mostly post-structuralists and post-modernists. For a brilliant and pioneering critique of Mbembe’s book *On the Postcolony*, see Jeremy Weate’s (2003) ‘Postcolonial theory on the brink: a critique of Achille Mbembe’s *On the Postcolony*’. *African Identities*, 1(1): 1-18. For a critique of Appiah’s book, *In My Father’s House*, see Nkiru Nzegwu. (1996). ‘Questions of Identity and Inheritance: A Critical Review of Kwame Anthony Appiah’s *In My Father’s House*’, *Hypatia*, 11(1): 175-201.

- ii. If there is any transformation, what are its underlying assumptions?
- iii. What is the nature and form of this transformation, who is included and who is left out?

The study attempts to address these questions in the light of calls for transformation of the social sciences in South African universities.

1.4 Research Objectives

In response to the foregoing research questions, the overall aim of this study is to investigate sociology curriculum in the said department.

Specific objectives of the research are to:

- i. investigate whether or not sociology lecturers teach the writings of sociologists within the African continent; and
- ii. investigate the impact of curriculum transformation, or lack thereof, from the perspective of students studying for degrees in sociology and of sociology lecturers.

1.5 Motivation

This study takes the view that curriculum transformation in the discipline of sociology is both necessary and desirable. Writing as a black student of sociology in post-1994 South Africa, a period where knowledge-making and dissemination should be less Eurocentric, it seems to me essential that the current situation be critically examined. Mamdani (2009) once said he had always taken it for granted that, if he wanted to learn about the United States, where he currently holds a professorship at the University of Columbia, he would have to do so through the people of that country. This statement seems to me incredibly axiomatic. Yet the same does not hold in the South African academy. Indeed, as will be argued in the next chapter, we still learn about ourselves through borrowed epistemological assumptions.

Oyewumi (2004: 8) argues that ‘analysis and interpretations of Africa must start with Africa.’ This call to endogeneity should not be taken to mean ‘analysis of Africa must be limited or restricted to Africa.’ Hountondji (1997:18) describes ‘as endogenous such knowledge as is experienced by society as an integral part of its heritage.’ This remark is important in the current fight for epistemological decolonisation – its pedagogic implications are profound. Oyewumi’s

proposal is not the same as Mbembe's (1999) problematic submission that African scholars are retreating into the 'ghetto' in fear of 'internationalisation'. The word 'start' is central to Oyewumi's message. We ought to take ourselves seriously enough to theorise about our lived experiences (in their plurality), as opposed to importing theories and exporting data for Northern scholars to theorise, problematically, about Africa.

It seems to me self-evident that scholars in other parts of the world write about what they know best – their locales – and those who happen to write about others do so, at least in part, because their market is saturated. Our market, on the other hand, is not – it is in its infancy, epistemologically. There is so much to write about, and a lot has been written, but the issue is: from what perspective, who is included and who is left out? What are the assumptions made, and based on what? These sociological and existential questions, as we shall argue in chapter two of this thesis, have implications for what is imparted to students in the classroom: whose histories are 'privileged'? Whose histories are erased? Who is taught what, and to what end? What are the methods adopted to these ends? The issue is not simply about doing research in South Africa, as we say a lot has been written – from crime to HIV/Aids through 'corruption' to poverty etc. The issue is from what perspective? There need not be one perspective either. But such perspectives, whatever they are, ought to be rooted in and be of Africa.³ There are many perspectives in Europe which address themselves to European conditions and do so in unmistakably European ways – it is when such perspectives pretend to be universal that they become Eurocentric. Mafeje (2000a: 106) argues: 'Afrocentrism is nothing more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their societies from inside and cease to be purveyors of alienated intellectual discourse.' This is the theme, indeed motivation, which runs through this thesis.

A caveat is in order at this point: the call for transformation of sociology curriculum is not (as it might be assumed) an invitation to parochialism. It is, rather, an affirmation of the local and an epistemological and pedagogic decolonisation. Writing about culture, Mafeje (2000b:34, emphasis in the original) had this to say: 'while culture accounts for diversity, it does not

³ Not everybody wishes to be rooted in, or to be of, Africa. However it is not by accident that much of the Euro-American writings we consider 'seminal' are rooted, epistemologically and existentially, in the Euro-American contexts. There is no reason why African scholars and others in the Third World cannot do likewise.

preclude cross-fertilisation through *selective* borrowing. The issue is *imposition.*' The issue is about, and has always been about, balancing the scales in the process of knowledge-making. Below we give a brief note on the methods and roads travelled in producing this thesis.

1.6 A Brief Note on Methods

1.6.1 *The Nature and Selection of Research Site*

It is necessary to make a note on our selection of research site. Given the problem of academic dependency and of alienating curriculum just highlighted, the researcher set out to conduct a study on elements of this problem. The issue was not to test a hypothesis as such, but rather to get an insight into the nature of this problem and make connections between the research questions and data so obtained. Given the fact that it was not possible to conduct research in all departments of sociology in South African universities, we opted for a case study. This researcher elected to conduct research in the Department of Sociology at Soutspanberg University (SU)⁴, based in the Western Cape – hereafter, ‘the department’ or ‘SU’ – which is an Afrikaans-medium university. This department was deemed suitable because of its reputation and history in particular and the history and reputation of its university generally – it is said to be one of the ‘leading’ research universities in the country. In addition, its department of sociology, which is connected to social anthropology, is known for being strongly ‘empiricist’ and research-driven and it was one of the pioneers of the so-called ‘*volk*’ and ‘welfare’ sociologies (Oloyede 2006: 346) – at least in the early years of sociology in South Africa. During the research process in this department, we discovered that it was known as the most ‘liberal’ among the Afrikaans-medium universities during apartheid. Interestingly, this department was the only one, during apartheid, to be affiliated both (at least in the 1980s or early 1990s) to the Afrikaans and English sociological associations in South Africa.⁵ We shall have occasion to talk about this issue in chapter three of the thesis.

1.6.2 *Sampling*

⁴ Pseudonym

⁵ Interview with Mr Willem, a sociology lecturer, 02 May 2012

This study adopted qualitative research methods. To achieve that, we elected to use purposive sampling. This kind of sampling is acceptable because it allows the researcher to 'select cases with a specific purpose in mind' (Neuman 2000: 198). This method is not insignificant in that our purpose was to interview sociology lecturers and their students. Purposive sampling was deemed suitable because we had identified a 'particular type of individuals for in-depth investigation' (Neuman 2000: 198). The human subjects of this study were from Soutspanberg University's Department of Sociology. Initial contact was made via email with the head of the said department. This researcher was then instructed, as a matter of protocol, to contact the university's 'Institutional Research and Planning Unit (IRPU)'. The researcher finally obtained permission to commence the study, on 23 November 2011, after a series of emails (with both the head of department and the secretary of IRPU) during which the researcher was asked to submit the following documents: research proposal, ethics clearance, research questions and a consent form. All of these documents were submitted by the researcher to IRPU. Following this negotiation of access, emails were sent to members of staff inviting them to participate in the study. They all agreed to participate – including two retired professors. One member of staff, however, did not participate. She was on sabbatical leave. A list of research questions was sent to her via email so that she could respond - she never responded.

Participants were grouped into two clusters: lecturers or members of staff of the department of sociology, and students of sociology (chiefly postgraduates). The criteria for lecturers were that they ought to have been in the department for at least five years, so that they would have taught at least one cohort from (first year) undergraduate to postgraduate level. Also, this period would have ensured that they are thoroughly familiar with their department and perhaps would have gone through at least one HOD's tenure before the current one so as to be able to assess intellectual trends (if any) which the department went through. At least one of the participant lecturers had been in the department for eleven months, but this researcher was encouraged by his colleagues to interview him anyway. I did, and it was a rewarding experience. Secondly, since the department is an amalgamation of two disciplines, sociology and social anthropology, the respondent lecturers were recruited from the sociology stream. The criterion for postgraduate students was that they ought to have been in the sociology stream in the department, from undergraduate to postgraduate level – they ought to have 'majored' in sociology.

Data was collected through the use of two methods: in-depth interviews and a review of sociology course outlines (looking both at the descriptive component and the reading material). Interviews were intended to take 30 to 45 minutes, depending on how long respondents answer the questions – the very first interview with one member of staff took four hours. The interviews were recorded with a digital tape recorder – although two members of staff and two postgraduate students responded electronically i.e. interview questions were emailed to them. Course outlines ought to have dated as far back as the 1990s. However this was not possible because either old course outlines were not available and that such a proposal would have taken much of the department's secretary valuable time – something which the HOD strongly objected to. We settled for those which were in e-format and they date back to 2003. We had intended also to obtain exam question papers but that was not possible since these documents are said both to be 'confidential' and 'university property'.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Initially, students were recruited via email. This method had little success. It is easy to ignore an email from somebody you have never met – especially when they are asking you to volunteer i.e. to do him/her a favour. A suggestion from one postgraduate student was that this researcher should attend the department's seminar series (which is in a way open to the public) held every Thursday at 13:00. This was an ideal place to recruit participants, at the end of seminars. The other was through referrals – the researcher would ask, upon completion of an interview, to be referred to peers of the interviewee. Negotiating access to begin research started in October 2011 although the actual research process began in November of the same year, following approval by the university's IPRU, and ended in October 2012.

1.6.3 Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and analysed along with course outlines. In doing all of this, we were guided by our research question and its subsidiaries. In analysing data we chose qualitative content analysis. This technique is used for gathering and analysing the substance of the text. Zhang and Wlidemuth (nd, 1) state that, 'qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. It allows researchers to understand

social reality in a subjective but scientific manner'. The most important issue for our purposes was to let data speak for itself. That is no refusal to be 'analytically universal' i.e. being critical. Nor are the two in conflict. Data is presented in two empirically-based chapters: chapters four and five.

1.6.4 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted after the researcher's proposal had been approved by the University of the Western Cape's the Postgraduate Board of Studies, the Senate Higher Degree Committee and Research Ethics Committee. Before the research actually began, the researcher, as stated above, had to apply to Soutspanberg University's Institutional Research and Planning Unit (IRPU) for permission. It has been explained above what this unit required from the researcher. In conducting this study, the researcher had to adhere to the following ethical rules: (i) Participation in the research study had to be voluntary, with no form of coercion used against participants; (ii) Confidentiality had to be guaranteed; (iii) participants were guaranteed the right to withdraw from the research at any stage and for whatever reason; and (iv) the researcher took the responsibility in ensuring that all the information gathered is treated sensitively and confidentially and sought to protect the identities and interests of all participants.⁶ Participants were told about the purpose of the study, they were shown the researcher's letter of introduction and before the interview began they had to signed consent forms – which outline the abovementioned points (see Appendices).

1.6.5 Limitations of the Study

In this study, no attempt is made at being exhaustive, comprehensive or definitive but rather our objective is to provide a thesis which is exploratory in nature. We acknowledged and recognise that it is a limitation, the inability to explore all departments of sociology in South African universities. But we are also of the view that taking an in-depth look at one department might yield deep and nuanced insight into the question at hand. But a case study is limiting insofar as insights gained may not be easily generalisable to or indicative of the situation in other

⁶ While it might be clear to anybody who knows which university is being referred to here, they will, however, have no knowledge of individuals being referenced. This is so because, for ethical reasons, the names of the participants are withheld.

departments of sociology in South African universities. We recognise this as a limitation of this study. Having said that, the study must be viewed in relation to the goals it had set itself. We should like to state also that this author's experience of the curriculum provides basis for distinguishing what is unique to his case and what may not be.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters. The present chapter constitutes chapter one and its structure has been outlined in the introduction above. A brief outline of the remaining five chapters is as follows:

Chapter Two: *Negation and Affirmation – A Mafejean Critique of Sociology in South Africa*

This chapter reviews the relevant literature on the question of transformation of the social sciences curriculum in South Africa. In particular, it focuses on the discipline of sociology in South African universities. It lays the epistemological groundwork for the rest of the thesis by speaking briefly to the thesis's theoretical orientations.

Chapter Three: *The Department in Historical and Sociological Context 1900-2000*

This chapter precedes the empirically-based chapters of this thesis. It seeks to locate the department under investigation, its research and curriculum, in its historical and sociological context. It argues that the department ought to be understood within the wider South African sociological context.

Chapter Four: *On Reading Material: Data Presentation Part I*

This chapter, and the next, presents the results of the study through an analysis of course outlines and tries to compare the modules, where possible, with those offered in other departments. Such comparison is made via course outlines or a look at other departments' web sites.

Chapter Five: *Themes and Perspectives: Data Presentation Part II*

This chapter brings together, in a thematic and interwoven fashion, the responses of students and members of academic staff. It brings the two groups into conversation as it were. The questions put both to students and lecturers centre on the same theme and as such it would be possible to cluster the responses in a nuanced narrative.

Chapter Six: *Conclusion*

This chapter draws together the views presented in various chapters of the thesis. In doing so, it draws a general conclusion for the rest of the thesis and highlights noteworthy insights.

1.7 Summary

The main purpose of this introductory chapter was: (i) to furnish the reader with the general introduction to the thesis, and (ii) to provide background and motivation to the study. In doing so we proceeded in this order: the first section of the chapter, which was biographical, provided background and how the researcher came to conceive this study. The second section stated the research problem. The third section provided and outlined the research question and its subsidiaries. Fourth, this chapter outlined the objectives of this research. Fifth, we provided the motivation behind the study. Sixth, we provided methodological remarks and thus the journey we took in conducting this study. Lastly, the chapter provided an overview and structure of the thesis. The following chapter is devoted to the review of literature.



Chapter Two

Negation and Affirmation: A Mafejean Critique of Sociology in South Africa⁷

'If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed.' (Mao Zedong quoted in Mafeje 2000a: 67)

2.0 Introduction

The discipline of sociology, quite like its counterpart, philosophy, is said to be characterised by critical self-awareness. That is to say, sociologists do not only write about societies which are the objects of their enquiry, they tend also to write *about* the discipline of sociology self-consciously *as* sociologists. In this regard, South African sociologists are no exception. One often encounters articles dealing with the 'state of the discipline' of sociology in South Africa. Such writings, however, tend to focus on how sociology in South Africa should face up to its immediate socio-political environment rather than the epistemological issues which constitute the core of this academic discipline (Ally 2005; Burawoy 2004, 2009; Cock 2006; Dubbeld 2009; Hendricks 2006; Jubber 1983; Mapadimeng 2012; Sitas 1997; Uys 2004; Webster 1985, 1991, 2004). The recent focus on the notion of 'public sociology', inspired by Burawoy, is a case in point. This practice, as pointed out by Oloyede (2006), tends to confuse sociologists with activists.

This chapter, indeed this thesis, will move away from such discussions and focus, instead, on epistemological issues. This literature review chapter comprises five main parts. The first part of the chapter contextualises discussions on epistemological decolonisation. The second part, which dovetails with the first, provides a very brief survey of sociology in South Africa. It subjects to critical scrutiny the assumptions made (and not made) by South African sociologists – at least those who have written about sociology in South Africa. The fourth section, linked to the third, disentangles the idea of 'indigenous' (a concept usually deployed by some proponents of transformation of the social sciences in South Africa) from 'endogenous' knowledge. The remainder of this chapter briefly discusses Mafeje's approach to research and therefore lays

⁷ Note that the subtitle reads 'Mafejean' not 'Mafeje's' critique of sociology. The point here is to offer a critique in the spirit of, and relying on, Mafeje's social scientific writings.

conceptual groundwork for the rest of the thesis. It relies on Mafeje's notions of 'discursive method' and 'authentic interlocution', and these insights will make it possible for us to take the objects of enquiry on their own terms.

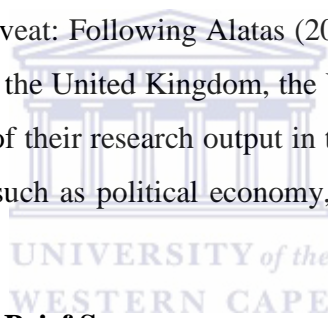
2.1 Transforming the Social Sciences: History and Context

Tracing the roots of 'academic dependency', Syed Farid Alatas (2003: 600) notes that: 'To the extent that the control and management of the colonised required the cultivation and application of various disciplines such as history, linguistics, geography, economics, sociology and anthropology in the colonies, we may refer to the academe as imperialistic.' For his part, Zeleza (1997: ii) argues that the literature on Africa, in the Northern academy, has always been 'self-referential, few scholars paid attention to the writings of African scholars or to what African scholars had to say'. Instead, discussions tended to centre on problematic theoretical currents which had gained currency in the western academy. So ubiquitous was this practise that 'each generation [of western scholars] produced its Livingstones who rediscovered Africa through the prevailing epistemological fad. Thus, Africa always appeared as nothing more than a testing site for theories manufactured in the Western academies' (Zeleza 1997: ii). Such theoretical strands range from modernisation theories, dependency theory, neo-Marxism, post-coloniality, post-modernism and so on. Indeed, 'there seemed to be a reputational lottery for those who could coin the most demeaning defamations of Africa and its peoples' (Zeleza 1997: ii). Think of such concepts (much loved by political scientists) as 'kleptocracy', 'patrimonial states', 'primordial states', 'predatory states', 'failed states' and so on. This labelling, Zeleza argues, was the final straw between African scholars and their western counterparts. African scholars were called upon to 'negate' these existential and epistemological 'negations'. That is not, of course, to suggest that there are no African scholars who engage in such labelling.⁸

Writings on Africa are replete with Africa's 'otherness' or what Mafeje calls 'negations' (when referring to the social sciences generally) or 'alterity' (when talking about anthropology in particular). Africa is almost always presented – even within the continent – as a 'representation

⁸ Mbembe is known for such labelling. See, for example, his bitter polemic, 'African Modes of Self-Writing' ([2000] 2002), wherein he relegates brilliant writings of African scholars to footnotes.

of the West's negative image, a discourse that, simultaneously, valorises and affirms Western superiority and absolves its existential and epistemological violence against Africa' (Zeleza 1997: iii). Let us, at this point, bring the story closer to home, South Africa. It has been suggested that the social sciences in South Africa thrive on essentially racist paradigms: that the black majority are either spoken of or spoken for (Sitas 1998:13). For Mafeje (1971, 1976, 1996), the epistemological basis for the social sciences has always been 'imperialistic'. Sociologists and anthropologists tended to produce writings which were 'doubtful, mistaken and pernicious' (Magubane 1973). Such writings were/are, in turn, accepted as working truths, their methodological and theoretical flaws notwithstanding (Magubane 1973, 2007). For Magubane (1973), these writings constitute little more than a defence of economic and political interests of the white minority. However to speak (as we do here) about the social sciences in general would be a mistake, if not an impossible task. Hence we shall limit ourselves to the academic discipline of sociology in South Africa. A caveat: Following Alatas (2003), when we speak of the West or the North, we refer in particular to the United Kingdom, the United States and France; insofar as they have a global reach in terms of their research output in the social sciences. Without a doubt if we were to use other markers, such as political economy, the concept West/North applies to many more countries.



2.2 Sociology in South Africa: A Brief Survey

To see the Eurocentric and 'extraverted' (Adesina, 2005, 2006a, 2010; Hountondji, 1997; Mafeje, 1992, 2000a) nature of the writings within and about Africa, it is necessary to examine briefly the discipline of sociology in South Africa. By 'extraverted' or 'extraversion' we mean the 'knowledge production process, where data is exported and theory imported. [Where] scholarship [becomes] little more than proselytising and regurgitating [of] received discourses – left or bourgeois – no matter how poorly they explain our lived experiences' (Adesina, 2006b: 138). Sociology in South African universities is said to have been characterised by five different and competing paradigms, *viz.* functionalism, Marxism, phenomenology, pluralism and 'Calvinism' (Webster 1985, 1991). Whether it was in the service of the apartheid regime or of the 'social movements', sociology is said also to have always been in the public domain (Burawoy 2004, Hendricks 2006, Webster 1985, 1991). Jubber (2007: 527) says '[sociology] has contributed to both the oppression of the majority and their liberation and is currently helping to

describe, analyse and shape post-Apartheid South Africa'. What is clear from the literature on the nature of sociology in South Africa is that its practitioners have yielded no *sui generis* theoretical insights. Or, their writings have never led to any 'epistemic rapture' – to borrow Adesina's concept (2010). This is confirmed by Hendricks (2006: 24) when he says:

Virtually all the sociological theories, all the major concepts come from outside the continent while we are firmly rooted here and our major intellectual and political preoccupations are located in our national and continental homes. I feel this schizophrenia very deeply because I know that I am an embodiment of it. Virtually all my formal learning has been Euro-centric. At school we studied European and American history but nothing on African history... Developing an African sociological discourse through the promotion of an African sociological community is an extremely difficult exercise against this background and in the current environment African sociologists have applied metropolitan ideas and concepts without subjecting them to critical scrutiny and they have not, in the main, developed concepts appropriate to the study of African societies. Attempts to indigenise sociology in Africa have been inchoate, unsystematic and anecdotal. It is not surprising that these have thus far not accomplished much popular acceptance by African sociologists.

It transpires, therefore, that little has changed. The discipline is still as Eurocentric as it was when Webster wrote about it in the 1980s. Regarding teaching material, Jubber (2006: 339) comments thus: 'As an external examiner in sociology departments in South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Kenya and Tanzania, I have found that most courses rely heavily on curricula derived from USA and British sources, often based on those from departments in which the lecturers had studied. The indigenous and the local appears, if it appears at all, as a kind of afterthought, the last section of the curriculum...' For a useful, though descriptive rather than analytic, historical review of research and publishing of sociology in South Africa consult Jubber's paper entitled 'Sociology in South Africa' (2007).

To see the Eurocentric nature of the writings in sociology in South Africa, it is useful, too, to look at the abstracts compiled in the 18th South African Sociological Association Annual Congress booklet (SASA 2012). Parallel sessions in the said congress were arranged according to the following themes: 'Higher Education and Science Studies'; 'Family and Population Studies'; 'Media, Culture and Society'; 'Economic and Industrial Sociology'; 'Crime, Violence and Security'; 'Urban Sociology'; 'Social Movements and Popular Protest'; 'Development'; 'Gender Studies'; 'Environment and Natural Resources'; 'Race, Ethnicity and Class'; 'Health';

‘Sociology of Youth and Sport’; ‘Religion’; ‘Social Theory and Methodology’; and ‘Rural Sociology’. Tellingly, none of the papers read at these parallel sessions was devoted to any theoretical work (or scholar) emerging from South Africa, let alone the rest of the African continent. There was, however, a special session organised by Jimi Adesina, former president of SASA, devoted to African scholarship under the title ‘Averting Extraversion: Breaking Bread with some Progenitors’. Papers read at this special session were devoted, variously, to aspects of the writings of Ruth First, Archie Mafeje and Ben Magubane. There should be more of such sessions. This is not, of course, to deny the fact that the papers read at the conference were devoted to empirical issues in South Africa. The issue, however, is about the conceptual/theoretical perspectives on which such writings are grounded.

Writing from a different, though not dissimilar context, Alatas (2003, 2012a) talks about the intellectual ‘division of labour’ between the West and the Third World, wherein Third World scholars conduct empirical studies with little (and usually imported) theoretical grounding while western scholars produce works of both theoretical and empirical significance. The same holds for much of sociological writings in South Africa. A glance at the current (2012) volume of the *South African Review of Sociology* (SARS), the flagship journal of the South African Sociological Association, reveals the Eurocentric bias about which we speak. The publication frequency of the journal is three issues per year. Volume 43, No. 1 (2012a) comprises eight sole-authored articles exploring, variously, issues of poverty, race, HIV/Aids, gender and labour relations, masculinity and sexuality and labour studies. None of the papers rely, for theoretical insights, on any theorist from Africa. Issue No. 2 (2012b), a special issue, is entitled ‘In Search of a Developmental University: Community Engagement in Theory and Practice’. It carried six articles, a debate by two authors and an obituary. While the articles grapple with the empirical question of a ‘community-engaged’ or ‘responsive’ university, they fall short of articulating any sustained Africa-centred theory – though the lead article attempts such a conceptual framework (see Kruss 2012). Much the same can be said about previous volumes of the journal. We should state, however, that issue No. 3, the last issue for 2012, contains an article on one of the ‘founding fathers’ of sociology, from the African continent, Ibn Khaldun.

Some of the pitfalls highlighted above cannot be said about the writings, respectively, of Mafeje and Magubane two sociologists who spent the better part of their lives in exile. It is true that they borrowed a great deal from Marxism, but their writings were, notwithstanding their absence in the country, rooted in the place they knew best – the country of their birth (South Africa) and the African continent at large. Their sophisticated deployment (at times repudiation, in the case of Mafeje) of Marxian concepts, rooted (ontologically) as it was in Africa, produced works of ‘epistemological rapture’. Conversely, their white counterparts were never able to produce such works insofar as their writings were never really rooted, epistemologically and existentially, in Africa – they had been strongly influenced by Euro-American writings (see Jubber 1983, 2006, 2007; Webster 1985, 1991).

On the foregoing issue, we refer to Mafeje’s ‘The Ideology of Tribalism’ (1971), ‘On the Articulation of Modes of Production’ (1981), *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* (1991), *Anthropology and Independent Africans* (1996) and *Anthropology in Post-Independence Africa* (2001a); and to Magubane’s ‘Crisis in African Sociology’ ([1968]2000), ‘A Critical Look at Indices Used in the Study of Social Change in Colonial Africa’ (1971), ‘The “Xhosa” in Town’ (1973), *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* (1979) and *The Making of a Racist State* (1996). The key issue which sociologists in South Africa fail to do is to take their objects of enquiry on their own terms, a fact which leads some of them unduly to superimpose their pre-conceived schemata on local data (Mafeje 1981, 1991). In doing so, they perpetuate what Mafeje (1976, 1998, 2000a, 2001b) refers to as ‘negations’. At least three detailed examples will be sufficient to illustrate our point.

First: In South Africa, one often reads sociology articles in which authors talk, with reference to black South African families, about ‘extended families’ or ‘households’ (Rabe 2008; Russell 2003a, 2003b; Ziehl 2001, 2002, 2003). Now given that western families usually take the form of ‘nuclear families’, Eurocentric sociologists in South Africa often narrate, because they cannot conceive of any other family structure outside of the one just mentioned, of an ‘extended family’ or a ‘household’. Yet *usapho* (a family) among amaXhosa, for example, is not limited to one’s immediate biological relatives i.e. parents and siblings – nor, for that matter, is it limited to living in the same house/home. It also includes ‘uncles’, aunts, grandparents and even people who are

not even related by blood but through *isiduko* ('clan name'). Thus a man and a woman who share the same *isiduko* can never get married because they are considered siblings. Also, in many South African languages, the concept of a 'cousin' or an 'uncle' on one's paternal side of the family simply does not exist. For example, my father's younger brother is not 'uncle' but *utat'omncinci* or *ubab'omncane* – literally 'younger father'. Similarly, his children are not 'cousins' but my siblings – *abanta'kwethu*. Thus, 'uncles' and 'cousins' – to use familiar terminology – do not belong to an 'extended family' or 'household' but are members of the family *tout court*. This may not always be easily intelligible to some, but it makes a lot of sense when one immerses herself in the ontological narratives of her objects of enquiry.

Second: Let us take the widely used, but manifestly misunderstood, concept of '*muti*' – and it is usually used in pejorative terms – as a second example. *uMuthi*, simply put, means medicine. Yet by some unsociological logic – in South African public discourse and, by extension, in the academy – the term is used to mean or is associated with 'witchcraft', so that when one uses *umuthi* s/he is, *ipso facto*, practicing witchcraft.⁹ Yet, properly understood, even a cough syrup or an aspirin from a 'western' doctor or pharmacist is itself *umuthi* (insofar as it is medication). We do not here wish to get into a discussion about how the concept came to be equated with witchcraft (in South African public discourse and academia) largely because that is not very puzzling – colonialism/racism had a lot to do with that, very much like the idea of a 'witchdoctor'. Colonialists used the latter term when referring to African herbalists and 'traditional doctors'.

We cite the example of *umuthi* to highlight the kind of erasures prevailing, even post-1994, in South African media and in the social sciences. Note, too, the different ways in which we spell the word – the Anglicised, and therefore pejorative, spelling reads '*muti*' when the word really is *umuthi*. Related to this is the problematic idea of '*muti* killings/murders' that we often read about in the newspapers and anthropology and sociology journals. Cruel murderers kill innocent people, remove their body parts, and then 'analysts' and journalists refer to such murders as '*muti* killings/murders' – not brutal murders as Northerners would most likely call them. The

⁹ I do not deny that even black people have come to adopt this negative usage of the term. But my view is that 'witchcraft', properly understood, is *ukuthakatha* not *umuthi*.

assumption is made, of course, that such practices have a lot to do with black people's ways of living. The very fact that such killings are associated with *umuthi* is a case in point. So shocked was I when I first heard people talk about 'muti killings/murders'. I thought that the victims were killed by or through the use of *umuthi* (it seemed, however, extraordinary that this should be so, since *umuthi* very rarely kills people). But no, the victims were/are allegedly killed for 'muti' i.e. their body parts were/are to be used to make 'muti'.

This conflation of *umuthi* with brutal murders gives offence, since most accounts of 'muti killings/murders' rely on tabloids and hearsay. For an academic account (in my view questionable) of 'muti killings/murders' see Vincent's paper 'New Magic for New Times' (2008a). Vincent is, of course, not alone in these kinds of negations (see Bishop 2012; Labuschagne 2004; Steyn 2005; Turrell 2001).

Vincent, relying on Jean and John Comaroff's (1999) notion of 'occult economies', continues to propagate 'negations' (to use a Mafejean term) by associating *umuthi* with witchcraft. While she (Vincent 2008a: 43) acknowledges that *umuthi* is medicine, she is unable to transcend 'the epistemology of alterity' upon which her chosen theoretical scheme is founded as she continues to lump together medicine with the alleged use of body parts. If it is indeed the case that people who claim to be 'traditional healers' use body parts, then we are no longer talking about medicine, we are talking about *ubuthakathi* or witchcraft (should there be such). That these purported traditional healers never carry out these murders themselves, but simply delegate or hire people for this 'specialist purpose' (Vincent 2008a: 43), should itself raise questions about their authenticity as 'healers'. A minor but related point is that Vincent (2008a:43) states that 'muti is derived from *umuthi* meaning tree'. That is not entirely accurate. Her definition of *umuthi* is derived from isiXhosa. Yet even in isiXhosa a tree is not *umuthi* but *umthi* – *thi* is prefixed with *um* not *umu*. In the same language, medicine is not *umuthi* but *iyeza*. *Umuthi*, which refers to medicine, is isiZulu not isiXhosa and a tree, in the former, is *isihlahla* not *umuthi*. This may appear trivial or pedantic but it is necessary in highlighting the casual and grossly inaccurate manner in which some white academics write about their black counterparts in South Africa. Even when they evince a genuine interest in knowing and writing about black people, they fall short of paying careful attention to detail so as authentically to represent their objects of enquiry.

Part of the reason why some white scholars, and some of their black counterparts, continue with these inaccurate assumptions is that they conflate herbal medicine with spirituality or mysticism. There is no reason to suppose that the two are mutually embedded or mutually reinforcing. Indeed these are two different things. It is an error of thought or a logical fallacy to suppose that they are one and the same, a ‘category mistake’ as Gilbert Ryle (1949) would have it. Strange as it may sound to some ears, one need not be *isangoma* or a ‘traditional healer’ to have knowledge of herbal medicine. The net effect of these negations is self-hatred (which manifests itself in various ways) on the part of black students. For example some people would make fun of an acquaintance that uses *umuthi* – thereby implying that there is something wrong with such a practice.

Here is a third example: Standard writings about the cultural practice of *ulwaluko* variously refer to it as ‘traditional circumcision’, ‘initiation’ or ‘rite of passage’ (see Kepe 2010; Peltzer & Kanta 2009; Vincent 2008b, 2008c, 2008d among others). The problem with these categories is that this practice becomes nothing more than a medical procedure which is marked by a public ceremony – for circumcision is a medical procedure, the removal of the foreskin, and initiation usually marks membership of a group with a special ceremony. Quite apart from these standard categories, this practice is, properly understood, a social and educational process – an articulation of a people’s way of living.

AmaXhosa refer to this practice as *ulwaluko*. Neither circumcision nor initiation comes close to capturing what is meant by this concept. *Ulwaluko*, far from being a special ceremony which marks membership of a group, or a medical procedure, is an educational process which marks a transition from childhood to adulthood. The purpose of *ulwaluko* is to build strong character traits, independence, teach responsibility etc. Similarly, it is not uncommon to find in the literature on *ulwaluko* reference to those who have returned from *esuthwini* – ‘initiation school’ – as ‘recently initiated men’ or ‘newly initiated men’ (see Bottoman 2006; Vincent 2008b, 2008c, 2008d). Again, this category falls short of capturing what it means to partake in *ulwaluko*. Here, too, it is wise to adopt the isiXhosa concept of *amakrwala* rather than ‘recently initiated men’. This is so because talk of recently initiated men suggests an end product of an event. Yet being *ikrwala* (singular for *amakrwala*) suggests a continuation, not an end, of the education process.

Further, while the literature abounds with talk of ‘traditional nurses’ and ‘traditional surgeons’, amaXhosa speak, respectively, of *amakhankatha* and *iingcibi*. While these writers may get away with talk of traditional surgeons, they are not justified in talking about traditional nurses. This is necessarily so because the people they refer to as nurses, play, above everything else, the role of educators. Further, instead of speaking about ‘initiates’ when referring to boys *esuthwini*, amaXhosa speak of *abakhwetha* or *umkhwetha* (singular). This is so because far from being an initiate, *umkhwetha* is akin to a pupil or a student. Against this background, it becomes clear that *ulwaluko* is not a mere ‘medical procedure’ but an educational/sociological process. These are only three examples, more may be enumerated.

In Mafeje’s parlance, the concept negation has a dual-meaning: (i) it refers to the Othering and misrepresentation of Africans in social scientific writings. This is what he calls ‘alterity’ when writing about anthropology in particular. (ii) The concept is also used to mean the undoing or critique of the said misrepresentations – what he calls, elsewhere, ‘deconstruction’ (1996, 2001a). Hence the phrase, ‘a determined negation of negations’ (2000a: 66), the point of which is ‘affirmation’ or what he calls, at other times, ‘reconstruction’ (1996, 2001a). Less cryptically, Adesina (2006a: 242) prefers to talk about the ‘recovery of intellectual and political nerve’.

The said negation is not merely an act of omission or failure adequately to analyse how black people live (as suggested by Webster (1985, 1991)), it is, more importantly, the problem of the ‘ontological disconnect’ (Adesina 2011, Private Communication) between white and black people in South Africa; particularly the failure on the part of some white sociologists to root themselves locally not only epistemologically but ontologically and existentially. For example, Webster (1985, 1991, 2004) writes about how white sociologists were heavily influenced by theoretical trends in the UK and American universities. He (Webster 1985:45) writes that, ‘South Africans studying abroad were to play an important role in introducing these [Marxian] ideas, particularly through Southern African Studies, into the university curriculum when a growing number returned to university posts in South Africa.’ He says that this rise in Marxian ideas in the South African sociological scene coincided with the rise of Black Consciousness (BC) in the 1970s. Adding that Marxism gave them (white sociologists) a ‘coherent alternative’. In the context of apartheid, it is difficult to understand why left-leaning white sociologists sought a

coherent alternative from outside of South Africa instead of seeking to join forces with their black counterparts.¹⁰ Writing about the history of sociology in South Africa, Jubber (2007: 536) observes:

In South Africa, during the most oppressive years of Apartheid, research and writing in this field was hazardous due to the enactment of legislation that curtailed the freedom of speech and publication and hence a fair amount of sociology dealing with politics was published by people in exile (e.g. Magubane, 2000). While seditious or insurrectional political sociology was proscribed and policed, less threatening publications were tolerated. One field in which sociologists were particularly productive was in counting the human and economic costs of Apartheid, and in proposing alternatives to it, or at least ways in which it could be humanized. The least politically threatening kinds of political sociology were the studies inspired by American studies of voting behaviour.

It is correct to say sociology dealing with South African politics was largely published by scholars in exile. However that was not exclusively so given the fact that the sociologist Herbert Vilakazi, who had gone into exile with his family in 1957, returned to South Africa in 1980 and continued to publish radical sociological works. Thus it would seem that Jubber's claim, quite apart from highlighting the ruthlessness of the apartheid system, highlights the uncritical embrace of western systems of thought (and hence cultural affinity with the West) on the part of white South African sociologists. The last sentence in the foregoing quote is telling. In his 2005 Presidential Address of the South African Sociological Congress, Adesina (2006a:256) stated, plausibly in our view, that:

The first line of research is premised on taking ourselves seriously. I have noticed how eagerly we adopt every new concept and author that reaches our shores from the global North; the rapid uptake on the idea of "Public Sociology" being the most recent case. Yet we hardly give ourselves, our scholarship, and local resources the same degree of scholarly attention.

It is interesting to note that, while in the 1970s and 1980s Webster saw in Marxism a coherent alternative to Black Consciousness, he has today found one in Burawoy's notion of 'Public Sociology' (see Webster 2004). The problem with Webster's embrace of this idea is not simply that it denies endogenous alternatives, but that it prescribes to South African sociologists what

¹⁰ The claim that Marxists felt 'marginalised' (Jubber 1983) or 'alienated' (Ally 2005), from both white politics and revolutionary black politics (because of BCM), is not only an unconvincing rationalisation it also assumes a false dichotomy. The 'class question' which they prized so highly was not separate from the 'race question' which they assiduously avoided – Magubane saw the nexus between the two (see Magubane 1979).

they have been doing all along. Webster is fully aware of this fact but does not see it as a problem. Indeed he says: ‘While it may be self-evident to South African sociology, by naming some of its activities “public sociology” Burawoy was giving these activities legitimacy’ (Webster 2004: 27). It is not clear whether legitimacy (as opposed to self-determination) is really what is at stake here. For as noted in the epigraph, ‘if what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed’ (Mao Zedong quoted in Mafeje 2000a: 67).

Presenting Marxism as an alternative to liberalism (which was rigorously critiqued by BC members) was itself a preservation of whiteness and an avowed refusal to be of Africa. Marxist sociology in South Africa had no critique of the nexus between race and class (Magubane 1979). It only saw apartheid more in class but less so in racial terms – it equated black workers’ struggle with those of their white counterparts, thereby assuming, problematically, that they were both only fighting against capitalism. In doing so, the question of whiteness (a category of supremacy) was left unaddressed. Ally (2005: 73) argues that ‘what Marxism’s class analysis offered this group of intellectuals [Marxist sociologists] was not just a powerful theoretical lens to explain apartheid, but a powerful political tool for white intellectuals to deal more comfortably with questions of race.’ Ashwin Desai (2010: 123) adds that: ‘It was almost as if since their emphasis was class, race did not exist and therefore did not have to account for its under-representation.’ Yet BC members were concerned, primarily, to criticise ‘that bunch of do-gooders that goes under all sorts of names – liberals, leftists etc.’ (Biko [1978]2004: 21); arguing that ‘the liberal [and others] must fight on his own and for himself’ (Biko [1978]1978: 72)’. For Mafeje,

Southern African Whites, as a general category, not isolated individuals, are not willing or prepared to relinquish their hegemony established since the conquest of the sub-region. This includes white intellectuals of all persuasions. The difference between the right and the left amongst them is how their vested interests are rationalised. While right-wing intellectuals make no bones about their belief in the inherent inferiority of the Africans, liberals and left-wing advocates recognise only the incompetence of the Africans and reserve the right to guide them until they attain the required standards... This is so self-evident that such do-gooders do not have to account for themselves. (Mafeje 1997c: 1)

It is not surprising, then, that even in the post-1994 period, Andile Mngxitama, a pamphleteer, would accuse white South African sociologists, who only do class analysis at the expense or race, of ‘hiding white privilege’ (Mngxitama 2009 in Akpan 2010: 117-8).

For Biko, as with Mngxitama, the point was/is ultimately to render whiteness – liberal or not – irrelevant. This message was never taken seriously by Marxian sociologists, yet one suspects that had they done so, a real ‘alternative’ would have been found. This is so because in adopting Marxism, or Burawoy’s ‘public sociology’, (white) South African sociologists were, epistemologically speaking, no less extraverted (or academically dependent) in their writings than their liberal, functionalist, pluralist and ‘Calvinist’ counterparts. Mafeje (2000a: 67) makes a similar point when he says: ‘Southern African white settlers... are unable to deal with their Africanity for they have persistently played “European” to the extent that they unconsciously granted that they were aliens whereas blacks were “natives”’.

For black students of sociology, the erasures of their biographies and lived experiences are not only at the epistemological/ theoretical level, they are practical and pedagogic. Black students of the social sciences were/are, in their intellectual formation, casualties of apartheid, colonialism and imperialism. For them, pedagogy and the curriculum was/is especially ‘incapacitating intellectually and it stifled creativity... (Lebakeng nd: 7).’ So notwithstanding the assertion of the South African Marxian sociologist, Hendricks (2006), about a ‘materialist broadside which challenged intellectual hegemony’, what was taught to us as undergraduates was not always found emancipatory by students. Nor can it be said to be relevant. We pursue this theme in chapter six. In the section that follows, we deal with contemporary issues in the debate on transformation of the social sciences in South Africa.

2.3 Contemporary Debates: Issues in Transformation

Broadly speaking, the question of transformation of the social sciences in South Africa is characterised by two sets of debates. We shall make a distinction between ‘Debate A’ and ‘Debate B’. Debate A centres on the question of making the social sciences ‘relevant’ by ‘training students to operate in the real world’ (Adam 2009: 11). It does also grapple with the question of education as a ‘public good’ (Singh 2001). It includes a range of critics, from those sympathetic to those critical. The constant, however, is the question of whether or not education should be viewed mainly in economic and instrumental terms. Proponents of this view (mainly government and business people) insist on the ‘relevance’ of higher education, so that it responds

to South Africa's economic and practical needs (Badat 2001, 2003; Cloete et al 2002; Singh 2001). One often encounters the term 'skills shortage'.

Some academics, however, talk about 'education for its own sake', meaning that education should not be viewed in instrumental terms (Beard 2005; Chisholm 2004; Jansen 2002, 2004). Beard (2005: 78, emphasis in the original) observes that South African 'universities are now faced with the change from *education* to *training*.' He argues that nowadays the emphasis is on career-orientated subjects rather than educating students to think critically and independently. Hendricks (2006) cited shutting down of the Department of Sociology at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, in favour of programme-based education, to buttress the same point. These are some of the issues prevailing in Debate A and they need not concern us in this study. This is necessarily so because the focus of this study is not on policy issues but primarily on epistemological issues in the transformation of the social sciences, with a particular focus on sociology. It is, also, on the pedagogic practices within classrooms and the contents of teaching and learning practices within the South African universities. This debate is mentioned for the purpose of providing the reader with an initial acquaintance of some of the discussions on the broad topic of transformation of the social sciences in South Africa. This is not to suggest that Debates A and B are *de facto* separate. They can be reconciled. The use of the concept of 'Ubuntu' in South African business and management literature is a case in point. What we are saying, however, is that in the literature, the two debates appear separately and that, for the purposes of this study, they will be distinguished.

For our purposes, we shall focus instead on Debate B which centres on epistemic issues in the social sciences. Perhaps to refer to 'Debate B' as a 'debate' is something of a misnomer since the writings of the authors who call for transformation are hardly taken to task. Indeed, the writings of black sociologists hardly feature in the reading material in many departments of sociology in South Africa (Adesina 2005, 2006a; Jubber 2006). Alatas (2012a) argues that standard sociology textbooks, when referring to thinkers of the 19th century, make no reference to sociologists outside of Europe. So that the history of sociology is equated with the history of western modernity; no reference is made to Ibn Khaldun to give but one example. Alatas refers to this erasure as the 'New Orientalism' (Alatas 2012a). In doing so, he departs from Edward Said's

notion of Orientalism in that he transcends the Orient/Occident dichotomy and highlights, instead, the fact that academics have gone beyond pejorative ways of writing about the Orient. Instead, the trend has taken the form of marginalising writings and writers from areas other than the West or certain writers/writings within the West – Rabaka (2010) talks about ‘epistemic apartheid’ to mean the same thing. The Third World, Alatas (2012a) argues, is simply not seen as a source of ideas/theory – but that of data gathering. The upshot of this marginalisation is ‘Hidden Eurocentrism’ (Alatas 2012b) which consists in (i) the desire to apply, universally, categories which come from particular locales (e.g. the UK or the US) to the rest of the world; and (ii) the internalisation, on the part of Third World scholars, of ideas which are superimposed on them by an academic orthodoxy – something which leads to lack of ‘self-understanding’. The critical issue, therefore, is for Third World sociologists to put scholarship outside of the West on a par with western scholarship – through research and teaching. This is what he calls a ‘sociological fusion’ (Alatas 2012a) e.g. just as we borrow and domesticate art, cuisine, music etc. we can do the same with ideas. This is clearly no invitation to parochialism. It is, Alatas argues, one of the ways of transcending ‘academic dependency’ or the intellectual ‘division of labour’ between the North and the Third World.

Chief among the sociologists who champion transformation of the social sciences in South Africa are, respectively, Adesina (2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2008a, 2008b, 2010), Mamdani (1992, 1993, 1998a, 1998b, 2008), Lebakeng (2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2010), Seepe (2004), Thaver (2002), and Hendricks (2006). (Though Mamdani and Seepe are not, strictly speaking, sociologists – at least not with a capital S.) They argue that the process of knowledge-making in South Africa ought to take Africa as its main point of reference or that it should be rooted in its ‘ontological narratives’ (Adesina, 2006b: 2). It is said that presently, the social sciences in South Africa are characterised by a two-fold problem: ‘negations’ and ‘extraversion’ (Adesina, 2005, 2006a, 2008a, 2010).

At the level of epistemology, and as shown above, South African sociologists take the West as their main point of reference. Thaver (2002) points out that this practice does little to inspire the contemporary generation to study sociology. At its most extreme, this form of Eurocentrism led to the resignation of Mahmood Mamdani from the University of Cape Town. The said incident

became known as the ‘Mamdani Affair’. Mamdani fought, unsuccessfully, to implement a course/module which took Africa seriously by prescribing readings which were, for the most part, written by Africans – in an attempt thereby to extirpate extraverted curricula at the foregoing university. Alas, this was not to be (see Mamdani 1998a, 1998b; Hall 1998a, 1998b; Graaff 1998).

Much of the said Eurocentrism can be traced to what Adesina (2006a) calls ‘status anxiety’ – the unjustified worry on the part of South African sociologists about what the countries of the North will say about them. Yet, as Adesina reminds us, it is primarily because the so-called ‘founding fathers of sociology’ (Durkheim, Marx and Weber) were rooted in their locales that their works have universal appeal. This rootedness in one’s locale is fundamental to ‘endogeneity’ or ‘endogenous knowledge’ (Adesina 2006a; Hountondji 1997).

Be that as it may, the call for epistemological decolonisation is not always met with enthusiasm in the South African academy. Take, for example, Morrow’s (2009: 37) claim that ‘sometimes when people advocate “curriculum transformation” – especially in the social sciences – they have in mind simply changing the content of the curriculum’. Unfortunately, Morrow provides no reference as to who these ‘people’ are. Nor does he substantiate his assertions. Out of courtesy, it would be helpful to point out in what ways proponents of transformation fail to face up to his epistemic challenge. He goes on to argue that ‘epistemic values are those values that shape and guide inquiry, which has as its regulative goal to discover the truth about some matter...’ (Morrow 2009:37). There is no gainsaying this remark. However in dismissing and lumping together unnamed authors, labelling them ‘people’, Morrow breaches the norms of good scholarship. Related to Morrow’s assertion is Sitas’ (2006: 357) submission that attempts to ‘indigenise’ (to use his word) will fail if they do ‘not take as its founding rules part of any canon’. He argues that sociologists in South Africa are offered no ‘creative breathing space’ by ‘indigenisation’. He dismisses as ‘simplistic critiques’ attempts at ‘deconstructing’ and ‘negating’ ‘that which constitutes ones “alterity”’ (Sitas 2006: 357). He argues that Third World sociologists must shy away from the culture of ‘imitation’. Yet it would seem that grounding sociological writings in South Africa on the ‘canon’ that is distinctly European is an invitation to the ‘culture of imitation’. Adesina’s (2006a: 257) question is extremely apposite in this regard:

'Is Sociology the specific ideas of a dead "sociologist" or a distinct approach to the study of society?' While it has been stated earlier that proponents of transformation are hardly taken to task, Sitas has attempted to do so. It is for this reason that one will examine at some length his intervention on this issue.

Among the statements Sitas (2006:360) make may be mentioned: 'critique and deconstruction [on the part of Third World sociologists] provide no sociological answers to the phenomena outside the sociologist's window'. Implicit in this statement is the assumption that sociologists need necessarily to be socially and politically engaged to do justice to their discipline. Yet we know, as Oloyede (2006:247) pointed out, that 'sociologists do not have to be political activists for the discipline to be elevated to a glorious height. What would seem critical is the importance of all perspectives in the discipline in the understanding of the life-world'. Sitas argues that in critiquing Eurocentrism and imperialism Third World sociologists engage in a form of reductionism because they ignore dissenting and critical voices in the West. That is not an entirely accurate assessment for the simple reason that: (i) Third World sociologists have as their polemical target those voices in the West which are imperialistic, not all of western scholarship; and (ii) at times Third World scholars rely on Northern scholarship even as they criticise it e.g. political economists such as Samir Amin, Dani Nabudere, Issa Shivji, Yash Tandon etc. rely heavily on Marxism even when they critique Eurocentrism and imperialism. Sitas contradicts himself when he says in labelling western scholarship 'Eurocentric', Third World sociologists reduce 'in one grand counter-gesture many insights, points of dissent and critical engagement of a complex intellectual heritage' (Sitas 2006:360). This is necessarily so because Sitas (2006:357) had already accepted that Third World sociologists rely on Foucault and Derrida, two French scholars who are part of the 'complex intellectual heritage' – and most people readily accept that the two were critical dissenting voices within the West.

One may point out, too, that Sitas' idea of a 'canon' is partial to Marxism – he refers affectionately to Marx as 'the grand old man' (Sitas 2006: 375 fn 3). Yet he criticises the writings of Third World scholars for being replete with 'borrowings'. One recognises that Sitas does not explicitly posit Marxism as the only canon, for he does speak, after all, of 'any canon'. It is nevertheless clear from his work that he conceives of sociology as an insurrectional

discipline (see for example Sitas 1997, 1998, 2006). But there is, unfortunately, nothing insurrectional in the works of Durkheim and Weber who are conventionally known as part of the ‘canons’ of the discipline. Further, scholarship which adopts insurrectional language but is nevertheless not rooted in its locale can be said to be just as problematic – for more on this issue, see Mafeje’s paper ‘On the Articulation of Modes of Production’ (1981), a critique of Harold Wolpe’s thoughts on the nature of capitalist relations and labour-reproduction in 20th century South Africa. The problem with Wolpe’s work was that (i) it had a weak conceptual grasp of Balibar’s theory of articulation of modes of production; and (ii) he superimposed this theory on local data even when he had little empirically-based knowledge of his units of analysis. Mafeje highlighted both mistakes and went on to interject that ‘to conduct class analysis we do not have to invent classes’ (Mafeje 1981: 130). The significance of Mafeje’s critique, however, lies in the general question of whether or not ‘ideographic enquiry yields deeper insights into societal processes than nomothetic enquiry’ (Mafeje 1981: 123).

Further, Sitas is less than charitable when he says: ‘Unfortunately, the emphasis on discourses (and texts), their [African sociologists] constructions and inventions encouraged by postcolonial theorists, despite their critical and emancipatory promise, prove to be frustrating. By prefiguring processes of signification and discursive power, they leave the “steering media” of money and power and more importantly the institutional matrices that constrain social life and indeed their own claims, untouched’ (Sitas 2006: 362). The works of Foucault and Said, respectively, were not limited to ‘discourse’ and the ‘text’. Said has written, sometimes at great personal risk, about the situation in Palestine and Israel. So much so that he had to deal with death threats and burning of his office in 1985 (see Said 1999: 107). We may also mention the influence of Foucault’s writings on gay and lesbian movements. In the South African context: Mafeje and Magubane not only wrote works of socio-political and economic relevance but were members, respectively, of the Non-European Unity Movement and the African National Congress (ANC). That these two sociologists spent over 30 years in exile because of their writings (and political engagement) is a case in point.

Sitas goes on to argue that African scholarship is characterised by ‘contrasting essentialisms of Afrocentric intellectual thought pioneered by African-Americans like Asante’ (Sitas 2006: 364).

This statement is not altogether justified. It is a casual reading of African scholarship which, ironically, Asante himself repeatedly wrote about. Sitas (2006: 369) says the 'reclamations journey' i.e. 'negation and affirmation', endogeneity, Africanisation etc. 'leads to intellectual cul-de-sac'. 'The only way out', he counsels, is the 'quietism of borrowing from antinomial and critical concepts from discourses incubated in the centre [i.e. the North]' (Sitas 2006: 369). Sociologically, one might argue that this proposal courts the charge of intellectual imperialism, perceptively identified by Syed Hussein Alatas (2000). This refers to the willingness, on the part of Third World scholars, to be dominated, at the ideational level, by western systems of thought without the West necessarily playing any active role in such intellectual dominance.

One agrees with Sitas (2006: 369), however, when he says much of what has been written by South African sociologists consist mainly in 'borrowings' i.e. applying uncritically western theories to African conditions. The same point was made Hendricks (2006:24). Yet it is difficult to understand why Sitas sees this as a problem when he himself prescribes that the 'peripheral sociologist' should borrow from the 'cannon'. Sitas (2006: 374) concludes his paper with several recommendations. He says 'South African sociology' has 'some major tasks'. One might wish to question the idiom of 'South African sociology'. This is so because precisely what constitutes South African sociology is an object of inquiry, not a given. Thus such a claim cannot be made *a priori*. Additionally, given that he concedes that there is a lot of 'borrowing' on the part of South African sociologists, in what sense can one talk of a South African sociology? Tina Uys, former president of SASA, also made the same mistake. In her 2003 SASA presidential address, entitled 'In Defence of South African Sociology' (2004), she goes on to defend their (South African sociologists) 'contribution' to the discipline. Yet, in her defence she relies heavily on Goran Therborn's 'three spaces of identity' (Uys 2004). There is nothing wrong with borrowing, but there seems to be a discrepancy between defending a brand called 'South African sociology' while essentially regurgitating sociological theories from elsewhere. Defending South African sociology, one would imagine, would require an endogenous theoretical approach. As it is, one would argue that Uys is defending a sociology in South Africa rather than South African sociology. Let us shelve this question and return to Sitas' recommendations.

Firstly, he says sociology in South African ‘can become a platform for a broader African cosmopolitan project, which, for the first time will not be a study of, or the discovery of the “other”, but a project of *self-discovery*’ (Sitas 2006: 374). This is precisely what Mafeje and Magubane have been doing and saying since they began their careers in the 1960s (see Mafeje 1991, 1996, 2001a; Magubane 1971, 1973, [1968] 2000). Sitas is less than generous in this regard, with no acknowledgement or awareness of the task Mafeje and Magubane set for themselves. This is so because what he is attempting to do here, far from highlighting originality in his ideas, demonstrates the concerted erasure and assiduous avoidance of African (black) scholarship in the South African academy. Such erasure and avoidance was identified by Mamdani: ‘The notion of South African exceptionalism is a current so strong in South African studies that it can be said to have taken on the character of a prejudice’ (Mamdani 1996: 27). It is easier for South Africans to compare themselves with people from the US and the UK than to make comparisons with people within the continent. This can be traced back to South Africa’s isolation, due to apartheid, from the rest of the continent until 1994. Thus, the preference for Euro-American material, on the part of South African sociologists, only serves to confirm the ‘prejudices instilled through Bantu education – that Africa lies north of the Limpopo [river], and that this Africa has no intelligentsia with writings worth reading...’ (Mamdani 1998b: 72)

Secondly, Sitas tells us, South Africa ‘offers an exceptional social laboratory for the entire planet’ (2006: 374). Interestingly, this recommendation seeks global recognition without making any reference to what local sociologists should do to address their current state of affairs. And it is silent on how Africans should generate theories and paradigms of their own so as to enhance African scholarship. The question is not just doing research locally. Such research abounds. The issue is to theorise about local conditions as opposed to waiting for the West to do so. It is not unfair to say this recommendation perpetuates the already existing division of labour in global scholarship, where Africa is a place to extract data for westerners to theorise. Thirdly, he says ‘the country [South Africa] harbours the institutional capacity to explore whether indigenous and endogenous know-hows within a “pluriverse” of languages can explicate inequality, interconnectedness, organisation and social evolution’ (Sitas 2006: 374). Again, the efforts Mafeje (1991, 1992), Magubane (1979, 1996) and others made have been primarily to explicate inequality among other things.

To be fair, the paper under criticism here is not representative of Sitas' *oeuvre*. Nor is it a definitive statement on his work. It is discussed here for its relevance to the issues under review in this chapter. Readers may be aware of Sitas' book, *Voices That Reason* (2004), which carries a highly pertinent and thought-provoking message on the issues we discuss. 'The book asks us to consider the possibility of a sociology "with" people. A sociology that is emphatic to people's cultural formations, one that risks failure in its counsel for social action and one that is *pace* postmodernism apodictic in its claims' (Sitas 2004: x). In addition, '[a]s an experimental text it must be used with the playfulness it invites and the disagreements it warrants...' (Sitas 2004: x). The foregoing disclaimer works quite badly for the important 'theoretical parables' which Sitas discusses in the book. This is so because in subsequent pages of the book Sitas states, quite correctly, that:

We do have much to contribute to one another and, of course, to the rest of the world: if we could only harness what is almost there, full of potential and promise. We cannot remain data collectors, immune deficiency samples, genetic codes, case studies, junior partners for others, elsewhere forever. We need to take hold of the trove of traditions and wit... that characterise our work, our failed social experiments, our distinctive voicing. (Sitas 2004: 8)

This is an important message which coincides with those of many other African scholars. It should be noted, however, as we did earlier on, that while Sitas attempts something of an Africa-centred theoretical approach, he sees his work as primarily insurrectional. Pursuing engaged scholarship and attempting grounded theory are not, of course, mutually exclusive. In his own words, Sitas argues:

In a previous piece titled "The waning of sociology in the South Africa of the 1990s", I positioned my work within an intellectual formation that, despite boundaries, engaged with the social movements around us. Inside that formation subscribed to some important biases: socio-political traditions that have been militant, community-sensitive, rooted in the country's labour movement and the grassroots cultural movements that were spawned during the intense period of resistance after 1976. Within that broad area of affinity I was particularly attracted to networks in KwaZulu-Natal that had some allegiance to the non-violent and communitarian traditions that have run in the province from Ghandi's *ashrams* to the present struggles. (Sitas 2004: 9)

As stated earlier, the focus, on the part of South African sociologists, on political issues at the expense of the theoretical confuses sociologists with activists. It is useful also to look at Sitas'

inaugural lecture, 'Neither Gold Nor Bile', delivered at the then University of Natal in 1995, and later published in the *African Sociological Review* in 1997. While the book is empirically-grounded and makes an attempt at grappling with some South African ontological narratives, the absences of writings by African social scientists dealing with similar issues is glaring. In many ways, one might argue that the book does precisely what Sitas warns against, viz. exporting data and importing theory. The prevalence of Euro-American scholars, with whom Sitas engages, both approvingly and disapprovingly, is surely not likely to be missed. A cursory look at the reference list confirms this point. To show just how Sitas avoids engaging with African scholars, he argues thus:

Honest analyses of the collapse of visions, dreams, narratives and meta-narratives have been the preserve of novelists from Armah, Ngugi, Achebe to Okri, Hove and Mahfouz, rather than the preserve of social science... (p18) To date no sociologist has had the courage to undertake research on the quality of vision embodied in the texts such as Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, with its fearless airing of post-colonial corruption... (Sitas 2004: 114)

This is sufficient to make one cringe with embarrassment. A significant number of African social scientists hold positions in American and European universities largely because of their 'fearless airing' of the issues which Sitas claims they do not raise. From Mkandawire to Mazrui to Zeleza and others, some African scholars cannot work in their countries of birth because of their 'fearless airing' of 'corruption' and many other issues. The issues raised by the said novelists have been the subject of empirical investigation and vigorous debate among CODESRIA-affiliated scholars for a very long time.

Related to the foregoing issues of 'academic dependency' (Alatas 2003) is the question of pedagogy. Recollect that earlier on we had said transformation debates entail both epistemological and pedagogic issues. Oloyede (2006: 350) argues that sociologists should infuse 'sociology courses and indeed the students with material that has both contemporary and social importance'. Key in this regard, is the notion of 'referential thinking' – which entails conceptualisation, critical thinking and sociological imagination. Closely related to Oloyede's proposal is Morrow's (2009: 37-38) submission that 'in teaching, one of our primary tasks is to enable our students to achieve a rich operational understanding of and commitment to the

relevant epistemic values'. What Morrow is calling for here is a commitment to disciplined, rigorous and reasoned inquiry about our immediate surroundings. Much of what Oloyede and Morrow are saying ought to form part of the process of transformation of the social sciences in South Africa. It is important here to make mention of the fact that while there has been much talk about 'indigenisation' (Lebakeng, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2010; Makgoba, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2004; Ntuli, 2004; Seepe, 2004) of the social sciences in South Africa, the theoretical importance of this concept is questionable. Earlier on one talked, albeit briefly, about endogenous knowledge (which should be distinguished from 'indigenous' knowledge). In the section that follows, we characterise this distinction more fully.

2.4 Indigenous Versus Endogenous Knowledge: Disentanglement

It has been suggested that the concept 'indigenous' is static, backward and essentialising. However Lebakeng (2010), one of its chief proponents in South Africa, denies that this is so. He goes on to give eleven reasons why indigenous knowledge is important:

[i] it can help communities to find the best solution to a development problem...; [ii] it represents the successful ways in which people have dealt with their environment (Puffer 1995); [iii] it is closely related to survival and subsistence and provides a basis for local-level decision making...; [iv] it plays a big role in participatory approaches to sustainable development; [v] it provides firm development underpinnings; [vi] it helps in conflict resolutions particularly on issues of land...; [vii] it contributes to local empowerment and development...; [viii] it provides a basis for alternative ways of managing resources...; [ix] ...not only is it cost effective but it is relevant and indispensable for environmentally and ecologically sensitive activity; [x] it provides basis for problem-solving for local communities, especially the poor; and [xi] it represents an important component of global knowledge on development issues and helps leverage other forms of knowledge so that poverty and other ills can be addressed jointly with the poor (Lebakeng, 2010: 26).

If one is reluctant to endorse Lebakeng's eleven theses, it is not because one thinks he is wrong about what he is saying. It is simply that all of what he says is not fully demonstrated. Moreover, his eleven theses dwell on what indigenous knowledge can do; yet precisely what this knowledge is, and what it consists of, is not immediately clear. Thus, the reader is left with the impression that what indigenous knowledge really is a romanticised African past. Besides, Lebakeng's proposals can be propounded by any left-leaning sociologist anywhere in the world. There is nothing necessarily 'indigenous' to (South) Africa about it.

‘Hountondji used “endogenous knowledge” rather than “indigenous knowledge” to account for the extent to which these knowledge systems would have changed in response to external (non-indigenous) influences’ (Adesina 2006c: 149 fn 57). In addition, for Hountondji (1997: 18), the term ‘indigenous’ has derogatory connotations, insofar as it represents what ‘appears to the foreign observer – explorer or missionary – as a purely local curiosity that has no effectiveness outside its particular context.’ The indigenous person, Hountondji tells us, is therefore essentially reactive, that is to say, he claims his indigenesness as a revolt or a reaction to that which denies it. He cannot just be. Seen in this light, the concept is not very effective since it depends for its existence, on reacting to external stimuli. In addition, since it represents, *a la* Hountondji, ‘what appears to the foreign observer’, its proponents, despite their laudable efforts, come dangerously close to being colonial anthropologists who were essentially racist in their epistemological inclinations. Understood this way, proponents of indigenous knowledge come close to conceding that they have no critique of academic and cultural imperialism, and therefore to hoisting their critique by its own petard. We shall, therefore, altogether avoid using this concept in this study.

We shall, instead, talk about endogeneity or endogenous knowledge. Endogeneity acknowledges that African sociologists cannot altogether eschew or avoid what comes from other parts of the world. Nor is this a call for a return to a *status quo ante*. Endogeneity says knowledge is first local before it becomes universal. It takes into account the influence of other knowledge systems but says, in the Mafejean fashion: we ask ‘to be taken on our own terms’ (Mafeje 1991: iii). While not exclusivist, or seeking to ‘draw invidious distinctions between human beings’, it nevertheless takes its locale very seriously. It consists in recognising that social science is ideographic not nomothetic (Adesina 2008b; Mafeje 1991). It does not, it should be noted, ‘seek to substitute one erasure for another’ (Adesina 2006b: 144) in a battle of essentialisms. For as Zeleza (2004: 26) puts it: ‘The issue has never been a question of engaging the world, for as African scholars we have always been engaged. Indeed, we cannot avoid being engaged even if we wanted to. My issue is about the nature and import of that engagement.’ Endogeneity is at its core an affirmation of one’s locale. Below we explore Mafeje’s theoretical orientations with an eye to show how we ought to research and write about ourselves.

2.5 Authentic Interlocution and the Discursive Method

Mafeje's (1981, 1991, 1996 2001a) approach is simply that the researcher's epistemological assumptions should not be allowed to dictate what people make of the conditions in which they live. Most of the time researchers get caught up, when conducting research, in their theoretical schemata rather than try to build theory from the ground up. But it may be objected to this view: that there is a sense in which this approach invariably becomes a 'theoretical framework' or an 'epistemological assumption' in itself. In that the researcher is, by adopting it, guided by the view that he should not superimpose himself. That, so it seems, is *ipso facto* a 'framework' *in itself*. In the preface to his book, *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations*, Mafeje (1991:1) says: 'Although I do academic work and believe in academic standards, I do not believe in erudition (which is another way of inhibiting the deprived and disadvantaged from writing what they know and think)...' Telling are the words in parentheses, for they speak eloquently not only to the theme of the book but really to his approach to research – which, he tells us, is not predicated on any epistemology.

The idea of taking objects of analysis on their own terms lies at the heart of Mafeje's scholarship. He referred to this approach as 'authentic interlocution' or 'authentic theoretical representation' in social scientific writings (1981, 1991, 1996, 2000a, 2001a, 2001b). His method is explicitly 'discursive' (Mafeje 1991: iii), and he used this word in its everyday English sense, to mean 'moving from one point to another without any strict structure' (Oxford English Dictionary). To speak of a 'discursive method' is not to suggest that his approach was disorderly, he still had to obey academic standards of analytical rigour, clarity of expression and logical precision. What he means is simply that he took his objects of enquiry on their own terms – whatever their 'ideological' bias or 'consciousness' ('false' or 'true'). Magubane (2007:3) adopted the same method when conducting archival research on racism: 'I allow my chosen authors and their texts to speak for themselves in the same way anthropologists, through their field notes, allow their subjects to speak.' In adopting this approach, Mafeje, as with Magubane, is not refusing to be analytically universal. But rather, this is an attempt to study societies or 'social formations' from 'inside outwards' so as the better to 'relate them to their wider social environment' (Mafeje 1991: iii).

Several of Mafeje's critics (see Moore 1998; Nabudere 2008; Sharp 1998) object that this approach is no different from positivistic or 'value-free' approaches of old colonial anthropologists. Especially worrying to them are these words:

As I conceive it, ethnography is the end product of social texts authored by the people themselves. All I do is to study the texts so that I can decode them, make their meaning apparent or understandable to me as an interlocutor or the "other". What I convey to my fellow-social scientists is studied and systematised interpretations of existing but hidden knowledge. In my view, this was a definite break with the European epistemology of subject/object... It was simply a recognition of the other not as a partner in knowledge-making, but as a knowledge-maker in her/his own right (Mafeje 1996: 35).

Mafeje never spotted the double-standard in what he was saying. Indeed this was (as analytic philosophers would have it) a *tu quoque* fallacy i.e. mounting a critique against your opponent while you are guilty of the same offence. For, as his critics correctly observe, this was predicated on positivistic notions of a 'neutral' researcher. So while Mafeje's approach was brilliant, it was not at all new. Yet nothing, in our view, diminishes from his proposal in that this objection merely raises the question of novelty as opposed to undermining the substance of the idea. Critics of Marxism cannot hope to overthrow 'dialectical materialism' by merely pointing out that the idea of 'dialectics' is derived from Hegel. They would have to do more than that. At any rate, Mafeje (1998, 2001a) acknowledged his mistake and duly added that 'ideological biases are ever-present in the evaluation of social texts.' He went on to emphasise the fact that in the process of knowledge-making

intellectual work becomes part of current social struggles. In other words, it dissolves the traditional anthropological epistemology of subjects and objects and solves the problem of alterity, which was the hallmark of colonial anthropology. It transpires, therefore, that inter-subjective communication, like all social communication, does not imply agreement or consensus. (Mafeje 2001a: 64)

This, however, will not do for some social scientists. This is so because colonialist and supremacist researchers could invoke the same argument in defence of their problematic views about their units of analysis. One is inclined to think that the critical issue here remains that of the 'ontological disconnect' between western researchers and their objects of enquiry and, indeed, local researchers who refuse, existentially and epistemologically, to be of the African continent.

It is interesting to note, however, parallels between some writers in South Africa, the rest of the African continent and the Third World generally (Adesina 2006a, 2008a; Alatas and Sinha 2001, Alatas 2003; Hountondji 1990, 1997; Mafeje 1992, 1994a). For example among Adesina's recommendations, in an attempt to extirpate extraversion, are to make 'ourselves [sociologists] the objects of critical scholarly engagement' (2006a: 257). Elsewhere, Adesina (2008a: 148) advises the new generation of African scholars to (i) have 'deep familiarity with the literature and subject'; (ii) 'an artisanal approach to field data and writing'; (iii) 'immense theoretical rigour'; and (iv) 'an unapologetic and relentless commitment to Africa'. Mafeje (1994a: 210), for his part, argues that 'as African history unfolds, we must prepare ourselves for new intellectual tasks and not a mere repetition of what has been conceived elsewhere... It is incumbent upon transcendent African intellectuals to develop new concepts and organisational forms for dealing more effectively with the emerging African reality.' For Hountondji (1997: 36), 'in order to de-marginalise Africa and the Third World, scholars in these areas ought to make a conscious effort towards a critical but resolute reappropriation of [their] own practical and cognitive heritage, a negation of the marginality of [their] endogenous knowledge and know-how...' This is not dissimilar to Alatas' (2003) recommendations for a reversal of academic dependency. Assuming that mechanisms have been put in place, Alatas (2003) argues that to reverse the problem of academic dependency Third World sociologists ought first to conduct serious research on the said problem. This could take the form of teaching, publication and organising and sharing knowledge at international conferences.

Second, this can be achieved through writing textbooks which, in addition to featuring the usual 'founding fathers of sociology' i.e. Marx, Weber and Durkheim, feature marginalised thinkers from the Third World e.g. Ibn Khaldun, Jose Rizal, W.E.B. Du Bois etc (Alatas and Sinha 2001; Alatas 2001). We include Du Bois on this list of Third World sociologists insofar as he was self-referentially African – at least in the latter part of his life. Thirdly, collaboration among Third World scholars would be of great assistance. In the African context, one might mention the pan-African social science network, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) based in Dakar, Senegal. For Mafeje (1992:27), 'to achieve the so-called indigenisation of the arts and sciences in Africa, African researchers and intellectuals must find a

base within their societies and the region in general – something which some African organisations are seriously attempting.’

2.6 Summary

This chapter comprises five main parts. The first section sought to locate the problem of epistemological decolonisation in its wider context. In doing so, the point was to trace the antecedents or the reasons why the African scholars have made calls for transformation. In the second section we attempted to limit and focus the above problem to the particular discipline of sociology in South Africa. In this regard, our purpose was to trace, briefly, the history of the discipline in South Africa. Thirdly, we attempted to grapple with contemporary debates and issues in the curriculum transformation debate. The fourth section attempted to disentangle the concept ‘endogenous’ from ‘indigenous’. The final section sought to lay epistemological groundwork for the rest of the thesis. In doing so, we critically evaluated Mafeje’s theoretical inclinations. In particular, we evaluated his concepts of ‘authentic interlocutors’ and the ‘discursive method’. Mafeje’s insights on how researchers should let the data speak for itself will be important in the chapters that follow – particularly four and five. In the next chapter, we trace the history of the department and evaluate some of the wider developments in sociology in South Africa. In doing so, we attempt to locate the department in its historical context so as to understand it better.

Chapter Three

The Department in Historical and Sociological Context 1900-2000

3.0 Introduction¹¹

Having discussed key debates and theoretical insights in the previous (literature review) chapter, this chapter attempts to locate the department under investigation within the wider historical and sociological context. Importantly, it attempts to investigate whether the department had, having been tainted by his ‘welfare sociology’, broke with Vergemoed’s legacy in the early 1940s. We mention this issue in an attempt to problematise the view that the department can be viewed, because of his influence, perpetually in a negative light. We shall trace the history of the department by locating it within developments in the wider sociological scene in South Africa. We shall look at some of the key figures not only in Soutspanberg but in sociology in South Africa generally. It is important, too, to look at the kind of research conducted by members of the department during this period. We shall look at its history until the 1990s. We shall also attempt to look at what was taught in the department. The following chapters deal with what is researched and taught in the present period.

In historical terms, the department of sociology under investigation occupies a somewhat controversial position in the South African sociological scene. Its first professor and chair/head went on to become the chief architect, indeed the first Prime Minister, of apartheid South Africa. As a result, it may not be easy for some people to separate its history from that of apartheid. However, in an email to the author, the head of the department said, ‘the portrayal of the department as “simply” pro-NP/Apartheid would certainly reflect a lack of understanding of the role of sociologists at SU’ (09 October 2012). Prof Emeritus Benet (in an interview with the author 11/10/2012), for his part, argues,

The debate at the time was that ‘is apartheid a race or a class issue?’ Race was the liberal approach and class was the Marxist approach... The dominant ideology in the department, through links with Anglo American was the first one and I mean it was certainly not Marxist although some in the department who were pushing it [e.g. Jeff Lever]... There

¹¹ Throughout this chapter, indeed thesis, we shall use pseudonyms.

was the Apartheid separatists/separate development approach, the liberal one and the Marxist approach... Certainly if there was [in the 1960s and 1970s] an ideology in the department it would have been the middle one... The department did not have an open supporter of separate development, though a lot of the students, not all but a lot, were supportive of separate development because they came from Afrikaner nationalist homes, I mean it's natural they had been given...er... they had been raised that way...

It should be noted, too, that very little documentary material exists on the history of the department. Attempts were made to document it but that became a controversial subject and it was thus summarily cancelled.¹² Much of what we rely on here, insofar as it deals with the department, are in-depth interviews.¹³ Also, given that there is little material, much of what is written comes from material written about Prof Cecil the former HOD. Interestingly, given the centrality of Cecil in the department, all three professors who were interviewed about the history of the department talk about him as though he had become the department itself. While one is careful not to individualise the history of the department, it seems, however, almost impossible to talk about it without talking about Cecil. Groenewald (2003: 4) states that 'through his [Cecil] training of numerous sociologists he contributed to the growth of the discipline nationally and internationally.' His erstwhile colleagues and students have wonderful things to say about him. Hugo (1992: 101) says:

The appearance of a Festschrift is obviously a reflection of the high academic regard in which the recipient is held by contributors, but academic standing, I would argue, constitutes only a necessary, not sufficient condition for such a signal honour. There are, after all, many academics whose work would seem to justify such an honour but for whom, on other grounds, it is not forthcoming.

Godsell (1992: 44) on the other hand states that, 'most of my fundamental understanding of contemporary South African society I have learnt at the feet of SP [Cecil]. More importantly, from him I have learnt to hope for new things in a future South Africa, most particularly for a shared normative culture. For SP, this was not merely an abstract concept but rather a life goal.' We shall talk about his ideological location in what is to follow.

3.1 The Early Years of Sociological Research in South Africa 1900-30

¹² Interview with Prof Benet on 11 October 2012

¹³ Interviews with the current HOD on 02 May 2012, with Prof Benet on 11 October 2012 and interview with Prof CJ Greegrove on 12 October 2012

Hendricks (2006: 89) tells us that

Sociology tends to look for patterns and regularities, it inclines towards the general rather than the particular and it ignores the aberrant. This is the core of the sociological project but there are any number of separate research agendas and traditions. At heart, sociology is concerned with so-called grand narratives, with asking big questions and with attempting to provide broad interpretive schemas for understanding.

This should be a good place to start in that what this chapter attempts to do is to locate the department under investigation within the wider historical and sociological context. Jubber (2007), following Groenewald (1984), argues that the history of sociology in South Africa began at the turn of the 20th century. It began with the establishment, in 1902, of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science. This association was modelled on the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Having been listed as one of the sciences, sociology was introduced to the association, in the inaugural congress of 1903, through a paper delivered, in Cape Town, by H.E.S. Fremantle – ‘The Sociology of Comte with Special Reference to the Political Conditions of Young Countries’ (cited in Jubber 2007: 528). It was during the period 1900-45, at various meetings of the association, that its members called for the establishment of sociology as a university subject. It was at the University of South Africa in 1918 (Cilliers 1991) that the discipline of sociology was first introduced and at the University of Cape Town in 1921 that the department of anthropology emerged – A.R. Radcliffe-Brown became the first head (Jubber 2007).

The Second Boer War, which was fought, in South Africa, from 11 October 1899 until 31 May 1902 between the British Empire and the Afrikaans-speaking Dutch settlers, left a number of Afrikaners in extreme poverty (Davenport and Saunders 2000; Jubber 2007). The latter had occupied two independent Boer republics, *viz.* Transvaal and Orange Free State. Having won the war, Britain annexed both republics – which were later incorporated into the Union of South Africa (Davenport and Saunders 2000). This led to many Afrikaners migrating to towns and settling in racially mixed slums. Both poverty and loss of cultural identity, due to racial mixing, compelled Afrikaner organisations such as the Afrikaans Christian Women’s Union and the South African Women’s Federation to call for programmes to uplift poor Afrikaners both socially and economically (Drew 1991; Jubber 2007). This is not the only issue for which they campaigned; a legislation to outlaw interracial sexual relations and marriages was also on top of

their agenda. By the late 1920s, all of these issues were of high import in white communities generally and the Afrikaner community specifically. The Dutch Reformed Church mobilised funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to conduct research into the problem of poor whites in South Africa (Giliomee 2003; Jubber 2007). The study, known as the ‘Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem in South Africa’, was conducted in the years 1929-1932. To this end, two American sociologists, Butterfield and Coulter, were enlisted to offer their expertise in sociological research (Jubber 2007). So important was this study, Afrikaner social scientists believed, that a number of congresses were organised to reflect on it – the People’s Congress of 1943 and the Economic Congress of 1939 are two examples. This study, then, can be said to be the antecedent for the formation of a number of departments of sociology in South African universities.

3.2 Formation of Departments of Sociology in South African Universities 1930–50

The University of Pretoria set up for the first time its department of sociology in 1931, Soutspanberg followed suite in 1932, Cape Town in 1934, Witwatersrand in 1937, Potchefstroom and Natal also in 1937, and Orange Free State in 1939 (Jubber 2007). Among the leading sociologists of this period may be mentioned Henry Vergemoed and Godfrey Kruger.¹⁴ Vergemoed, with a PhD in psychology from Soutspanberg, was appointed professor of sociology and social work in the same university in 1932. He would later become the chief architect of apartheid. His research interests were primarily on the social problems of the 1930s – poverty, unemployment, housing etc. To address these problems, he resolved that welfare work and state intervention were needed (Jubber 2007). His colleague and friend Godfrey Kruger who was based at the University of Pretoria shared his views. The two of them would pioneer, respectively, ‘*volk*’ sociology (Kruger) and welfare sociology (Vergemoed). The latter supplied the former with empirical data (Oloyede 2006: 346). The lead up to their respective studies was the People’s Congress of 1934. At this congress Vergemoed delivered the keynote address with a paper titled ‘Combating Poverty and Reorganisation of Welfare Work’ (Jubber 2007). Though Vergemoed resigned from his academic post in 1937, he nevertheless left the discipline tainted –

¹⁴ Pseudonyms

in South Africa at least. This is so because, through his research and publications, and, later on in his Prime Ministry, he intensified racial oppression, segregation and white supremacy.

Kruger's research interests, on the other hand, were mainly on the themes of his doctoral work – family life and family pathologies (Jubber 2007). In the years 1945-8, he published four 'seminal' apartheid texts which offered the 'most articulate and comprehensive theoretical statement in support' of racial segregation (Jubber 2007: 530). Meanwhile at UCT Edward Batson was appointed professor of sociology though he had trained in economics at the University of London. His research interests were mainly around issues of poverty, unemployment and social pathology among white and coloured communities in the city of Cape Town. At Wits, John Gray was appointed professor of sociology and social administration. Trained at Edinburgh, he championed comparative sociology and to a large extent focused on issues of livelihood as well. Elsewhere, Jubber (2006: 336) tells us that the period between the 1970s and 1980s in sociological research and curricula in South African universities constituted a 'moment of relative unanimity'. This is so because the practitioners of the discipline focused mainly on issues of 'social policy and social problem amelioration' (Jubber 2006: 336). This is the wider historical context within which the department must be located.

3.3 A Shift in the Department 1950–80

The late 1940s and early 1950s saw 'a number of new senior sociology appointments' in South African universities (Jubber 2007: 530). Among these may be mentioned: Olaf Wagner at Soutspanberg and later Wits, Berthold Pauw and S.P. Cecil both at Soutspanberg, and James Irving at Rhodes University. Research conducted during this period was still very much shaped by the Carnegie study and it had strong ties with Social Work (Jubber 2007). Jubber (2007) claims that nowhere is this evident than in the works of Wagner who was at Soutspanberg in the 1940s and, from 1948, at Wits. Arguably the most influential sociologist of this cohort was Cecil. Like Vergemoed, and Wagner after him, Cecil was based at Soutspanberg – testimony to the department's long tradition of research and justification for the present study. While Cecil had obtained all his qualifications at this department (see his CV in Kellerman 1991), he had occasion to study under Talcott Parsons at Harvard University in the United States (Jubber 2007). His major areas of interest, which would shape the research outlook of the department,

Cover a wide spectrum including systematic sociological theory; research methodology of the social sciences and various social institutions. Includes research on the development of measurement scales; housing requirements in several urban areas; socio-economic position of specific groups, especially of the 'coloureds'; the Western Cape as an economic region and various surveys of towns and areas in the region; urban planning in Central Malawi; aspects of productivity such as labour turnover and absenteeism; kinship, marriage and the family; race relations; social and political change and development. (Cecil's CV in Kellerman 1991:3)

We shall have occasion to talk about the clients of his research. Cecil contributed immensely to the widespread embrace of structural-functionalism in sociology in South Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. He was, as Professor Benet puts it, 'a convinced structural-functionalist' (Interview 11 October 2012). Jubber (2007: 531) observes: 'Together with other academic sociologists of his time, he was instrumental in broadening the scope of sociology and gradually freeing the discipline from its close association with social work.' At SU, sociology and social work later split into two departments when Cecil became professor and head of the department of sociology in 1965. Prof Greengrove (Interview on 12 October 2012) states that in freeing sociology from social work, Cecil's attempt was to present the discipline as a professional and academic endeavour rather than a service discipline – which it was when still linked to social work. He had adopted structural-functionalism as his theoretical approach. In doing so, he turned a blind eye to the fact that structural-functionalism, with its inability to offer any theory of sociological change, simply centres on why things are as they are. Here was his Parsonian formulae, in which he elucidated his ideal of the *Rechtsstaat*: 'a societal order structured and maintained on the basis of a general legal system, in the sense of an institutionalised independent set of societal norms, adopted to the function of social control at the societal level and integrated on its own terms... a societal order in which the individual can act as a free and equal social agent' (cited in Kellerman 1991: 145). Elsewhere Cilliers (1971: i) said:

As an Afrikaner, I would naturally have preferred to have this book published in my home language. I believe, however, that all sections of the population of the Republic of South Africa have an interest in discussions on aspects of our social structure. Since most Afrikaners who would participate in such discussions may be expected to be conversant with English, not all members of the other sectors of our population are as yet able to follow discussions in Afrikaans.

It is not clear whether this was an invitation to black people as well. There were very few black academic sociologists in South Africa (some were in exile) during the period in which Cilliers

wrote. It would therefore be highly problematic simply to include them in ‘discussions’ as opposed to joining them in rejecting apartheid. For example, while some academics had been concerned with ‘academic freedom’, there is very little evidence to show that they protested against the cruelty visited on Archie Mafeje in 1968 at the University of Cape Town – the so-called Mafeje Affair. Additionally, even though the so-called liberal institutions are said to have been opposed to apartheid, serious revolutionary sociology was conducted mainly by South Africans in exile (Jubber 2007). The works of Mafeje and Magubane, respectively, and as highlighted in the previous chapter, are good examples of pioneering works which were written and published by exiles. In an interview with the author, the current head of department stated that though his department is usually associated with pro-Nationalist sentiments, it was in fact among the most ‘liberal’ in the cluster of Afrikaans-medium universities. So much so that it was heavily criticised by sociologists from other Afrikaans-medium universities. The HOD observes:

In the late 80s and early 90s what was focused on was a critique of apartheid. If I were to highlight one intellectual tradition in the department it would be a critique of apartheid. And also during that period some of our students would walk out of our lecturers because what was taught [critique of apartheid] was too much for them. This department was certainly the most ‘liberal’ amongst Afrikaner department of sociology. And I don’t know if you know but in the past there used to be two sociological associations and some members of this department belong to both. And the head of the department and that time, S.P. [Cecil] was president of the English one. And there were people like Jeff Lever, before he went to UWC, who taught Marxian theories. But I would say that in that period the department was liberal. (Mr Willem interview with the author 02 May 2012)

Prof Benet says ‘there was no love lost’ between the state and sociologists at this university (Interview 11/10/2012). If it is indeed the case that members of the department had a liberal outlook, the problem we still have to contend with is this:

In the face of Afrikaner nationalism and monopoly of the political space, oppositional discourse derived from Classical Liberalism would seem to occupy a higher moral ground. I will argue that the continued adherence to this tradition has the tendency, inherently, to justify, rationalise, and acquiesce with injustice and inequity; and for continued defence of class/race/gender privileges. Often, the defence of these privileges is couched in the language of *individual* freedom and liberty and against government encroachment. In the university setting, this will be presented as academic/intellectual freedom. (Adesina 2005: 30-1)

In the context of apartheid South Africa, it is difficult to know what is really meant by ‘liberal’. Did the scholars in the department, apart from being members of the English-speaking sociological association, radically breach any apartheid policy? Did they breach the racial exclusivity of SU – in staff composition, student recruitment, invitation of black intellectuals to speak on campus etc? In a critique of liberal resistance to curriculum transformation, Marrow reminds us that:

Academic freedom might have been available in the cemetery, but there are now economic and political reasons why we can no longer afford it. The political reasons revolve around the ways in which the so-called ‘academic freedom’ of the past simply reinforced and perpetuated the systems of oppression of colonialism and its virulent offspring – Apartheid. Academics need to understand that whatever their intentions and self-images, they were ideological props of oppression, the reproductive organs of non-democratic regimes. (Marrow 2009: 34)

In this regard, to what extent were sociologists at SU simply fighting for bourgeois individual rights such as ‘academic freedom’ at the expense of thoroughgoing and revolutionary reforms? To what extent were they simply playing into the hands of the apartheid state? Why is it that, in spite of their cynical ‘liberalism’, they were not state casualties as did, for example, Rick Turner and Ruth First? These questions are not unfair in that one can be seen to be ‘oppositional’ to the state, yet his/her purported oppositional stance succeeds only in maintaining the *status quo*. An example will suffice. Helen Suzman, who is typically considered a ‘radical’ who opposed apartheid, was never a target of the apartheid state. Indeed, being the only official opposition parliamentarian, while others operated outside of that draconian system, succeeded only in legitimising apartheid. Political scientists inform us that when citizens exercise their right to vote, whether they vote for the opposition or the governing party, give legitimacy to government or the state. Helen Suzman, in spite of herself, legitimised apartheid. The same holds for Cecil and his colleagues – statements to the contrary notwithstanding.

In an interview with John D’Oliverira of *The Pretoria News* (17 April 1971) Cecil announced: ‘I am a sociologist, a South African and an Afrikaner in that order.’ Groenewald (2003: 1) says:

This was a time when a statement such as this would have raised the eyebrows of the ideologues of the then apartheid-state, not only because an Afrikaner professor from [Soutspanberg] relegated his loyalty to the tribe to the last position in a list of signifiers of

identity, but also because he identified reason as a measure of South African citizenship as the primary attribute.

A dissenting statement no doubt, but what price did he pay for it? It should be re-emphasised that there is no material relating to the history of the department. The focus on Cecil is not to set him up as the department itself but rather to highlight the fact that he was the dominant figure in the department. More importantly, three professors interviewed about the history of the department, each independently, invariably spoke about Cecil in their attempts to highlight what was going on in the department – they went on to refer the author to two books written in his honour. Also, they had very little recollection of what was taught during this period – we shall say something about this below. One professor said to the author, jokingly, ‘you are taxing my memory’.

Since the early 1950s there was a change of leadership in the department of sociology at Soutspanberg (author interview with Greengrove 12/10/2012). Cecil became head/chair of the department and, together Deon Johan, had set about transforming it both in terms of research and degree programme. They had both been structural-functionalists and taught modules in structural-functionalism – though the latter also taught Marxism and tended to take a psycho-social approach (Benet interview 11/10/2012). The former was more inclined, in his teaching and research, towards empirical work, while the latter was more attuned to the theoretical – his work centred largely on the question of ‘values’ in society. The latter had been, according to Greengrove (12/10/2012), a champion of a ‘humanist’ approach to sociology. One should say that though Johan had taught modules in Marxism, he was not himself Marxist – nor is teaching Marxism the same as being sympathetic to it.¹⁵ One could teach Marxism from an anti-Marxist perspective – to denounce it and diminish its relevance. To give a sense of Cecil’s empiricist inclinations, Groenewald (2003: 4) had this to say:

He introduced Parsonian sociology to his students as well as South African academic audiences. His systematic sociology includes a solid and authoritative knowledge of

¹⁵ One is reminded here of the story of the British philosopher, A.J. Ayer, who had authored the book *Language, Truth and Logic*. The book was an iconoclastic piece of work which sought to overthrow the whole tradition of conservative (if largely metaphysical) analytic philosophy which dominated the Oxbridge setting in the early 20th century. The book so upset the Oxford dons of this period that they prescribed it only to ‘poke holes in it’. Because of the book, Ayer would later be labelled the ‘wickedest man in Oxford’. See Rogers, B. 2000. *AJ Ayer: A Life*. New York: Grove Press.

methodology and social research methods. His inclination was however quantitative. He was an active social researcher and mainly involved in projects of an applied nature.

There was, Greengrove (interview with the author 12/10/2012) says, a split in the department among those who were methodologically inclined and those who were theoretical. This split was at the level of ideas not personal. There was no hostility between the two camps. Indeed, they co-authored an introductory text, in Afrikaans, in structural-functionalism – entitled *Sosiologie: 'n Sistematiese Inleiding* [*Sociology: A Systematic Introduction*] (1966). Greengrove states that this was reassuring to students of sociology in their department in that he and his cohort had never before read a systematic sociological text written in Afrikaans, using South African examples to explain South African conditions. In the context of the present study, this kind of endogeneity makes the call for curriculum transformation and epistemological decolonisation all the more important. What was interesting about these two individuals is that they set the agenda for the department not only in terms of what was taught but in research as well (author interview with Greengrove 12/10/2012). Thus, there were academics in the department who never wrote or published but simply taught and assisted in conducting research and in administrative responsibilities. Benet (interview 11/10/2012) states that he cannot recall but if he were to guess, the modules offered in the department during this period were likely to be ‘mainstream American texts’. This is so because, under Cecil’s influence, most members of staff during this period had been educated in the US. Benet had himself been teaching a module on ‘Collective Behaviour’. Some members of staff, Benet included, did not find this environment conducive to their ideas and thus left the department.

Up until the late 1950s and early 1960s, Cecil had in fact been a supporter of the National Party and member of the executive committee of the South African Bureau for Race Relations (SABRA), a conservative equivalent of the supposedly ‘liberal’ South African Institute of Race Relations. He, along with two other professors, one from the department of social work and the other from the department of anthropology, resigned from SABRA. Greengrove observes:

In his public life (as a South African) he crossed swords with Dr H.F. Verwoerd in the 1950s, which led him and his compatriots to resign from the conservative SABRA (South African Bureau for Race Relations) because of the “liberal” report on the position of coloured community in the political dispensation of that time he had chaired. His interest in the affairs of coloured people grew, and he became principal researcher at the Western

Cape Research Project that focused on developmental issues and the coloured population from various interdisciplinary perspectives. (Greengrove 2003, unpublished Obituary for Cecil)

Benet (interview 11 October 2012) stated that Cecil had been a member of the Boerdebond. Yet, membership of this secrete organisation is by invitation only. Given Cecil's purported dissenting stance, it seems extraordinary, however, that he could have been invited to join this secrete organisation.¹⁶ This is so because chief among the requirements for joining this group was loyalty to Afrikaner nationalism, something which, according to the current HOD and Greengrove both, Cecil did not possess (interviews, respectively, on 02 May and 12 October 2012). The HOD's (02 May 2012) recollection is also in line with Greengrove's, 'I mean [Cecil] broke away from SABRA when it was not fashionable, at the time, among Afrikaner intellectuals to stand up against apartheid.'

As stated previously, research in this department largely centred on Cecil and Johan.

The department was very much Prof [Cecil] and Prof [Johan], who was very strong in theory, and then the rest focused, as it was the case with many departments, on undergraduate level teaching. So [Cecil] was the one who was doing all the publishing as did [Deon Johan]. And that was in the late 50s, 60s and 70s. I mean if you look at people like Bobby Godsell. He was a student of [Cecil]. People like Godsell and Van Zyl Slabbert came from this department and they were liberal. Take someone like Jeff Lever, where would you place him? People had diverse research interests here. But I mean Prof [Cecil] dominated this department for many, many years. He was Chair [HOD] of this department for 25 years. And most of the people in the department were students of his. Posts were advertised. But few people came from outside. Also the pool of sociologists at that time was very small. (Mr Willem interview 02 May 2012)

It should be said that the fact that Godsell and van Zyl Slabbert came out of the department, does not, strictly speaking, make the department radical or liberal. Chris Hani, Ruth First, Robert Sobukwe, Steve Biko etc. came out of Fort Hare, Wits and Natal, respectively, but that reveals nothing about the content or the outlook of the departments in which they were trained. Cecil was, extraordinarily for a professor of sociology, very influential and popular with capitalists or 'big business' – such as Anglo-American. Greengrove says he was 'esteemed' both in the academy and private sector (Greengrove 12/10/2012). He had obtained funds from the same mining company to conduct research on a housing project in Welkom in the then Orange Free

¹⁶ This was Prof Greengrove's counterargument – in an interview with the author on 12/10/2012.

State and in Sebokeng in the Vaal Triangle. Asked about the basis of this research and why Cecil had been a favourite with this mining company, Benet observes: 'In studies such as this one, one should not only look at the ideologies, one should not only look at theories, one should not only look at the approaches but one should follow the money... What SP had done was to become an advisor to Anglo America...' By the phrase 'follow the money', Benet meant that while one may be conscious of his role as an academic, a sociologist, at the end of the day research has to be conducted and to do so one has to have funds. Anglo-America had such funds. Interesting to note is the fact that, while Cecil did more than anybody to institutionalise sociology i.e. make it a discipline of enquiry rather than a service discipline such as Social Work or Native Administration, he was quite comfortable with serving as an advisor to various organisations or act as principal researcher in policy-orientated research such as the 'Western Cape Research Project'. In this regard, one should note that the defence of South African racial order came from multiple sources. The very nature of the system may have been dominated by the overt project of 'grand apartheid', but the so-called English 'liberalism' was fundamental to the economic front of the racist social and political system – all these elements were mutually reinforcing. Anglo-American, therefore, was at the heart of the system. That Cecil obtained funds from Anglo-American, and not the apartheid government, is no reason to suppose that he was radically opposed to apartheid.

While there were two separate sociological associations – the South African Sociological Association (SASOV) and the Association of Sociology in Southern Africa (ASSA) – in South Africa, members of this department were, at some point, associated with both – unique in this regard, as stated earlier (Interview with Mr Willem 02 May 2012). This no doubt had a lot to do with Cecil. But the dual membership did not always exist. If it did, it is likely that it began in the late 1980s after Cecil had addressed SASOV, on invitation, in 1989. To understand SU sociologists and their relations (or lack thereof) with SASOV and ASSA, we must begin in June 1966 with a meeting of eighteen South African sociologists who came together at Soutspanberg to draft a constitution for the first sociological association. The association was to be open to all racial groups. However most present at the meeting opposed such a clause. This led to a walk out by three sociologists: Prof Batson from UCT, Prof Cecil of Soutspanberg and Prof Wagner from Wits (Uys 2004). Cecil would later on be the first president of ASSA, which was formed in June

of 1970 in Mozambique to provide an opportunity 'for closer contact for social scientists in the Southern African region', and not in opposition to SASOV as is conventionally known – though it became oppositional later on (Uys 2004: 4). Greengrove (interview 12/10/2012) argues that it seems, however, insincere to suppose that ASSA was formed purely on the basis of closer contact for social scientists in the Southern African region. To think this way is to assume that members of ASSA were necessarily apolitical. If that were so, surely they would have no problem joining SASOV. It follows, then, that ASSA was formed, above all else, in opposition to SASOV. Part of what this means, at least where SU sociologists are concerned, is that under Cecil's leadership they were conscious of the political implications of their discipline.

3.4 Agents of Change 1980–2000

When the author asked as to whether this department was shifting or gravitating towards a particular 'school of thought', the current HOD, as did other members of staff, responded in the negative. The HOD however pointed out that the closest the department ever got to something akin to a 'school of thought' was under Cecil's headship. This is so because Cecil, whom he described as charismatic and influential, was able to galvanise everybody into a common cause and it was his leadership style to prescribe research projects to others – as highlighted earlier. He recruited most of his junior colleagues from his student base (author interview with the HOD 02 May 2012). At least one of his students, Van Zyl Slabbert, played an important part in setting up negotiations for a democratic South Africa. Some have become prominent sociologists in their own right: Johann Graaff, APR Kellerman and C.J. Groenewald among others. Bekker (1992: 52) argues that 'during the 1970s, many younger members of the South African sociological community joined together in criticising the dominant American sociological approach known as structural-functionalism. [Cecil] was a sophisticated advocate of this approach and I, as a member of his department at the University of [Soutspanberg], was one of his and its critics.' The 1970s were of course a period in which Marxism and Black Consciousness gained currency. Benet was part of the sociological current which launched a broadside, within Soutspanberg, on the dominant sociological theory of the time. Benet had, while teaching in the department in the 1970s, chosen to do his PhD in the rival department at UCT. This is so because, according to Greengrove (12/10/2012), he had been unwilling to conform to the dominant structural-functionalism of Cecil. While Cecil is said to be a 'liberal', the reluctance to pursue a PhD by

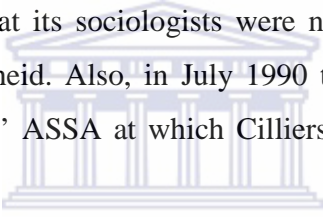
Benet, on the grounds of the intellectual stance adopted in the department, suggests an authoritarian rather than a 'liberal' culture.

As the 1970s heralded, in the South African sociological scene generally, an era of a 'paradigm shift' (Webster 1992), this was the case at Soutspanberg as well. Van Zyl Slabbert left, and, in 1978, Benet did the same, primarily because they had had enough of the dominant paradigm within the department. This remained the case in spite of the fact that the department had by now recruited Marxists such as Jeff Lever. By the 1980s the trend continued. They had by now, through Cecil, established a research unit within the department of sociology – this unit lasted from 1981-1992. It was named the HSRC Research Unit for Sociology of Development. Academics such as Johan Graaff, Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass had been recruited to conduct research within this unit. Funds for this research came from the HSRC not to the department but to Cecil himself (Interview with Greegrove 12/10/2012). Writing about the unit under Cecil's leadership, Graaff (1992: 184) had this to say:

His leadership of the Unit was simultaneously open, tolerant and insistent on rigorous work. It was also, not by accident, the most productive time of my whole academic life. During this period I was operating from a Marxist/post-Marxist paradigm, which was not, and is not, [Cecil's] sphere of interest. It is a measure of the flexibility and receptiveness of his 'sociological imagination' that, notwithstanding this gap between us, our discussions on these topics were rarely less than robust, absorbing and extremely creative.

There were those who had teaching responsibilities and those who were conducting research. There were, however, slight changes in the curriculum because apart from the theoretical material via structural functionalism and Marxism which dominated the curriculum, lecturers were teaching substantive modules on themes such as Development Studies, Labour Studies etc. This, of course, was due in part to the changing nature of the sociological scene in South Africa generally. Scholars such as John Rex had set the tone earlier in the 1970s with his paper 'The Sociology of South Africa' (1975). In the 1980s sociologists such as Ken Jubber continued the onslaught with his paper 'Sociology and the Sociological Context: The Case of the Rise of Marxist Sociology in South Africa' (1983). Jubber would push this even further in his 1983 ASSA presidential address by stating that, 'we must acknowledge that the true history of South African sociology dates back to the earliest human groupings to settle in this part of Africa. And

just as Gramsci was able to say all men are intellectuals, so we can say that all people are sociologists and all societies produce people who ask sociological questions and provide sociological ideas' (cited by Cilliers in Kellerman 1991: 122). While this onslaught was mainly from sociologists in the English-medium universities, Afrikaans-medium universities continued with conservative structural-functionalism (see Groenewald 1992). Not only that, but they were still against the idea of joining forces with their English-speaking counterparts. Webster (1992: 237, italics original) states that 'ASSA however did not make any significant progress in the eighties in recruiting members in the more traditional Afrikaans universities such as University of Potchefstroom, Rand Afrikaanse University, the University of Pretoria and the University of the Orange Free State. Sociologists in these universities continue to form a separate and cognitively more conservative association, the *South African Sociological Association* (SASOV).' Note that no mention is made of SU in this list of Afrikaans universities – something which goes some way to show that its sociologists were not, at least not overtly, among the conservatives who were pro-apartheid. Also, in July 1990 the department of sociology at SU hosted a conference of the 'liberal' ASSA at which Cilliers read a paper. In it Cilliers (1991: 146) argued:



This week we will yet again have both ASSA and SASOV (the *Suid-Afrikaanse Sosiologievereniging*) having annual congresses at separate venues. I note from a recent ASSA newsletter that some exploratory discussions with the council of SASOV have now been held and that prospects for greater collaboration are being explored. This is to be welcomed. I have never regretted my own stance in refusing to be associated with SASOV as it was structured at the time when it was founded. I also never regretted my own involvement in the founding of ASSA and my support for it... I believe therefore that we should now ask ourselves if our discipline can any longer afford the divisiveness which flows from the existence of two academic associations and I sincerely hope that the councils of both ASSA and SASOV will be authorised to seek to bring about unity amongst sociologists in our country.

The early 1990s saw the retirement of Cecil and changes began in the department. Greengrove became HOD and he put an end to Cecil's managerial approach of prescribing to members of staff the kind of research they should conduct which was, as stated earlier, centred on his research interests. Greengrove called together members of department and advised them to start publishing and relieved them of administrative duties. Significant changes were made. It should be noted that even prior to that academics in the department were publishing. The issue,

however, is that they had little time to pursue their own research interests. In the 1990s, members of staff were conducting research on the wine industry, on agrarian issues, etc. In terms of the curriculum, modules were quite diverse (Greengrove interview 12/10/2012).

The changes in the 1990s took place in tandem with changes in the wider sociological context around the country. Chief among these are the fact that the two previously mutually antagonistic sociological associations merged in 1993. For the first time sociologists of all races were free to interact with each other. Previously they could only interact outside of the country i.e. in the Southern Africa region or in 'black universities'. While this promised to re-invigorate sociology in South Africa, the outcome was not especially good. In a paper written for the National Research Foundation (NRF) on the 'state of sociology' in post-1994 South Africa, Webster (2003: 3-4) had this to say:

The starting point of the report was the argument that apartheid had shaped the production of social knowledge in South Africa and had produced "many sociologies". These divisions, from institutional resources to the focus of teaching and research work, were created in the past and persist in the present. The report identified several trends within the discipline, which, the report argued, could be seen either as threats or opportunities. The first trend is an increasing theoretical diversity within the discipline, which has opened up spaces for new intellectual approaches and an opportunity for creative pluralism. However, such diversity could lead to a debilitating fragmentation and an incoherent Sociology where sociologists are not engaged in dialogue with one another. Secondly, the report suggested that the impetus that drove Sociology in the 1980's, namely, its intimate dialogue with social movements, had been lost in the nineties. Sociologists seemed to be responding to social issues, rather than shaping them in new directions. In a context where there had been large-scale transition, and the demand for applied knowledge and research had increased, sociologists were increasingly divided on the role and value of such social knowledge. Some saw it as an opportunity to become involved in social reconstruction, while others viewed it as a threat to the autonomy of the academic. The fourth trend is the impact of globalisation. Globalisation affords sociologists opportunities to become involved in a "new world" – exposed to and shaping new ideas, and participating in international conferences. However, globalisation could simultaneously undermine a local Sociology. Finally, the need to locate the discipline within a changing institutional context was paramount, the report argued, because such institutions have placed increasing demands and pressures on the discipline, all of which will shape the future of the discipline. The social sciences and the natural sciences are now funded by one body, the NRF, SAQA is attempting to bridge the gap between the 'world of work' and knowledge production, the Department of Education is aiming for equity in the higher education system, and restructuring at universities has placed pressure on Sociology to become more commercialised and market-oriented. The five trends above were, overall, creating a demand for a more 'relevant' Sociology. The

question facing the discipline is whether such relevance is to be dictated by the employment market, by a desire to meet basic social needs or by some combination of both. The report concluded by arguing that many of these trends place conflicting demands on the discipline. Such tension is not unmanageable, but sociologists need to find a way of balancing these conflicting pressures that ensures the coherence of their intellectual project.

This passage is worth reproducing at length because it is silent on question of the curriculum: who is taught, what is taught, from what perspectives, who is excluded, and who is forgotten or erased etc. – if Webster’s report had addressed the ‘key issues’, the present thesis would probably be redundant. Sociology at SU ought also to be understood within these changes in the wider sociological context in South Africa. In response to one of the questions from the author, Prof Heinemann (16 April 2012) had this to say: ‘I think that the South African Sociological Association is in crisis. SASA no longer attracts top academics to present papers at this event and it is now largely dominated by student papers. The journal, I feel is not being managed professionally either. Having been a very active member of SASA and publishing in the Journal, I have stopped doing so in recent years.’ This author attended this year’s, 2012, SASA congress and most of the well-known South African sociologists were present. One does not, moreover, take the growing number of student participation at the conference to be a bad thing. This is so because students need to acquire academic skills such as conference presentation and writing for publication. That is one of the ways in which the community of sociologists in South Africa will grow. This should be a good place to end this chapter and attempt, in the following chapters, to locate the department within the issues highlighted in both Webster’s words and Prof Heinemann as they are quoted above.

3.5 Summary

This chapter traced the history of the department by locating it within developments in the wider sociological scene in South Africa. Specifically, the first part of this chapter traced the history and developments of the academic discipline of sociology in South Africa. It argued that the discipline was largely shaped by societal developments outside of the academy. The chapter then shifted to talk about how and when sociology was finally instituted as an academic discipline in South African universities. In doing so, it tried to locate the department of sociology at SU

within these developments. It then moved to narrate some of the changes instituted in the department following the resignation of its first head and professor – Vergemoed. The section that followed talked about some of the major developments within the sociological scene in South Africa. In talking about changes in sociology in South Africa generally, it also tried to locate the department of sociology at SU within these developments. The final section talked about the lead up to the 1994 democratic moment and the period afterwards, developments in the sociological scene generally and the changes instituted in the department during this period. In doing all of this, the chapter also attempted to highlight elements of the research conducted in the department, who the members of staff during these decades were and the programmes on offer. The following chapter presents data from course outlines used in present period.



Chapter Four

On Reading Material: Data Presentation Part I

'It is incumbent upon transcendent African intellectuals to develop new concepts and organisational forms for dealing more effectively with the emerging African reality.' (Mafeje 1994a: 210)

4.0 Introduction

Having looked, in the previous chapter, at the history of the department, this chapter forms the first of the two chapters on data presentation. It presents the material found in the department's course outlines. In particular, it looks at the descriptive components of the course outlines. This is so because these components give insight into what is to be expected in, and the reasoning behind, the modules. It will also present the particular readings such as they are listed on the course outlines – at least on those courses outlines in which readings are listed. In doing so, it will also compare, where possible, these modules with those found in other departments of sociology in South African universities. This will be possible through a look at module/course description found in the said departments' websites. We will present the modules from first year to postgraduate levels. It should be noted that, in our web search, it became apparent that while some modules at SU have equivalents in other departments, many of them do not.

4.1 On Reading Material: A Presentation of Course Outlines

4.1.1 On First Year Level Reading Material

Where this researcher read, in his first year sociology class, the textbook by Haralambos, Holborn and Heald, first year sociology students at SU read, in addition to that, the textbook by Anderson and Taylor – *Sociology: Understanding a Diverse Society* (2006). The former is published in the United Kingdom while the latter is published in the United States. It should be noted that the latter textbook is prescribed to all of the first year sociology modules in the department, *viz.* 'Introduction to Sociology 114', 'Social Institutions 142', 'Social Change 152' with the exception of 'Society and Culture 162'. The department's course outlines state, with reference to the latter textbook:

The prescribed textbook is an American one. The text provides a good theoretical basis for the module, as well as useful comparative perspective. What is lacking, however, are South African examples. In order to provide South African relevance to the text, excerpts from articles, books and internet sources that contain uniquely South African content, have been compiled in two documents... (Sociology 142 2007:4).

Among the 'outcomes' of 'introduction to sociology' is that the module seeks to offer, in the main, 'an understanding and basic application of the main theoretical frameworks in sociology. In addition, learners must be able to identify different theorists and their theoretical contributions to the theoretical frameworks of sociology' (Sociology 114 Course Outline 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007: 1). The module also 'focuses on basic concepts in sociology... [which are to be] applied to the South African society' (Soc114: 2). In addition to learning basic concepts, students are introduced to the 'fathers' or 'giants' of sociology (Soc114: 14), viz. Durkheim, Marx, Simmel and Weber. Given that this is a first year module in a university in Africa, it is equally imperative to introduce students to sociologists such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Ibn Khaldun among others, insofar as they are also considered 'founding fathers' of sociology (see Alatas and Sinha 2001; Alatas 2003; Rabaka 2010). That is if we must equate sociology with the views of particular authors rather than viewing it as a distinct approach to the study of society. Ibn Khaldun, to take one example,

completed his three volume magnum opus, *Kitab Al 'Ibar*, in AD 1378. In the first volume, *Muqaddimah*, not only did Ibn Khaldun set out the conceptual framework and the methodological basis for adjudicating between competing data sources, it was self-consciously sociological. As Sayed Farid Alatas noted, Ibn Khaldun outlined his new 'sciences' of human organisation and society ('ilm al 'umran al-bashari and 'ilm al-ijtima 'al-insani). This was 452 years before the first volume of Auguste Comte's six volume *The course of positive philosophy*, was published. In the same work, Ibn Khaldun articulated the concept of 'asabiyyah' to explain the normative basis of group cohesion; how it decomposes and is reconstituted; the different ways in which it manifests at different levels of social organisation and among different groups. This was 515 years before Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labour* (1893) and its idea of social norms, was published. (Adesina 2006b: 136)

The erasure and omission of sociologists such as Du Bois and Ibn Khaldun only succeeds in equating the history of sociology with the history of western modernity. This is similar to what one Oxford philosopher purportedly said, mocking the arrogance and parochialism of early 20th century Oxford analytic philosophers, 'if we don't know about it, it's never been written, therefore it does not exist' – or something to that effect. Ibn Khaldun's work, however, has been

available in English since 1967 (Adesina 2006b: 136), thus it would be very difficult to sustain the view that it is inaccessible.

One of the first year sociology handouts implores students to buy the textbook by Macionis, J.J. and Plummer, K. (2012). *Sociology: A Global Introduction*. 5th edition. Harlow: Pearson Prentice Hall. This textbook is said to be a 'required text' for the first year sociology class. This is in addition to the two textbooks mentioned earlier on in this section. For a 'highly recommended text', students are advised to purchase Haralambos, M. Holborn, M. and Heald, R. (2008). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. 7th edition. London: Harper Collins. The handout states: 'This book is a great reference source that could be used for all the undergraduate modules, as well as general reference for postgraduate work' (SU General Framework 2012: 7).

First year level modules in the department of sociology at Ronald University (RU) are organised in a similar fashion. Students enrol on modules in 'Introduction to Sociology', 'Social Institutions' and then 'Social Change'. The descriptive component of the course outline in 'Introduction to Sociology' seeks to provide students 'with a firm grounding in sociology, including what sociology is, how it arose and what it means to think sociologically. It will also introduce you to the ways in which sociologists explain different phenomena within society' (RU Handout Number 3 2012: 2). By the end of this module, students need to:

know what sociology is; (ii) Distinguish between common sense understandings of the social world and those based on sociological explanations; (iii) Realize that sociological explanations require an approach which goes beyond surface appearances and explores deeper dynamics involved in social processes; (iv) Have a critical understanding of the relationship between the individual and society; (v) Understand that individuals are shaped by society but that they are not powerless in determining their behaviour; (vi) Have a general understanding of the origins of Sociology as a discipline; (vii) Understand what social theory is and how (in general) sociologists attempt to explain human society. (RU Handout Number 3 2012: 5)

The reading material includes 'strongly recommended material' and 'supplementary textbooks' (RU Handout Number 3 2012: 5-6). The former are, respectively:

Giddens, A. 2006. *Sociology* (5th ed.). Cambridge: Polity; and

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. (6th edition). London: Collins.

The latter are, respectively:

Bilton, 1987. *Introductory sociology*. (2nd ed) London: Macmillan;

Henslin, J.H. 1993. *Down to earth sociology*. (Seventh edition) New York: The Free Press.

Additional reference list includes:

Abrahamson, M. 1981. *Sociological theory: an introduction to concepts, issues and research*. (Chapter 1) London: Prentice-Hall.;

Berger, P.L. and Berger, B. 1976. *Sociology: a biographical approach*. (Chapters 1-3) Harmondsworth: Penguin.;

Cabral, A. 1972. "Culture, colonization, and national liberation" in de Bragança, A. and Wallerstein, I. (eds) *The African liberation reader Volume 1*. London: Zed Press.;

Fanon, F. 1970. *Toward the African revolution*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.;

Hansen, D. 1976. *An invitation to critical sociology*. (Chapters 2-4) New York: Free Press.;

Mills, C.W. 1959. *The sociological imagination*. (Chapter 1) Oxford: Oxford University Press.;

Odetola, T. and Ademola, A. 1985. *Sociology: an introductory African text*. (Chapters 1, 4 & 5). London: Macmillan.;

Open University Press. 1971. *The sociological perspective*. (Chapter 1) Bletchley: Open University Press. (Handout Number 3 2012: 6).

The content of the 'Social Institutions' module:

flows from your first course, in which you were introduced to key themes within Sociology. The overall purpose of the Institutions & Inequalities course is to assist you in understanding, from a sociological perspective, the basic building blocks of modern human (and specifically, capitalist) society... Capitalism is a class-based society and therefore the focus in this course will be on social class inequalities. In looking at class, we will consider three different theoretical approaches found within sociology (namely, Functionalism, Weberianism and Marxism). Functionalism tends to justify the existence of class inequalities in capitalism, whereas Marxism and Weberianism provide more critical perspectives. (RU Institutions & Inequality Course Outline 2012: 2)

The reading material is as follows:

Bilton, T. et al. 1987. *Introductory Sociology*. (2nd ed.). London: MacMillan.;

Eitzen, D. and Zinn, M. 1991. *In Conflict and Order*. (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.;

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. (6th ed.). London: Collins.;

Henslin, J.(ed.). 1993. *Down to Earth Sociology*. (7th ed.). New York: The Free Press.;

Jenks, C (ed.). 1998. *Core Sociological Dichotomies*. London: Sage Publications.;

- Charon, J (ed.).1996. *The Meaning of Sociology*. (5th ed.) (section V-VII). New Jersey: Simon & Schuster.;
- Marsh, I. and M. Keating. 2006. *Sociology: Making Sense of Society*. (3rd ed.) (chap. 6). Essex: Prentice Hall.
- Domhoff, G. 1967. *Who Rules America?* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.; and
- Pierson, C. 1996. *The Modern State*. (pp.70-93). London: Routledge.
(RU Institution & Inequality 2012: 7)

The ‘Social Change’ module states that: ‘The objective of the course is to explore key sociological theories and debates in a way that will encourage an inquisitive and reflective approach to understanding and explaining social change’ (RU Social & Cultural Change 2012: 2). The reading material includes:

- Haferkamp, H. & Smelser, N. J. (eds.). 1992. *Social change and modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Introductory chapter. (RU online resource – OPAC).;
- Harper, C.L. 1993. *Exploring social change*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc. Chapter 1.;
- Lauer, R. H. 1991. *Perspectives on social change*. Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon. Chapters 1 - 5.;
- Moore, W.E. 1963. *Social change*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. Chapter 1.;
- Popenoe, D. 1995. *Sociology*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. Chapter 22.;
- Strasser, H. & Randall, S. C. 1981. *An introduction to theories of social change*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. Chapters 1-4.; and
- Vago, S. 1989. *Social change*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6 & 7.

The department of sociology at Ronald University is the only one which puts its course outlines on its website. Most departments of sociology around the country do not put reading material on their websites and this is a serious limitation for comparative purposes. Below we shall present second year level course outlines.

4.1.2 On Second Year Level Reading Material

Let us take, to begin with, a second year level module on ‘Race in South Africa’. Although this is a module on race in South Africa, black writers are conspicuous only by their absence. Out of nearly seventy prescribed readings, only five black authors are listed: Fanon, Kiguwa, Nkuna, Ratele and Selohiwe. One is tempted to say that this paucity of black authors is not an oversight

but a deliberate omission. This is so because the convenor of this module, Prof Petersen, said, in our interview with him, South African scholars who call for transformation or ‘indigenisation’ of curricula work with ‘patronising assumptions of what indigenous knowledge is.’¹⁷ It is not immediately clear, upon reflection, who is being patronised as a result of calls for ‘indigenisation’ or transformation. Is it black students, white students, black academics or white academics? Nor is it clear as to what is meant by ‘patronising assumptions’. Whatever the case may be, omission of black South African authors, in a module on race in South Africa, coupled with the abovementioned statement, is surely telling. One is reminded of the American anthropologist, Sally Falk Moore, who wrote a monograph entitled *Anthropology and Africa* (1994), in which she deliberately neglected to reference the works of African anthropologists – save Valentin Mudimbe whose work she dismissed as ‘indigestible’ and ‘highly opinionated’ (cited in Mafeje 1997b: 11). This deliberate omission was pointed out to her by Mafeje (1997b), to which she said nothing more than ‘I had to make choices... [Because a] short book cannot include everything’ (Moore 1996: 23). True, but this was a book about anthropology and Africa. Neglecting to consult the works of African anthropologists was not merely a case of ‘making choices’ but a sign of contempt for, and low esteem to which she holds, African scholars.

In the 16th section of the course outline, entitled ‘Celebrating Subordinate Identities or Critiquing Colonial Apartheid Categories’, Steve Biko’s name is mentioned, but his work does not appear on the actual reading list (see 2nd year Course Outline on Race 2012: 22). This is a serious and deliberate omission. Nor is Biko the only black writer who wrote about race. But certainly he was one of (if not the) the most prominent. Yet throughout the course outline, the works of South African liberal academics such as Deborah Posel and Melissa Steyn, among others, figure prominently. Surely the writings of black writers would provide a good counterpoint to the foregoing liberal academics – especially in the light of Biko’s critique of liberal intellectuals.

The course outline states that ‘the questions and readings... address pertinent and important issues in SA and aimed at encouraging students to engage with these, to see the “wider picture” and become more critically self-reflexive’ (see 2nd year Course Outline on Race 2012: 1). It is surely questionable that (in an institution with a history of celebrating white supremacy, with a

¹⁷ 24 April 2012 Interview with Prof Petersen

student body that is largely white and from affluent backgrounds) these readings would force students to become 'critically self-reflexive'. As one of the more politically conscious lecturers in the department told me, 'rich white parents send their children to this university [SU] not only to get good education but to be sheltered. Most of our students are completely ignorant of what is happening in the rest of the country.'¹⁸ In what ways, therefore, are readings by mostly white liberal scholars, to the exclusion of their black counterparts, likely to force students to become 'critically self-reflexive'? For we know, following Mngxitama (2011: 1), that what recent 'rescue missions [of whiteness] have done, contrary to their lofty claims, is to reduce whiteness and white racism to a mere misunderstanding between friends.' Mngxitama said this in response to the 'whiteness debate' (on the internet) which was sparked by Samantha Vice's (2010) paper 'How Do I Live in this Strange Place?'

Tatum, a postgraduate student interviewee from the same department, had this to say,

even though race is such a big issue in South Africa, at [Soutspanberg] it is a taboo topic... Sometimes with the readings it is nice to have balance. It is nice to read something that speaks to your reality. Texts that are relevant. We must say fuck Northern universities and academics and start our own social theory. Like you know Andile [Mngxitama], New Frank Talk? That would be cool to look at in our classes; that's theoretical. But there's this bias [in South African universities]. But we are trained to think that there are no African scholars who write about theory. (03 April 2012 Interview with Tatum sociology student)

We shall look more closely at student's responses in the following chapter. In the meantime, one should say that there are, of course, more academic and less polemical texts on race and racism in South Africa, written by ontologically-rooted academics. The works of Fatima Meer, Archie Mafeje, Ben Magubane, Absalom Vilakazi, and Herbert Vilakazi among others easily come to mind. It is well to note, too, that in the abovementioned course outline, the assumption is made that it suffices merely to prescribe readings on 'race' without due regard as to who authored them.

In section two of the course outline, entitled 'History of Race in SA: Colonialism and Apartheid', no reference is made to Magubane's two highly influential books *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* (1979) and *The Making of a Racist State* (1996) and

¹⁸ 16 March 2012 interview with Mr Donald

his short monograph *Social Construction of Race and Citizenship in South Africa* (2001). No serious sociology module on the history of race/racism in South Africa can afford not to include these texts. Yet what we see in this section of the course outline are five readings written exclusively by white (or at least not black) authors of a liberal bent: Durrheim et al's *Race trouble: race, identity and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa* (2010); Erasmus' *Racial (re)classification during apartheid South Africa: regulations, experiences and the meaning(s) of race* (2007); MacDonald's *Why race matters in South Africa* (2006); Posel, D. (2001) 'What's in a name? Racial categories under apartheid and their afterlife' (2001) and Watson's *Passing for white* (1970). What is missing are readings which are written from an Africa-centred standpoint – readings which take Africa both as the epistemological and ontological starting point. Mafeje's two essays – 'Africanity: A Combative Ontology' (2000a) and 'Africanity: A Commentary by Way of Conclusion' (2001b) and his monograph, *The National Question in Southern African Settler Societies* (1997c) – easily come to mind. Readings for this module, apart from the ones mentioned above, include the following:

- Buechler, S. 2008. *The Social Construction of Race: Critical Sociology*. London: Paradigm Publishers.;
- Cashmore, E. 1996. *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*. London: Routledge.;
- Montagu, A. 1997. *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*. London: Sage.;
- MacDonald, M. 2006. *Why Race Matters in South Africa*. Scottsville: UKZN Press.;
- Stevens, G., Franchi, V., & Swart, T.(eds.). 2006. *Race Against Time*. Pretoria: UNISA Press.;
- Seekings, J. 2007. *Race Discrimination and Diversity in South Africa*. Cape Town: Centre for Social Science Research.;
- Pattman, R & Khan, S. (eds.) 2007. *Undressing Durban*. Durban: Madiba Press.;
- Gannon, L & Dubbled, B. 2010. 'Sobers Only: Drunkenness and race in the Entry to Stellenbosch Bottle Stores', *South African Review of Sociology*, 41(2).;
- Ratele, K.(ed.) 2006. *Intergroup Relations*. Cape Town: Juta.;
- Pattman, R. & Bhana, D. 2008. 'Black Boys with Bad Reputations', *Alternations*, 13(2).;
- Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke & Roberts. 1978. *Policing the Crisis*. London: Macmillan.;
- Burr. 1995. *What is Social Constructionism?* London: Routledge.;
- Jansen, J. 2009. *Knowledge in the Blood*. Cape Town: UCT Press.;
- Walker, M. 2005. 'Race is Nowhere and Race is Everywhere: Narratives from Black and White South Africa University Students in Post-Apartheid South Africa', *British Journal of Sociological Education*, 26(1):41-54.;
- Pattman, R. 2010. 'Investigating Race and Social Cohesion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal', *South Africa Journal of Higher Education*.;
- Field, S. Meyer, R. & Swanson, F. 2007. *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.;

- Steyn, M. & Van Zyl, M. 2001. *'Like that Statue in Jammie Stairs': Some Student Perceptions and Experiences of Institutional Culture at the University of Cape Town in 1999*. Research Report. Institute for Intercultural and Diversity Studies in Southern Africa, UCT.;
- Dolby 2001. *Constructing Race: Youth Identity and Popular Culture in South Africa*. New York: State University New York.;
- Steyn, M. & Van Zyl, M. 2009. *The Prize and the Price*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.;
- Pattman, R. & Bhana, D. 2010. 'Sport, Girls, Trouble and Humour: Black and Indian Boys Speaking about Life in a Formerly Single Sex School Near Durban', *Journal of Psychology in Africa*.;
- Vandeyar, S. 2008. 'Shifting Selves: The Emergence of New Identities in South African Schools', *International Journal of Educational Development*, 28: 286-299.;
- Alexander, P., Dawson, M. & Ichharam, M. (eds.) 2006. *Globalisation and New Identities*. Johannesburg: Jacana.;
- Cock, J. 1980. *Maids and Madams*. Johannesburg: Raven Press.;
- Mare, 2001. 'Race Counts in Contemporary South Africa: An Illusion of Ordinarity', *Transformation*, 47.;
- Fanon, F. 1986. *Black Skins, White Masks*. London: Pluto.;
- Olivier, L. 2010. 'Racial Oppression and the Construction of a Political Community Among Rastafari in Stellenbosch', *South African Review of Sociology*, 41(2).;
- Dolby, N. 2002. 'Making White: Constructing Race in a South African High School', *Curriculum Inquiry*, 32(1).;
- Distiller, N. & Steyn, M. (eds.) 2008. *Under Construction: "Race" and Identity in South Africa Today*. Johannesburg: Heinemann.;
- Pattman, R. 1998. 'Becoming White in Zimbabwe', *Auto/Biography*, 6(1&2): 141-8.

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A second year level module which one found particularly relevant is 'Industrial Sociology 252', where the reading list includes material by South African labour theorists. Well-known sociologists such as Webster, Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu feature in the reading material. It should be noted that, the issue is not merely to engage in a head-counting exercise of South African authors, but to take the local seriously enough as a point of departure. Industrial Sociology 252 course outline states that 'from a historical and theoretical perspective we examine how work has changed through the different eras, rise of factories, scientific management and Fordism. Also how one can interpret these changes from the perspective of Marx, Weber and Durkheim' (Sociology 252 Course Outline 2007: 1). Noting that the writings of the three sociologists are not always applicable, the reading list includes contemporary scholars. The reading material is as follows:

- Beck, M. 2002. 'The Antithesis to the Work Society' in: *The Brave New World of Work*. Polity Press: Cambridge. (Chapter 2).;
- Grint, K. 2005. *The Sociology of Work: Introduction*. Third edition. Polity Press: Cambridge. (Chapter 3).;
- Webster, E., Buhlungu, S., & Bezuidenhout, A. 2003. *Introduction to Sociology: Work and Organizations*. Oxford Press: Oxford. (Chapter 1).;
- Cohen, R. & Kennedy, P. 2000. *Global Sociology*. Macmillan: Basingstoke, Hampshire. Chapter 2.;
- ILRIG. 1999. *An Alternative View of Economic Crisis*. ILRIG Globalization Crisis No.2. Cape Town. Chapter 5.;
- Watson, T. 1997. *The Sociology of Work and Industry*. Pages 5-9.;
- Kritzinger, A, et al. 2004. Global production and flexible employment in SA horticulture: Experiences of contract workers in fruit exports. *Sociologica Ruralis*, 44 (1): 17-39.;
- Ray, M. 1997. Flexible Production: Shaping up to Globalization. *South African Labour Bulletin*, 21 (5).;
- Rees, R. 1997. Flexible Labour: Meeting the Challenge. *South African Labour Bulletin*, 21 (5).;
- Thursfield, D. 2000. *Post-Fordism and Skill*. Ashgate: Aldershot. (Chapter 2).;
- Van der Merwe, A. 1995. *Industrial Sociology: A South African Perspective*. Lexicon Publishers: Isando. Chapter 3.;
- Watson, T. 1997. *The Sociology of Work and Industry*. Chapter 8.;
- Bendix, S. 1996. *Industrial relations in South Africa*. Juta: Cape Town. Chapter 6.;
- Mathews, J. 1989. *Tools of change: new technology and the democratization of work*. Pluto: Sydney. Chapter 9.;
- Watson, T. 1995. *Sociology, Work and Industry*. Chapter 7.;
- Webster et al. 2003. *Work and Organizations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 3.;
- ILRIG, 1999. The rise of the flexible woman worker. *ILRIG Globalization series* No. 6.;
- Kritzinger, A. 2005. Gender Relations and the informalisation of farm employment, in Bock, B. & Shartall, S (eds). *Rural gender relations: issues and case studies*.;
- Orr, L. 2001. Women's work and globalization trends: The SA picture. *Agenda* (48).;
- Samson, M. 1997. Globalization: Women pay the price. *SA Labour Bulletin*, vol 21 (1).; and
- Standing, G. 1999. Global Feminization through flexible labour: A theme revisited. *World Development*, vol 27 (3).

Sakhele Buhlungu has written useful work in the field of industrial sociology, his sole-authored texts would certainly prove relevant in this module.

A second year level module entitled 'Poverty and Development 212', seeks to answer the question: 'How do theorists look at "development"' (Sociology 212 Course outline 2007: 1)? It does so by exposing students to 'theoretical thinking' about development. The module starts with broad theoretical questions about development globally, it then looks at Asia with a particular focus on China and, in the final section, deals with South Africa. The reading material is as follows:

Jeffrey Sachs: *The End of Poverty*, Penguin (2005), chapter 1, ISBN 0-141-01866-6;
 Julian May: "Poverty and Inequality in South Africa", *INDICATOR SA*, vol 15 No 2 (1998).;
 Richard Peet: *Global Capitalism*, Routledge (1991), chapter 3, pp. 26-33, ISBN 0415013143.;
 Ankie Hoogvelt: *The Third World in Global Development*, Macmillan (1982); ISBN 0333276825, pp. 165-170.;;
 F. de Beer & H. Swanepoel (eds): *Introduction to Development Studies* (2000), pp. 47-49.;;
 Mahbub ul Haq: *Reflections on Human Development*, Oxford University Press (1995), chapter 2, ISBN 0195101936.;;
 Jennifer A. Elliot: *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*, Routledge (1994), chapter 1, ISBN 0415335590.;;
 Tom Hewitt: "Half a Century of Development", in Tim Allen & Alan Thomas (eds), *Poverty and Development into the 21st Century*, Oxford University Press (2000), chapter 13, ISBN 0-19-877626-8.;;
 Ankie Hoogvelt: *Globalisation and the Postcolonial World*, Palgrave (2001), chapter 10, ISBN 0-333-91420-1.;;
 S. Terreblanche & N. Nattrass: 'A periodisation of the political economy from 1910', in N.Nattrass & E. Ardington (eds): *The Political Economy of South Africa*, Oxford University Press (1990), chapter 1, 0-19-570562-9.;;
 Roger Southall: 'Introduction: The ANC state, more dysfunctional than developmental'?, in *State of the Nation South Africa* (2006). Cape Town: HSRC Press.

While the reading material is informative, the above module is designed in such a way that not only does it ignore the rest of the African continent as a subject matter, but also ignores the vast literature of the same – particularly debates on development and democracy. *CODESRIA Bulletin*, *Africa Development* and *SAPEM* carried out, in the late eighties and early nineties, an intense and highly pertinent debate on democracy and development in Africa. Some of the interesting, and relevant, contributions include but not limited to: Anyang' Nyong'o's 'Political instability and prospects for democracy in Africa' (1988), 'A rejoinder to the comments on democracy in Africa' (1989), and 'Development and democracy: the debate continues' (1991); Gutto's 'The way forward: sustainable development and people's democracies in Africa' (1990); Mandaza's 'Democracy in the African reality' (1990); Mkandawire's 'Comments on democracy and political instability' (1989), and 'Further comments on the development and democracy debate' (1991); Shivji's 'The pitfalls of the debate on democracy' (1989); Ibrahim's 'History as iconoclast: left stardom and the debate on democracy' (1993a), and 'History as iconoclast: a rejoinder' (1993b); Amin's 'History as iconoclast: a short comment' (1993); and Mafeje's 'On "icons" and African perspectives on democracy: a commentary on Jibrin Ibrahim's views' (1993), and 'Theory of democracy and the African discourse: breaking bread with my fellow-

travellers' (1995). These pieces, a treasure trove for students of development and democracy in Africa, should be collected into a single volume – akin to Yash Tandon's *The Dar-es-Salaam Debate on Class, State and Imperialism* (1982).

Sociology 222, 'Crime and Social Control', 'entails an introduction to selected aspects of sociological reflections on crime and social control' (Sociology 222 Course Outline 2011: 1). The outcomes of this module include: '[i] Insight into the *core aspects* of the most important sociological theoretical perspectives on crime and deviance'; '[ii] the ability to *interpret* specific examples of crime and deviance in terms of sociological theoretical perspectives'; '[iii] an awareness of the *policy implications* of the theoretical perspectives'; and '[iv] the ability to analyse crime policy academically' (Sociology 222 Course Outline 2011: 1, italics in the original). To get an insight on crime and deviance, students are given 'multiple sources',

with authors writing from British, American or other country perspectives. Since these are core readings in international sociology and social anthropology, contact sessions are often focused on the presentation of uniquely *South African content* not presented in these sources. These well recognised international sources are important for us to use, since we are concerned about quality of our education and sustaining an internationally recognised standard in our teaching (Soc222 Outline 2011: 2, italics in the original).

The course outline for the foregoing module does not contain the reading list. Below we present outlines for third year level modules.

4.1.3 On Third Year Reading Material

Let us, at this point, move on to third year level reading material. Sociology Three modules include: 'Sociological Theory 314' (Classical and contemporary); 'Political Sociology 324'; 'Environmental Sociology 334'; and 'Meta-science 364'. We shall present the course outlines in this order. 'Sociology 314' course outline has very high hopes for students. Chief among these are

to introduce students to nine individuals (Comte, Durkheim, Smith, Spencer, Marx, Weber, Simmel, Pareto, Mead and Nietzsche) who seemed to have played influential roles in the institutionalisation of contemporary sociology... This module focuses on a selection of major theoretical frameworks that develop groundwork for understanding modern life in general and for sociological thinking in particular... This course will principally be based upon reading texts by key theorists, rather than summaries and

secondary reflections on these theories. The point of the class is to develop your comprehension of difficult texts, and to enhance your ability to connect theory developed mostly over the nineteenth century and its links to contemporary life (Course Outline 2011: 4).

In section three of chapter two we criticised the idea that sociology is necessarily the same as the views of the so-called founding fathers of sociology. Further, it is difficult to see how their ‘major theoretical frameworks’, as opposed to contemporary frameworks of the same, help students understand ‘modern life’. The underlying assumption is that these theoretical frameworks transcend historical specificity so that they are applicable anywhere and everywhere. Yet we know, after Adesina (2006a), that these writings are rooted in their specific contexts. As with the majority of the modules in the department, this course has a prescribed ‘textbook’: Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958).

Initially, ‘Sociology 314’ focused principally on four ‘giants’ of classical sociological theory, viz. Durkheim, Marx, Simmel and Weber (Sociology 314 Course Outline 2007: 1). In 2011, or there about, its scope was expanded to include five more ‘influential thinkers’. Previously, the module sought to ‘develop students’ skills in applying (classical) social theory to the analysis of a contemporary issue in South Africa, the land question (ibid: 4).’ The said application of theory, however, is done only in the third of four sections of the course. In the first section, students are introduced to definitions of social theory, its origins and links to modernity. In the second section, students are introduced to Marx and Weber, while in the fourth section they are introduced to Durkheim and Simmel. While the second section introduces students to Marx and Weber’s analyses of capitalist societies, respectively, it is left unclear as to why Durkheim and Simmel are placed in the final section. It should be noted, too, that South Africa is not quite central to the course but merely an example ‘through which to explore the relevance of these two theorists [Marx and Weber]’ (ibid: 1). In other words, any country could have been used as a case study to apply, respectively, Marx and Weber’s theories. The course outline then proceeds to list additional or recommended material, the majority of which are Euro-American – with the exception of Mafeje’s monograph, *The Agrarian Question, Access to Land, and Peasant Responses in sub-Saharan Africa* (2003); Shireen Ally’s ‘Oppositional intellectualism as reflection, not rejection of power: Wits Sociology, 1975 – 1989’ and the course convenor’s paper on land restitution. Lastly, the idioms ‘sociological theory’ and ‘social theory’ are used

interchangeably in the course outlines. Yet there is a difference between the two. The latter is cross-cutting (akin to 'social science') while the former is discipline-specific. The reading material is as follows:

- Ally, Shireen. 2005. Oppositional intellectualism as reflection, not rejection of power: Wits Sociology, 1975 – 1989. *Transformation*, 59.;
- Ashley, D and Orenstein, DM. 2005. *Sociological Theory. Classical Statements*. Boston: Pearson Education. (pp 10-16, 23-26; 467-479).;
- Durkheim, E. Sociology and the Social Sciences. In Thompson, K (ed.) 1985. *Readings from Durkheim*. Chichester: Ellis Horwood and London: Tavistock. (First published in 1909.) (pp 21-27).;
- Giddens, Anthony. 1995. *Politics, Sociology and Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (Chapter 2: Marx, Weber and the Development of Capitalism.);
- Hall, Stuart. 1992. The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power. In S Hall and B Gieven (eds.). *Formations of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (pp 276-282, 291-296, 314-318).;
- Hamilton, Peter. 1992. The Enlightenment and the Birth of Social Science, in S Hall and B Gieven (eds.). *Formations of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (pp 18-24, 29-31, 51-57).;
- Holton, RJ. 1996. Classical Social Theory. In BS Turner (ed.). *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.;
- Mafeje, Archie. 2003. *The Agrarian Question, Access to Land, and Peasant Responses in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Geneva: UNRISD, Civil Society and Social Movements Programme Paper No 6. (extract).;
- Marx, Karl. 1972 (1867). *Capital*. London: JM Dent & Sons. (pp 790-794; 800 – 809).;
- Miles, Stephen. 2001. *Social theory in the real world*. London: Sage. (Chapter 1: Introduction).;
- Ritzer, George. 2000. *Modern Sociological Theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill. (Chapter 1: A Historical Sketch of Sociological Theory: The Early Years).;
- Seidman, S. 1994. *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory in the Postmodern Era*. Cambridge: Blackwell. (pp 312-327).;
- Simmel, G. Fashion. In Levine, DN (ed.). 1971. *Georg Simmel. On Individuality and Social Forms. Selected Writings*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (First published in 1904).;
- Turner, JH, L Beeghley and CH Powers. 2002. *The Emergence of Sociological Theory*. Belmont: Wadsworth Thomson Learning. (pp 2-6).;
- Walker, C. 2005. 2005. Land of dreams: land restitution on the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia. *Transformation*, 59.;
- Weber, Max. Classes, Status Groups and Parties. In Runciman, WG (ed.). 1978. *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (First published in 1922).;
- Weber, Max. The Nature of Charismatic Domination. In Runciman, WG (ed.). 1978. *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (First published in 1922).;
- Giddens, Anthony. 1971. *Capitalism and modern social theory; An analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim and Weber*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.;

Hall, S and B Gieben (eds). 1992. *Formations of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.;
Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital*. London: Penguin Books;
Ritzer, G. 1992. *Classical Sociological Theory*. New York: McGraw Hill.;
Thompson, K (ed.) 1985. *Readings from Durkheim*. Chichester: Ellis Horwood and London:
Tavistock.; and
Weber, Max. 1968. *Economy and Society*, vol. 1 & 3. Bedminster Press, New York.

'Sociology 324', Political Sociology, seeks, in the main, to 'examine why most states in Africa are authoritarian and weak and whether South Africa will follow the same route' (Sociology 324 Course Outline 2011: 1). The second section of the course seeks to examine how citizenry can influence state power and authority. It does so by assessing voting patterns and the effects of one-party dominance in democracy. The third section looks at the nature and development of social movements in South Africa. This is deemed relevant in the light of wide-spread protests in South Africa. Finally, the fourth section of the course tries to determine how protests mutate into revolutions and the conditions for war. It examines the question why African societies are given to civil wars and the effects thereof (ibid: 1).

Among the readings prescribed for section one is a chapter from Macdonis and Plummer's (2007) textbook. It is supplemented by readings on 'failed states', 'collapsed states', 'weak states' by Rotberg (2003) and Bratton (2005), respectively. On this issue, it would be useful to include readings by scholars on the rest of the African continent. Among informative critiques of writings on 'failed states' etc. is Olukoshi's 'Changing Patterns of Politics in Africa' (2005), where the author takes stock of the debates on the literature on 'failed states' and critiques different theoretical currents of the same. There are many other African scholars who have written extensively on these issues. To be sure, CODESRIA, the continental research council, disseminates research findings (through books, journals and monographs) on these and other issues affecting Africa. Refusal, on the part of South African academics, to tap into these resources succeeds only in confirming 'prejudices instilled through Bantu education – that Africa lies north of the Limpopo, and that this Africa has no intelligentsia with writings worth reading...' (Mamdani 1998b: 72). The reading material for this module is as follows:

Jo Beall, Stephen Gelb and Shireen Hassin, Fragile Stability: State and Society in Democratic South Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31 (4) 2005 pp 681-700.;

- John J. Macionis and Ken Plummer, eds Power, the State and Social Movements, in *Sociology: A Global Introduction*, Prentice Hall New Jersey, USA, 1998 pp 440-470.;
- David Popenoe, Brena Boulton and Peter Cunningham eds Power, Politics and Government in *Sociology: First South African Edition*, Pearson Education South Africa, 2003, pp 348-367.;
- Michael Bratton, Building Democracy in Africa's Weak States Democracy at Large, 1(3), 2005, pp 12-15.;
- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (online).;
- Collette Schultz- Herzenberg A Silent Revolution: South African voters 1994-1999. In eds Sakhela Buhlungu, John Daniel, Roger Southall & Jessica Lutchman, *State of the Nation: South Africa.*;
- Heidi Leigh Matisonn, Beyond Party Politics- Unexpected Democracy-Deepening Consequences of One Party Dominance in South Africa, *Theoria: A Journal of Social & Political Theory*, December 2004, pp 1-30.;
- Richard Ballard, Adam Habib, Imraam Valodia and Elke Zuern, Globalization, Marginalization and Contemporary Social Movements in South Africa, *African Affairs*, 104/417, 2005, pp 615-634.;
- Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala, Popular Responses to HIV/AIDS and Policy, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31 (4), 2005, pp 845-856.;
- Shireen Hassim, Voices, Hierarchies and Spaces: Reconfiguring the Women's Movement in Democratic South Africa, *Politikon*, 32 (2), 2005, pp 175-193.;
- Steven Friedman and Shauna Mottiar, Seeking the High Ground: The Treatment Action Campaign and the Politics of Morality, Richard Ballard, Adam Habib and Imraam Valodia (eds) in *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Durban, 2006.;
- Sophie Oldfield and Kristian Stokke, Building Unity in Diversity: Social Movement Activism in the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, Richard Ballard, Adam Habib and Imraam Valodia (eds) in *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Durban, 2006.;
- Greg Mills, Africa's New Strategic Significance, *The Washington Quarterly*, 27 (4), 2004, pp 157-169.;
- Alan Emery, Revolution without the revolution: On the Unintended consequences of illegitimate state repression in South Africa, *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, Vol 33 (2) 2005, pp 209-230.;
- Louis du Plessis, African Conflict at the turn of the Century: Manifestations, Propensity and Management in Louis du Plessis and Mike Hough (eds), *The Challenge of Military Intervention*, Pretoria, HSRC Press, 2000, pp 119-166.;
- Funmi Olokisakin Conflict and Conflict Resolution in Africa in Patric J McGowan, Scarlett Cornelissen and Philip Nel (eds) *Power, Wealth and Global Equity* (3rd ed) UCT Press, Cape Town, 2006 pp 265-281.;
- Jacklyn Cock, Guards and Guns Towards privatised Militarism in Post-Apartheid South Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31 (4), 2005, pp 791-803.;
- Robert Mattes and Ryann Manning, The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Democracy in Southern Africa: What do we Know, What do We need to Know and Why? In Nana K. Po und Alan Whiteside eds, *The Political Economy of Aids in Africa*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004, pp191-214.

Sociology 334, 'Environmental Sociology', offers 'a cohesive framework for a sociological understanding of environmental issues and problems, particularly as they pertain to South Africa... The module therefore has a strong South African emphasis, which it maintains throughout, by integrating primarily European and North American theoretical contributions' (Sociology 334 Course Outline 2011: 1). It is not immediately clear why emphasis on South Africa is maintained through theoretical contributions from the North. Among the course objectives are: 'providing learners with an overview of the historical development of the field of environmental sociology, an understanding of how classical sociology theory relates to contemporary environmental sociology...' (ibid: 1). As with most modules in the department, the core/prescribed reading is in the form of a textbook: Hannigan, J. (2006). *Environmental Sociology*. (2nd edition). London & New York: Routledge. In addition to the textbook, students are furnished with 'extracts... showcasing recent South African insights and empirical findings' (ibid: 4). The reading material is as follows:

- Phalane, M.F. & Steady, F.C. 2009. Nuclear energy, hazardous waste, health, and environmental justice in South Africa: The continuing legacy of apartheid, in Steady, F.C. (ed.). *Environmental Justice in the New Millennium: Global Perspectives on Race, Ethnicity, and Human Rights*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. 189-201.;
- Khan, F. 2002. The roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s, in McDonald, D.A. (ed.). *Environmental justice in South Africa*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.;
- Cock, J. 2007. *The War Against Ourselves: Nature, Power and Justice*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.;
- Beinart, W. & Coates, P. 1995. *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa*. New York, NY: Routledge.;
- Walker, C. 2010. Land claims, land conservation and the public interest in protected areas, in Freund, B. & Witt, H. (eds.) *Development Dilemmas in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal Press. 275-298.;
- Struwig, J. 2010. South Africans' attitudes towards the environment, in Roberts, B., Wa Kivilu, M. & Davids, Y.D.(eds.). *South African Social Attitudes The 2nd Report: Reflections on the Age of Hope*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.;
- McGeoch, M.A., Butchart, S.H.M., Spear, D., Marais, E., Kleynhans, E.J., Symes, A., Chanson, J. & Hoffmann, M. 2010. Global indicators of biological invasion: species numbers, biodiversity impact and policy responses. *Diversity and Distributions*, 16:95108.;

- Oelofse, C. 2003. A critical realist perspective on urban environmental risk: A case study of an informal settlement in South Africa. *Local Environment*, 8(3):261-275.;
- Cock, J. 2010. Connecting nature, power and justice, in Heineken, L. & Prozesky, H. (eds.) *Society in Focus Change Challenge and Resistance: Reflections from South African and Beyond*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 43-53.; and
- Dahlberg, A. C., & Burlando, C. 2009. Addressing trade-offs: Experiences from conservation and development initiatives in the Mkuze wetlands, South Africa. *Ecology and Society*, 14(2):37-48.

Sociology 364, 'Meta-science', introduces students to the 'work of Robert K. Merton, who is widely considered to be the father of the sociology of science. His theoretical work... provides a starting point for discussions... on related issues within the South African context...' (Sociology 364 Course Outline 2007: 1). It is interesting to note that in almost all the modules students are introduced to 'founding fathers' of sociology. That in and of itself is not a bad thing, but it has to be acknowledged that even in the West there have been major developments since the 'founding fathers' wrote their texts. Not only that, some contemporary western theorists have levelled devastating critiques of the so-called classical theories. The reading list for this module is as follows:

- Hess, D.J. 1997. The institutional sociology of science. Pp. 52-80 (Chapter 3) in *Science Studies: An Advanced Introduction*. New York: New York University Press.;
- Merton, R.K. [1973 (1942)]. The normative structure of science. Pp. 267-278 (Chapter 13) *The sociology of science: theoretical and empirical investigations*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.;
- Mouton, J.M. 2003. South African science in transition. *Science, Technology and Society* 8(2): 235-260.;
- Boshoff, N. 2005. The representation of women academics in higher education in South Africa: progress in the pipeline? *South African Journal of Higher Education* 19(2): 359-377.;
- Prozesky, H.E. 2006. Gender differences in journal publication productivity among South African authors. *South African Review of Sociology* 37(2): 87-112.;
- Ilorah, R. 2006. The dilemma of the HBUs in South Africa. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 20(3): 79-96.;
- Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). 2006. Summary of the chapters. Pp. xiii-xxxiii in *Report on a strategic approach to research publishing in South Africa*. Pretoria: The Academy of Science of South Africa.;
- Pienaar, M., Blankley, W., Schirge, G.U. & Von Grunewald, G. 2000. The South African system of evaluating and rating individual researchers: its merits, shortcomings, impact and future. *Research Evaluation* 8(1): 27-36.; and

Uys, T. 2006. *Evaluation and Rating of Social Scientists in South Africa*. Paper presented at the 16th World Congress of the International Sociological Association in Durban, South Africa, 23-29 July.

It is interesting to note that the department has no stand-alone undergraduate module on gender and related issues. In the section that follows, we present postgraduate level course outlines.

4.1.4 On Postgraduate Studies Reading Material

Having presented the undergraduate course outlines, at this point we turn our attention to the postgraduate studies material. It is important to note that, in spite of the fact that the department conjoins sociology and anthropology, the pool of honours modules is relatively small. As a result, students of sociology take modules in anthropology and vice versa. The modules include: 'Research Methodology', 'Gender', 'Sociology of Work', 'HIV/Aids' and Society, Culture and Identity', 'Applied Social Theory' and students are expected to write an honours research report (mini-thesis). At master's level there are two modules: 'Research Design' and 'Advanced Social Theory'. The honours programme general information handout declares:

The Honours Programme at [Soutspanberg] University equips students with the necessary research, analytical and thinking skills for a broad range of professions and occupations. At the end of an arduous academic year, students emerge confident and equipped not only to enter the labour market, but to pursue further academic studies locally or internationally. Our Honours students do exceptionally well on international exchange programmes, an indication of the quality of their education, training and development acquired during their Honours year. (Honours Handout 2012: 1)

While the lecturers may be confident about ensuring international standards, such passion is not always shared by students. A student who had recently returned from an exchange programme said, somewhat dejected, that she wished, while attending postgraduate seminars in Europe, that she had been introduced to more writings which were anchored on the African continent.¹⁹ This is so because she did not feel any different, in terms of what she had learnt at SU, from the European students in her class – she had no competitive edge, and instead she felt like she was competing with Europeans at their own game.

¹⁹ 26 March 2012 interview with Tarryn a postgraduate sociology student

It is important to note that we did not obtain course outlines for the postgraduate modules – save the ‘Research Methodology’ module. The material we rely on in this section is a document available, in PDF format, from the department’s webpage. The readings for the Research Methodology module include:

- Pallant, J. 2010. *SPSS Survival Manual*. Fourth Edition. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.;
- Babbie, E., Halley, F. S., Wagner, W. E. & Zaino, J. 2011. *Adventures in Social Research: Data Analysis Using IBM SPSS Statistics*. Seventh Edition. California: Sage.;
- Bryman, A. & Cramer, D. 2009. *Quantitative Data Analysis with SPSS 14, 15 & 16: A Guide for Social Scientists*. New York: Routledge.;
- Acton, C., Miller, R., Fullerton, D. & Maltby, J. *SPSS for Social Scientists*. Second Edition. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.;
- Field, A. 2009. *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*. Third Edition. London: Sage.;
- Neumann, W.L. 1997. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

The description for the ‘Sociology of Work’ module, as it is written in the handout, is worth reproducing at length:

In more recent times, debates around the changing world of work has often focused on two questions, namely: is post-Fordism replacing boring, alienating work under mass production and ushering in a new, fulfilling world of work? If so, can this new concept of production and organization be generalized throughout the world, including developing countries like South Africa? Or, stepping slightly away from this debate, are there actually more important questions we have to ask about work in South Africa and elsewhere today? This course takes students through the history and arguments of the ‘transformation of work’ debate, but also gets to grips with real life issues in the contemporary world of work. We pick up on some central themes such as how the professions are changing, the importance of emotional labour in work today, the effect of employment equity and how non-standard work affects the social fabric of society. Included in this module is a fieldtrip to the fish factory I&J where students can witness and see Fordism in action, visualize what Marx meant by alienation, see the implementation of scientific management and understand global value chains in the production of consumer goods. (Honours Handout 2012: 2)

This module raises critical questions which have some relevance to South Africa. To be sure, attempts to shy away from debates which claim to universalise and generalise about the nature and conditions of work are on the whole commendable. But there is no reading list in the handout as mentioned earlier. Description for an equivalent module at the University of Waterberg, such as is found on the department of sociology website, is as follows:

This course focuses on how the nature of work is changing in the new economy, and the implications for economic opportunity and inequality in both South Africa and the United States. It is a reading-intensive course dealing with the theoretical literature on rapid economic restructuring and how this is shaping work and employment. The course consists of three main parts. Part one focuses on general theoretical issues in the world of work and the major changes that have taken place on a global scale. Part Two consists of series of comparative case studies that explore these themes in different industrial sectors in both the U.S. and South Africa. Part Three examines the response of labour, at a local (both U.S. and South Africa), regional (Southern African and North American) and global scale.

Description for the module on 'Gender' states that: 'While initially the concept was used extensively in analyses of the position of women, more recently there has been growing academic interest in gender as applied to men and the study of masculinity/ies' (SU Honours Handout 2012:2). Again there is no reading list for this module. An equivalent the University of Waterberg is described as follows:

This course traces the trajectory of feminist theory since the so-called 'second wave' and focuses on some of the central questions in feminist thought. These include questions such as what is oppression? How are patriarchy and capitalism related? Is there a sex/gender distinction? How do constructs of femininity and masculinity impact on our subjectivity? How is gender an embodied experience? The course will guide the student through a range of feminist theories that asks these questions and many more related to sexuality, the body, violence, subjectivity and emancipation. Participants will be expected to critically evaluate the theories in relation to contemporary life, and use them effectively to create their own theoretical standpoints.

Here, too, there is no reading list. At the University of Ka-Manciza, a university which prides itself for being a 'Premier University of African scholarship', the equivalent sociology module is described, with assessment methods, as follows:

The overall focus of this course is to explore feminism and gender relations in South Africa within a sociological perspective. Students will begin by developing a critique of Western feminism. This critique will draw on the voices of many racial and ethnic groups from Africa, India, Mexico and so on. We will look at African feminism(s) in relation to experience, identity, and region. We will then assess the status of feminism in South Africa today through exploration of the ongoing debate of theory versus experience. A major part of this assessment will involve a group research project within a feminist methodological paradigm allowing us the opportunity to explore feminist methodology.

Here, too, there is no reading list on the department website.

This should lead us to the rest of the modules which are on ‘HIV/Aids and Society’ and ‘Culture and Identity’, respectively. These two modules are more on the anthropology than the sociology stream. We need not comment on them since they, too, provide no clear information as to the reading material prescribed to the students.

Finally we shall look at the ‘Social Theory’ module. Before we do, we should like to note that the master’s ‘Research Design’ module is about preparing students for the process of writing a proposal. The second master’s module, ‘Advanced Social Theory’, is the same as the honours ‘Applied Social Theory’ – insofar as the readings are concerned, the difference lies in expectations and the mode of assessment. Let us focus our attention on ‘Applied Social Theory’. This module investigates ‘key concepts relating to questions of citizenship, governance, the state, NGOs, social movements and community-based organisations using the work of a number of key social theorists including Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt, Zygmunt Bauman and Achille Mbembe’ (Honours Handout 2012: 2).

An equivalent module at the University of Ka-Manciza is described as follows: ‘This course employs as central source the book on Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science by Brian Fay.’ It aims ‘to confront students with contemporary issues and theoretical approaches in the social sciences.’ There is no reading list available on the department’s website. However an equivalent module at the University of Waterberg is as described as follows:

Modernity and post-modernity; colonialism and the postcolonial; nation-state and globalization; are some of the key issues explored. The course aims to provide a conceptual and historical framework for thinking about just what it is that we mean by transition which will assist you in dealing with your later specialization. Authors discussed in the course include David Harvey, Marshall Berman, Edward Said, Michel Foucault, Paul Gilroy, Derek Sayer, Achille Mbembe and Frantz Fanon, amongst others.

Though the key authors discussed in the module are listed above, the actual reading list does not appear.

4.2 Summary

This chapter formed the first of the two chapters on data presentation. It presented the material found in the department’s course outlines. In particular, it looked at the descriptive components

of the course outlines. This is so because these components give insight into what is to be expected and the reasoning behind the modules. It also presented the particular readings listed in the course outlines – at least in those courses outlines in which they are listed. In doing so, it also compared, where possible, these modules with those found in other departments. This was possible through a look at module/course description found in their websites. We have presented the modules from first year to postgraduate levels. It should be noted that in our web search it became apparent that while some modules have equivalents in other departments, many of them do not. In the chapter that follows, we present data on what students think of the reading material they are/were exposed to. Also, we present what lecturers have to say about the material they teach and their research interests vis-a-vis students' interests. This will be possible because not only do the questions asked both to students and lecturers coincide, but because they fall under the same clusters/themes and so the responses will be presented as such. The general point is to bring the two parties into conversation, as it were.



Chapter Five

Themes and Perspectives: Data Presentation Part II

'As African history unfolds, we must prepare ourselves for new intellectual tasks and not a mere repetition of what has been conceived elsewhere.' (Mafeje 1994a: 210)

5.0 Introduction

Linked to the previous chapter, this second data presentation chapter brings together, in a thematic and interwoven fashion, the responses from students and members of academic staff respectively. The questions put both to students and lecturers centre on the same themes and as such it will be possible cluster the responses in a conversation-like narrative of their responses. Some of the themes include what is taught (readings), the question of rootedness on the continent, whose interests are served (i.e. do lecturers teach according to their research interests and do students find themselves in what is taught), are African sociologists taught in the modules and is (South) Africa always central to what is taught.

We shall deliberately quote respondents' extensively, instead of paraphrasing, so as to let their voices come to the fore. This chapter comprises four parts. The first section of this chapter starts with caveats and the way in which the researcher approaches this chapter. The second section deals with the research interests of the lecturers and whether their research interests intersect with what they teach. Also, this section enquires into some of the major texts prescribed by lecturers to students. The third section explores, from the students' perspectives, what they have been taught (the readings/texts) and the question of whether (South) Africa is the central focus in what they had to learn. This also speaks to the question of whether the material prescribed to them, or the modules generally, speak to their personal histories and collective memories. The fourth section presents both the views of students and lecturers on their knowledge of the writings of African sociologists and of the very concept of African sociology. The final section presents the views of lecturers on the question of Africanisation or endogenisation of the social sciences generally and sociology in particular.

5.1 Preliminary Remarks

It is important to note that while the author was guided by Mafeje's notion of a 'discursive method' and 'authentic interlocution', he did not enter the research site as a neutral researcher. The researcher came to the site with his own 'baggage' as Mafeje (1998) puts it. This is so because while the topic is interesting in its own right, the researcher was drawn to it by his own experiences of undergraduate training. Indeed, the said baggage is the primary motivation behind conducting research on this topic. While that may serve as a limitation, insofar as it could lead to intellectual bias, it could also serve to challenge the researcher to engage in self-reflexivity. Such baggage can, as well, serve as a preliminary source of enquiry into the problem. This is so because:

While conventional studies might harbour such ['objective'] pretensions (with obvious potential benefits), not every subject matter can be adequately explored with the rigour of a sample survey. Subjective and intersubjective accounts sometimes say much more about a phenomenon than does a dull and phoney objectivity... One is always doing fieldwork, even when not formally in the field. [Therefore] while confining social research to formal field situations might yield 'hard facts', it detracts from those realities that may not immediately fit our practiced instruments and scholarly *maniere de faire*. (Nyamnjoh 2005: 297–8)

In speaking of 'subjectivity' and 'inter-subjectivity', it should be noted, one is not denying that this can also lead to intellectual bias. It is, rather, a general recognition that being aware of this issue can also force the researcher to produce fair accounts of his unit of analysis. While this researcher is no neutral outsider to what is being studied, that should not be seen a problem because he has learnt to subject his own views to critical examination. There will, therefore, be no attempt to suppress this prior knowledge but rather to draw from it in an attempt to enrich the study.

Against this background, this chapter attempts (with several themes and questions common in the set of questions put both to lecturers and students) to present data. Chief among these questions are: Is South Africa central to or the point of reference in the courses taught in the department? Who are some of the (South) African sociologists introduced to students? Do the writings of (South) African sociologists form part of 'prescribed' or 'core' readings, or are they 'additional' readings? Does it matter to students that they were introduced to (South) African sociologists? Do readings prescribed to them speak to their lived experiences? Correspondingly, do lecturers teach according to their research interests or what they believe to be important for

students to know? Is (South) Africa given enough attention? What are their views on 'Africanisation' or 'endogenisation' of the social sciences generally and sociology in particular?

5.2 Research Interests, Courses and Major Texts: What Lecturers Say

In this section we shall present the answers from the lecturers on the questions relating to: their research interests, whether those interests are linked to what they teach, some of the texts they prescribe in their modules and whether South Africa is given enough attention in those modules. We asked these questions based on concerns raised, respectively, by Thaver (2002) and Oloyede (2006). In a review article of Graaff's book – *What is Sociology?* – Thaver asked:

Are we seeking to teach at the introductory level something meaningful about society or do we wish to establish a level of sociological theorising before we have in fact put in place some understanding of what constitutes society at its simplest determinations and then in an incremental logic move on to increasing levels of complexity? (Thaver 2002: 157)

The issue, it would seem, is that Graaff's book, far from being an introductory text he had intended it to be, ended up avoiding any systematic engagement with South Africa as an empirical source of knowledge. The upshot of this flaw in the book, Thaver (2002: 162) writes, does 'little if anything at all to promote the discipline of sociology as a dynamic field of study actively engaging in the challenges of the day' – such a flaw can, one suspects, be extended to other social sciences as well. In electing to remain at an abstract or theoretical level, Graaff failed to connect the book to his intended audience's – students – lived experiences or collective memories.

The second motivation behind these questions is one which was raised by Oloyede, and that is that:

There are instances where courses are more often a reflection of a lecturer's interests and experience than of students' interests and needs. This, of course, is understandable because expertise in a particular area or areas is essential. However, one could argue that this might result in a lack of sequential learning, building on blocks of knowledge that build up to a more sophisticated understanding and encouragement of the imagination and efforts at synthesis (Association of American Colleges, 1990) or what Thaver (2002: 157) calls 'an incremental logic'. (Oloyede 2006: 351)

These concerns are not raised here to judge our research participants but in order to get a sense of whether students do in fact get the sort of education envisioned not only by sociologists like Thaver and Oloyede, but one which is envisioned by the author as well. This is a coherent curriculum which takes the locale as its starting point rather than ‘a kind of afterthought’ (Jubber 2006: 339). As such, here we will present some of the lecturers’ answers as they responded to our questions.

In an interview with the author, Mr Msindo (24 April 2012) responded as follows:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your research interests?

Mr Msindo: I have developed an interest on numerous issues, globalisation and collective bargaining. But my key research interests are around Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), HIV/AIDS, informal economy (small businesses) and this whole issue of xenophobia. Of course my honours and masters were around the issue workplace restructuring so I did a lot of work on those particular issues.

Interviewer: Are these aligned to the courses you teach?

Mr Msindo: It is not always possible for junior guys like us. You just walk into the department and then the HOD says ‘Look we just lost a senior person who has just retired and we are in need of a person who can teach Crime and Deviance’, which is what I’m teaching. I’m teaching Deviance. So I had to teach Deviance because there was a vacuum in the department. Then later on, I think it was last year [2011] when I said, ‘This is not working for me. My PhD is specifically in the field of Industrial Sociology and I’m teaching a course on Crime and Deviance. I need some sort of alignment here’. Then I went back to Industrial Sociology. So now there is that kind of correlation between my PhD and what I’m teaching.

Interviewer: What are the major texts in these courses?

Mr Msindo: Firstly, I’m teaching first years and second years on full-time basis. So far we have used Haralambos and Horlborn [for first years], and we are using Anderson and Taylor from the first edition, the third to the fourth and the fifth edition. And you know we are teaching first years so you cannot just prescribe an American text. You obviously have to prescribe South African textbooks. So South African texts: Popenoe, the South African version, that was produced, I can’t remember how many chapters from Popenoe. But obviously it lost its interest. But it came back. For second years I am using the key text that we normally use is by C Wright Mills, *Sociological Imagination*, and then of course. You see the thing is we have just restructured our undergraduate curriculum. We

used to have [modules on] 'Social Institutions' and 'Social Change'. But we have decided to collapse both modules into one. So we have 'South African Social Issues'. So you have three people teaching 'Social Issues'. I taught in the past two years HIV/AIDS, where obviously I would teach the works of Steven Robins, and of course chapters in the textbooks that I have just mentioned and other people.

Interviewer: So if I'm getting you right you are saying South Africa is at the centre of, or central to, what you are teaching?

Mr Msindo: Yes, yes, yes

One should note that even if South Africa is the main point of reference in the module/course, it does not follow that the paradigms used in the module/course are rooted in the locale. South Africa may very well be used as an empirical illustration of these received paradigms.

In response to the same questions, Dr Bester (24 April 2012) had this to say:

Dr Bester: My research is mainly in sociology of religion.

Dr Bester: Yes. At first year level I teach a course on the institution of religion. I also teach social theory so Sociology of Religion is closely linked to sociology of knowledge. So I'm able to satisfy that interest there. I also teach in the international programme. There I also teach the institution of religion, I look at the political sociology of liberation theology. I teach in two international programmes on a regular basis. I'm also the convenor for sociology of religion for SASA and I have been for the last six years.

Dr Bester: At this university we don't use many texts. So we try to keep the cost down. So we take excerpts from texts which we pay for. But I have my own texts which I use. I have key texts. For example 'new religious model', McGuire's Religion and Social Contexts, I have my own book and essays, which I prescribed last year [2011] and I'm prescribing it this year – the book is called 'The Hadjj'. It's about the Sociology of Religion and the Sociology of Interpersonal Communication.

Dr Bester: Yes, of course. The world is explored at the same time. But South Africa is important, context.

Prof Heinemann (16 April 2012) responded as follows:

Prof Heinemann: Research interests in the field of Armed forces and Society, specifically human resource issues affecting the military and South African military in particular. Issues such as trade unionism, diversity issues, HIV/Aids, preparing for military missions, civil-military relations.

Prof Heinemann: Yes – aligned to both courses in Industrial Sociology and Political Sociology – although not directly.

See my module outlines. [Refer to sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3, respectively, the material is under Industrial Sociology 252 and Political Sociology 324]

Prof Heinemann: Yes, mostly but of course not exclusively as theory related to studies is generic.

Mr Willem (02 May 2012), on the other had this to say:

Mr Willem: Mainly Research Methods and Research Methodology, but I'm also doing work on social security issues.

Mr Willem: Yes. I teach a course on Research Methodology.

Mr Willem: There is no core text really. It's usually various chapters from books or journal articles. But there is a book by Barbie and also Mouton to make the course more South African.

Mr Willem: Yes. Most of the case studies that one use, where one illustrates what is written in the text are South African and one even draws examples from the SADC region. But given that I teach a course on Research Methods, I'm sure you'd agree that the principles are the same e.g. questions of sampling etc. But we also try to use local examples to problematise widely accepted ways of conducting research. For example one would find a questionnaire which asks a person about his 'marital status'. Of course that assumes that the person is either married or not married. Yet in South Africa one could find people would not fit both of these categories.

Dr Pearl (28 March 2012) responded as follows via email:

Dr Pearl: My current research activities reflect an interest in Environmental Sociology, sociology of science, and social research methodology. I have developed a strong research interest in stakeholder perceptions of various environmental and conservation issues, such as water quality, invasive alien species, ecosystem services, sustainable natural resource management, rural livelihoods, and human impacts on biodiversity. With regard to the sociology of science, my focus is on scientometric analysis of research output, particularly as it relates to gender and race. My social research methodology interest is reflected in my current supervision of postgraduate students who are studying methods effects, attaining validity in qualitative research, the challenges involved in measuring complex constructs, methodological trends over time, and methodology training at postgraduate level (in the last two instances also dovetailing with my research within the field of sociology of science).

Dr Pearl: Yes. I teach a third-year course on environmental sociology, and a MA course on the conceptualisation and design of research. I used to teach a third-year course on the sociology of science, but that has been replaced by the course in environmental sociology.

Dr Pearl: For the course on environmental sociology in 2012, I prescribed a reader that consisted of the following: [See Annexure A]

For the course on the conceptualisation and design of research, I prescribed the following in 2012: [See Annexure B]

Prof Petersen (26 April 2012) responded as follows:

Prof Petersen: I'm interested in studying young people, social identity, I focus on race and gender. I look at various dimensions of power as well. I have done research in school around the question of social identity.

Prof Petersen: Yeah, yeah. I mean one of the reasons why I do that kind of research is to use it to teach. So it's [research] for teaching purposes as well not just for publication.

And at the moment I generate resource material in my teaching so, for example, in a course teach around homophobia I did a kind of questionnaire where students have to answer and I tabulate the answers and give the back the material and get them talking. In a sense I use students themselves as resources.

Prof Petersen: It's fairly central yeah. At the moment I'm teaching, first year and second year courses, a course on Deviance, Crime and Social Control. I'm teaching a course around sex work and gays and lesbians and those are based in South Africa, not just South Africa, but mainly South Africa. I'm also doing a course around the discourse of racialisation of crime - how crime operates in the context of South Africa. So a lot of what I teach is focused on South Africa.

With regards to Oloyede's concern that sometimes courses reflect lecturers' needs rather than students' concerns, some of the responses were as follows:

Interviewer: How do you respond to the claim that more often than not, lecturers teach courses which reflect their research interests rather than their students' interests or needs?

Prof Heinemann: Yes, this can be the case, but not in my teaching. I am of the firm opinion that students should be taught what they need to know in the field and not the lecturer's pet research topic (16 April 2012).

Dr Pearl: I have not yet heard such a claim being made. Teaching courses which reflects one's research interests is an ideal I thought we all strove for, as it leads to efficient and effective teaching of relevant content (28 March 2012).

Mr Msindo: It depends on the level of students you are teaching. If you teach first years obviously your immediate directive is to introduce students to as much as possible to a variety of material that is available. You know you have like a pyramid scheme. Where, say, you teach Social Institutions, you introduce them to as much as social institutions as possible. With the idea that as they move towards second year they'll begin to know what the books say, and as they move to their third they'll know exactly what to do. Because sometimes students don't know that they'll majoring in sociology. Such decisions are made in the second part of second year. So if you want to align your research interests then sometimes it becomes difficult for first and second years. But for third years you can give them case studies based on what you do in your research and even involve them in your research, then it becomes easier at postgraduate level to align the two i.e. research interests and the courses you teach (24 April 2012).

Dr Bester: That depends. I'm not one of those. My interest is in historical sociology. Now there are not many historical sociologists in the world (24 April 2012).

Mr Willem: Well, I don't think that's a problem per se. It's difficult to say *a priori* what students' needs are. Our group of first years is different from last years' cohort. So how do we determine what their needs are? We can only teach what we know and think is best for students – such as critical reasoning, imparting sociological imagination etc (02 May 2012).

Prof Petersen: At the moment I generate resource material in my teaching so, for example, in a course I teach around homophobia I did a kind of questionnaire where students have to answer and I tabulate the answers and give the back the material and get them talking. In a sense I use students themselves as resources (26 April 2012).

This last response from Prof Petersen is not dissimilar to Oloyede's proposal. In his article, 'Sociologia Cognitia', Oloyede states that:

In a practical sense, it would undoubtedly be useful and effective if students are encouraged, for example, to write introspective papers in which they analyse personal experiences using sociological theories and concepts learned in class (experiences with prejudice or discrimination, the dynamics of their intimate relationships, breaches of everyday social norms). The purpose of this would not simply be to tell a story or to use individual experiences to refute long-standing social theories. The goal is that of infusing in them the sociological imagination: to promote, as stated by Mills (1959), a social awareness of the interplay between structure and power; to make the students come to terms with the world in which others are constantly influencing them. This type of

exercise would begin to open up issues which trigger students' inquisitive minds. They would begin to see the significance of ideas, beliefs and perceptions in, to borrow from Berger and Luckman, the construction of social reality, and indeed the root of ideas, beliefs and perceptions. (Oloyede 2006: 351-2)

The point thus is not merely to teach critical reasoning but also to ensure that students find themselves in the curriculum.

5.3 Major Texts and South Africa as Point of Departure: Students' Responses

Students were asked questions relating to some of the major or core texts prescribed to them over the years. Also, they were asked questions relating to the question as to whether or not South Africa was the central focus in the modules they took. These questions, as can be seen, relate in important ways to those put to lecturers about the readings they prescribe and whether they took South Africa as the point of reference. In asking corresponding questions to lecturers and students one sought to get a sense of whether the enthusiasm displayed by lecturers is also shared by students as well. This is not to judge or pit lecturers against students but to try and relate data to the literature. After all, sociologists such as Thaver (2002) and Oloyede (2006), have stated, each independently, that sociology textbooks such as the one by Graaff either deter would-be students of sociology or alienate those who are already taking the course. In this regard, Thaver's submission tallies with Oloyede's submission that sometimes (though not always a bad thing) courses reflect lecturers' interests rather than students' needs. Let us consider the following responses:

Interviewer: What were some of the major texts/readings you were exposed to?

Tarryn: [Laughs] I can't remember. I don't know if that's a reflection of me or reflection of the text. We had Barbie and Mouton research textbook. Definitely Marx, *Das Kapital*, *Grundrisse*, Adam Smith, I know in Honours we did Hegel and Heidegger, basically the more philosophical side of social theory. We did *Thus Spake Zarathustra* [Nietzsche] and I went 'whoa!' 'What is this?' We did Walter Benjamin, quite a few of the Frankfurt School. I mean we did Adorno. I enjoyed that sort of writing. In undergraduate we did like snippets of article and books. (26 March 2012)

Save Barbie and Mouton, no mention is made of South African authors who articulate locally grounded theories.

Interviewer: Was (South) Africa always at the centre or point of reference in all these courses?

Tarryn: I think it depends on the subject. Like in Political Sociology, we dealt with quite a lot of Africa. And I think it is quite over simplified I mean 'weak states', 'strong states', 'failed states' and whatever. In Social Theory we dealt most with the texts rather than try to apply them to a specific context. In Development we dealt with quite a lot of South Africa. I think most of the undergraduate courses were South Africa grounded. But to be honest a lot of what we did in undergrad is quite blurred in my memory I don't know if that was because of the pressure, the way we taught or the size of the class because our classes are quite big and that affects the type of instruction. (26 March 2012)

Interviewer: What were some of the major texts/readings you were exposed to?

Steve: Definitely Marx, *Das Kapital*, *Grundrisse*, we spent quite a lot of time on Freud, the person who teaches Social Theory believes quite a lot in Freud (specifically his *Civilisation and Discontent*), personally I'm not a big fan of him. We did quite a lot of Frankfurt School, so we did Adorno, Benjamin, Horkheimer, Habermas, but a lot of Adorno and Benjamin. But that's more social theory. We did Heidegger's *Being and Time*, I remember hating Heidegger, we did Hegel's *Master Slave Dialectic*. And then in the elective we did EP Thompson. We do sort of kind of weird things like Foucault where as in the theory class we do sort of Durkheim, Marx etc. The founding fathers of sociology. (27 April 2012)

Interviewer: Was (South) Africa always at the centre or point of reference in all these courses?

Steve: No I would not say so. Especially the theory I mean it was so abstract that we never really discussed practical issues. I guess in my masters we did a course on Johannesburg. But overall, not really hey. (27 April 2012)

Here, too, no mention is made of texts from within. Nor is (South) Africa seen as central. Nania responded as follows:

Nania: Durkheim, Webber, Marx, Geertz, Douglas, Comaroffs, Furgeson...I think most of the classics. (23 April 2012)

Nania: No. Our courses were more about equipping us to do research, than giving us facts about our own context. (23 April 2012)

There does not seem to be major points of divergence in these responses.

William: Durkheim, Marx, Goffman, Mbembe (12 April 2012)

William: In the majority of the courses South Africa was the central focus. (12 April 2012)

5.3.1 Lived Experiences

When lecturers were asked whether they think that their courses/reading material help students have a better understanding or make sense of their societies, some of their answers were as follows:

‘Yes, absolutely. The industrial sociology course helps them understand how work has changed and how this affects employment and their future employment. The political sociology course helps them understand how power is used and abused in society and the effect of conflict on society (Prof Heinemann 16 April 2012).’

Or ‘Yes, that is the whole point. If that’s not the whole point then we can’t explain why we are still teaching (Mr Donald 16 March 2012).’

Student’s responses to the question as to whether or not their reading material helps them make sense of their societies or whether the material speaks to their lived experiences vary a great deal. Here are some of their answers:

‘Yes they did speak to my reality to a degree. Yet I also felt that they did not speak to my reality – as a young coloured South African male – enough (Leonard 12 April 2012).’

‘Yes the readings did help me understand South Africa better in relation to citizenship (William 13 April 2012).’

‘I think all research is relevant. Though some areas interest me more than others, I think the work our supervisors chose were brilliant. Come to think of it, yes, they were really diverse. And it is true that the work on South Africa is fascinating because it gives me insight into the society we live in today. Especially things on race, class and gender. These were not in the majority though. I think we had a good balance (Nania 23 April 2012).’

‘Yeah, definitely. I think so. I like the fact that they help me think critically (Lauren 18 April 2012).’

‘I think my reality as a white South African is very different from someone studying at Fort Hare or at Wits because I’m from SU and it’s a European kind of department. But maybe I can see but I don’t know any other environment. I don’t, for example, have a lot of contact with poor black people who are living in the township. I don’t go to poor areas.

For me it explains it okay. But that might just be my shortcoming. I wouldn't know any better (David 03 May 2012).'

'Mostly, I can say black students share my views and you see because these westernised ideologies do not really relate to our realities. Or issues that affect us directly. Because in fact most of the theories come from very different background. They have their own agenda. Maybe they formulate them, so they don't relate in fact to my background. They have their own dynamics. So there's no correlation (Sizwe 02 April 2012).'

'Well I think there must be some balance. It's nice to read Nietzsche and say 'oh look at this reading'. But at the same time you need something that speaks to your reality alongside that. You need texts that are relevant. Why can't we come up with our own (Tracy 03 April 2012)?'

These issues are not, of course, straightforward or clear-cut. Questions of race, class and gender – though not explored – heavily influence how students view or relate to these questions. For example some find the material relevant while others do not. Some find the material fascinating but still feel that something is missing – words like 'balance' or 'westernised agenda', 'as a young coloured South African male', 'as a white South African', 'I can say black students', 'poor black people' etc. are indicative. Below we should like to explore exposure to, and knowledge of, African sociology and African sociologists by both lecturers and students.

5.4 On African Sociology and African Sociologists

Answers to the question of African sociologists and African sociology vary and at times are quite contradictory. The real issue, however, might be lack of exposure to the very concept of African sociology. While some lecturers, for example, tell you about the African sociologists they expose students to, they are not aware of the idiom of African sociology – which is taken for granted, correctly, by sociologists such as Onoge (1977), Magubane (2000) and Adesina (2008c). Let us consider some of the questions put to lecturers in this regard.

Interviewer: Which African sociologists have you introduced your students to?

Mr Donald: Fanon, Biko, Magubane and I did suggest a piece by Andile Mngxitama.

Interviewer: Have you actually heard of the concept of 'African sociology'?

Mr Donald: Well, no really but I would imagine that it exists. I think Magubane has a book titled African sociology. So yeah. (16 March 2012)

In response to the same questions, Dr Pearl responded as follows:

Dr Pearl: Jacklyn Cock and David Fig.
Dr Pearl: No. (28 March 2012)

Dr Pearl mentions only two African sociologists. Yet in her list of texts she prescribes to students the majority of the authors are South African – especially the module on Environmental Sociology. The meaning of this is not immediately clear.

Prof Petersen: Well I suppose people like Fanon and Biko. I guess it depends on what you mean by South African sociologists. I teach about people who were thinking sociologically but who would not be recognised as sociologists. But I suppose Biko and Ngugi stuff like that. I draw on post-colonial thinkers – Edward Said for example, and people like Stuart Hall.

Prof Petersen: Not really. (26 April 2012)

While one may not need a degree in sociology to be a sociologist, the question as to why African academics (Fatima Meer, Ruth First etc.) who wrote sociological works are not utilised is not entirely clearly.

Dr Bester: That's a good question. I use Fanon, he might not have been born in Africa but he certainly saw himself as an African. When I came here I used the works of an African sociologist who has never been taught in this country. His name is Ibn Khaldun. I teach the theories of Ibn Khaldun.

Dr Bester: Not as a formal concept but certainly I read quite a lot of African sociologists; though some are not directly relevant to what I teach. (24 April 2012)

I think Dr Bester's second response highlights what we have termed lack of exposure to the concept of African sociology – though he himself reads the works of African sociologists.

Mr Msindo: Jimi Adesina is among them, Eddie Webster, Andries Bezeidenhout, Ben Magubane, Sakhele Buhlungu, Ari Sitas, Neville Alexander, Tina Uys, Simon Bekker a whole lot.

Mr Msindo: Well, I have come across it in Adesina's work and I have heard him talk about it at various SASA congresses. (24 April 2012)

Prof Heinemann responded as follows:

Prof Heinemann: Refer to the module outlines. [Political Sociology 324 and Industrial Sociology 252]

Prof Heinemann: Not specifically. (16 April 2012)

These are some of the answers from the lecturers. Let us look at corresponding answers from students about whether they have been exposed to African sociologists or not.

Interviewer: Could you tell me about some of the African sociologists which you have been introduced to thus far?

Nania: John and Jean Comaroff and James Furgeson, Steven Robins, Achille Mbembe, Fancis Nyamnjoh. (23 April 2012)

The people mentioned above by Nania are not, strictly speaking, sociologists. Unless, of course, one works with the notion that one need not be a sociologist with a capital S to write sociological works. Lusanda responded as follows:

Lusanda: None. I can't remember being introduced to any African sociologist. (21 April 2012)

Johnson: The only African sociologist I have been introduced to is Achille Mbembe. I found his writings on the city and citizenship very interesting (12 April 2012).

Mbembe's work is not sociological. Nor, for that matter, is it social scientific. With its emphasis on aesthetics or texts i.e. 'writing' this or that, instead of writing about this or that, one could argue that it belongs to literary criticism.

Jobby: There aren't many African sociologists but Achille Mbembe, Sarah Nuttal and Fiona Ross. (07 May 2012).

Tracy responded as follows:

Tracy: What African sociologists? No. Never. (03 April 2012).

Steve: Well, like what do you mean by African sociologists? You mean black people? Is it people who write from Africa?

Interviewer: Well I use the term collectively not simply black people but people who write from Africa.

Steve: Okay I would say I have not been introduced formally by the institution like people teaching me their texts. But I have read their texts. I have read some of Jacky Cock's texts, but then yeah I go to SASA and seeing people and here they present their work and then I would go and do research and read their works. But I would not say I have been introduced to their texts. But I'd say that I have been introduced to some South African texts but not like the African Renaissance [i.e. Africa-centred texts like Mafeje, Magubane etc.] kind of way. I mean there is someone in our department who is doing research and teaching a course on the environment and introduces students to some South African writers in this field. (27 April 2012)

The question we put to students as to whether or not it matters if they were exposed to African Sociologists or African sociology elicited interesting responses. Some of the responses are as follows:

Interviewer: Does it matter to you if you were taught the writings of African sociologists or not? If so, why? If not, why not?

Helen: Well ja it matters, when I think about it. Because you want to locate where you are from. You can't always refer to theories which were formulated in places which are far from your own. You are dealing with different geographical spaces, different circumstances. So there is a kind of disconnect. (24 April 2012)

Tatum: If you prescribe or talk about African scholars then it becomes the 'nativist club'. But if you look at the amount of Northern scholars they prescribe... I would love to have learnt more African scholars. Because it's like you need Freud to understand the black man. You need Marx to understand the black man. Let's not even get to the black woman. Like right now I'm reading [on my own] a lot of African fiction and I find it extremely valuable. (3 April 2012)

Nania: For me it is important to deal with the work of African social scientists because they often deal with issues close to home, they have a "native" perspective that is very different from external researchers and because they inspire me as a researcher. On the other hand, I think we need to be exposed to the best researchers (irrespective of where they are from) and also the pioneers. (23 April 2012)

William: It does not really matter to me if I was taught the writings of an African sociologist. My argument is that does a sociologist have to be "African" to write about Africa or South Africa? I do not think so. What does matter to me is the quality of the authors' work, African or not. (12 April 2012)

Sizwe: I can't remember being introduced to any Africa sociologist. It does matter to me. I'm in Africa and I'm an African. The dynamics of Africa, it seems to me, are understood better by Africans and South Africans. But you might say it's too late because I have been stereotyped by these western ideologies and theories which in fact have overlooked the African perspective. But at the same time it might not be too late it is still critical. I am still an African and I'm in South Africa so I still need to understand the dynamics of this continent. (02 April 2012)

These responses should lead us to the question of Africanisation or endogenisation of the social sciences generally and sociology particularly.

5.5 On Endogenisation of Sociology

In this section we should like to look at some of the responses from the lecturers on the question of endogenisation of the social sciences. We have pointed out earlier on that various sociologists

(Adesina 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, Hendricks, 2006; Jubber 2006, 2007) in South Africa lament the fact that South Africa sociologists do not take the locale seriously enough to theorise about it. Now to theorise about the locale implies Africanising or endogenising sociology in South Africa. The extent to which South African sociologists are receptive to this idea is not known. But here are the answers from those based at SU.

Interviewer: What are your views on 'endogenisation' of higher education curriculum and the social sciences (Sociology) in particular?

Dr Pearl: It depends on whether there is enough quality material to prescribe. (28 March 2012)

Prof Heinemann: There is no problem if the scholars work is of international standard. (16 April 2012)

Mr Msindo: I would not mind being counted as one of the advocates of indigenous knowledge. I'll tell you what, currently the Minister of Higher Education Blade Nzimande has commissioned a study which looks at how the social sciences can be revamped because the social sciences have not taken their rightful place in South Africa. His argument is that during apartheid people turned to sociologists, for example, for ideas on how to make sense of their society. I would definitely advocate indigenisation. (24 April 2012)

Mr Donald: I'm not opposed to it. But I must say that theory travels. Even Magubane and Mafeje were heavily influenced by Marxism. So while I'm not opposed to the idea of indigenous knowledge I also think we should be open to ideas from other parts of the world. We should engage theory whatever its point of origin. (16 March 2012)

Mr Willem: Yes, we support it – this idea of theorising from the South. People are coming up with interesting ideas. (02 May 2012)

Mr Bester: Of course. Absolutely. My major work, the work that I have done in the last few years is shaped by that kind of thinking. (24 April 2012)

Prof Petersen: It depends on what you mean by indigenising. We need to find ways of understanding how education operates in South Africa. That is what I would understand by indigenising. But sometimes people work with patronising assumptions of what indigenous knowledge is. (26 April 2012)

These are the answers from lecturers presented as they are. It appears then that they are not opposed, though not without qualifications, to the idea of taking (South) Africa as the point of departure or of endogenous knowledge – in the social sciences and, *a fortiori*, sociology.

5.6 Summary

An in-depth analysis of the data presented here will be analysed in the following chapter. The data presentation method adopted in this chapter may not always be palatable to some. However it makes a lot of sense if we are to remain true to the Mafejean discursive method and authentic interlocution we attempt to have here. This chapter sought to present data as it is, to let it speak for itself as it were. It should be stated that while we used excessive quotations, interviews were not quoted verbatim. This is so because sometimes not everything said in interviews is relevant even though it might be important in other contexts. Also, we have to consider space and word limit to studies of this nature. While we have elected to present data almost as it is, we shall have occasion to discuss it in the next chapter. This chapter then proceeded as follows. The first section laid groundwork by stating the manner in which we conceived of this chapter. The second section presented responses to the questions relating to major texts adopted in the courses taught by lecturers, their research interests and whether such interests coincide with what they teach. Correspondingly, the third section asked students questions around the texts they are exposed to, whether South Africa is taken seriously enough as the point of departure in their courses and whether the material so prescribed speaks to their lived experiences. The fourth section dealt primarily with whether or not lecturers and students are familiar with African sociologists and African sociology. The final section focused mainly on the lecturers' views on endogenisation of sociology. With this data in place, in the next chapter we should like to discuss it and some of the salient feature of it.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

In the first instance this study is informed by the author's experience of his undergraduate and honours level curriculum. Secondly, it came about as a result of the author's encounter with postgraduate students at a postgraduate roundtable in a conference in Pretoria, wherein the said students expressed their feelings of alienation as a result of extraverted curriculum. Thirdly, the author had heard of an incident of undergraduate students who heckled their lecturers because they were taught about 'dead European men'. All of the above were sufficient to motivate the author to pursue a study on the question of curriculum transformation such as it relates to epistemological decolonisation. In order to get a sense of how to contextualise and conceptualise the problem, the author reviewed literature on the question of curriculum transformation, particularly the social sciences. Given that it was next to impossible to investigate all of the social sciences, and indeed all the departments of sociology in South African universities, the author elected to conduct a case study of a department of sociology in a South African university. Below we discuss noteworthy insights and findings of the study.

6.1 Preliminary Remarks

What (South) African and Third World scholars call, variously, the problem of 'extraversion' (Adesina 2005, 2006a, 2010; Hountondji 1997; Mafeje 1992, 2000a, 2001b) or 'academic dependency' (Alatas 2003), which prevails in the writings of Third World scholars has implications for what is taught in the classroom. The extraversion prevailing in some South African sociological writings has adverse effects on some of the students who have to take modules where such writings are prescribed. In section 2.2 of chapter two we have provided only three examples of such alienating writings. In the first chapter, in an attempt to give background to the study, we have mentioned first the author's experience of the alienating nature of his undergraduate and honours curriculum, the experiences of students (who protested against Eurocentric curriculum) at one of South Africa's 'leading' universities and postgraduate

participants at a conference (who spoke about their experiences of their university education). These issues combined to form the point of departure for this study.

At the level of epistemology and research, the erasure and avoidance of locally grounded theories denies any possibility of there being a truly 'South African sociology'. Mafeje's and Magubane's exemplary ideas, to name but a few, are just the few writings which one has in mind when speaking of an (South) African sociology. The issue is not simply a case of producing a list local scholars or conducting research locally but to engage the locale both existentially and epistemologically in an attempt to produce endogenous theories and not merely to export data for scholars in the West to theorise. Alatas (2003) has commented on the pitfalls of this practice. To argue for an engagement with local knowledge is not to deny or shut out knowledge from other parts of the world. It is, rather, an acknowledgement that knowledge which takes seriously its immediate surroundings yields deeper insights.

Informed by the foregoing insights, this study is a result of a case study of a department of sociology in a South African university. The unit of analysis in this study has been the nature of the sociology curriculum in the said department. To get answers to our research questions, we studied course outlines, interviewed students (to learn about their views and experiences of the curriculum) and members of academic staff in the said department (to get a sense of what their research interests are and whether such interests coincide with what they teach). Additional information/data was collected through an internet search of modules and teaching material in three other departments of sociology in South African universities. This was done with an eye to see points of convergence and points of divergence in similar modules.

As intimated above, the study relied on Mafeje's theoretical orientations and methodological approach. In bringing in Mafeje's work, part of what we sought to do was to shift or move away from merely identifying the problem but also to attempt to find a way of addressing it. His idea of a 'discursive method' and 'authentic interlocution' guided our analytical and methodological approach, particularly his call for letting data do the talking or taking the objects of enquiry on their own terms. The point here was not merely to test the workability of Mafeje's theoretical insights – he himself opposed superimposition of theory on data. But rather, it was to let his method, which he says is not predicated on any epistemology (Mafeje 1981, 1991, 1996, 2001),

guide us through the research process and in making sense of data. While there is no uniformity among the answers given by students, the course outlines suggest that lecturers do prescribe readings from local authors. While this may be so, the modules make reference, and indeed use as the starting point, readings from Euro-American authors – particularly the so-called founding fathers of sociology. This squares with Jubber's (2007) earlier submission (see section 2.2) that sociology modules in South Africa resemble, and indeed rely on, curricula from the US and the UK.

Although this study attempted an in-depth analysis of the curriculum in a department of sociology at SU, insights gained here are such that they cannot be said to be reflective of other departments of sociology in South African universities. We say this notwithstanding the fact that we tried to make comparisons, in chapter four, with similar modules in other departments of sociology. Quantitative or multiple case studies may add substance to existing knowledge on these issues. Also, we did not explore other social science disciplines. In this regard, the study must be viewed in relation to the goals it had set itself. This is so because, as an in-depth analysis of one department, the aim of the study was not to measure or make generalisations. This leaves us with an unresolved tension – one which can truly not be addressed here. Sociological analysis, as Hendricks (2006) tells us, inclines towards the general and a case study, while yielding in-depth information, deals with the particular. Fortunately this presents an opportunity for future research – as mentioned earlier.

It would be too hasty a conclusion to argue that there is no acknowledgement of South African authors in the curriculum at SU. This was made clear in the chapter on courses outlines. It is evident, too, in the preceding chapter that SA sociologists are prescribed. There is no gainsaying, also, statements made by lecturers that they do prescribe the works of sociologists in South Africa. The issue, however, remains that of engaging scholars on the rest of the continent – such paucity of African scholars except for those in South Africa is glaring. Also, what one finds particularly striking is the fact that, when lecturers were asked about the 'African sociologists' they prescribe to their students they would not mention more than four authors – except for one lecturer. Yet their course outlines suggests that they prescribe far more than the two or three authors they mentioned.

This suggests a possible lack of understanding of the category of 'African sociologists'. It also suggests a more serious issue: that is the ontological disconnect about which we spoke in chapter two of this thesis. While a good number of the authors listed in the reading list are based in South Africa, the lecturers, for whatever reason, do not refer to them as African sociologists. Yet our use of the term was not exclusionary nor was it qualified to say it means a particular group of people and not the other. Indeed, two of the lecturers mentioned, correctly, the likes of Jacky Cock and Eddie Webster etc. as African sociologists prescribed in their modules. It is appropriate at this point to make clear that, though some lecturers seem to conceive of this idea as exclusionary, being African does not necessarily entail being black – nor does being black entail being African. This is a point which African scholars such as Adesina (2005), Mafeje (2000a, 2000b, 2001a), Prah (1998) and Zeleza (2004), among others, have been at pains to point out.

Prah (1998: 36) elaborates:

The racial definition of an African is flawed. It is unscientific and hence untenable. No serious mind today would use the race concept in any way except as an instrument for poetic imagery... Most Africans are black, but not all Africans are black, and not all blacks have African cultural and historical roots... There are many groups in Africa today which are not African, do not describe themselves as African or wish to be so regarded, peoples whose cultures and histories are linked and derived from extra-African sources. Needless to say, they are full citizens and must always remain full and equal citizens in all respects to the Africans amongst whom they live...

Elsewhere, Prah (2011, Internet 1) argues thus:

It needs also to be said that being African is an inclusive notion. It is possible for people who are not African today to become African in due course of time. But this is not achieved by opportunistic claims based on expediency and formulae like 'commitment to Africa'... Becoming African involves immersion into African society and requires a certain degree of acculturation into African societies. At least it would require the adoption and sharing of the values of African society. It has nothing to do with colour, but all to do, to varying degrees, with cultural integration. In other words, it is not possible to be African while one rejects African culture and rejects the self-designation of being African.

This is the background against which we should like to argue that in conceiving of their colleagues, whose texts they prescribe, as not African sociologists, and possibly not African themselves, lecturers deny any possibility of there being, in South Africa at least, an African sociology. African sociology, as stated in the previous chapter, is taken for granted in the works

of some sociologists outside of South Africa. To conceive of their colleagues as not doing African sociology (which seems to be the case) lecturers invariably if inadvertently concede to doing something other than African sociology. The literature certainly suggests that this is so, as seen in chapter two of this thesis. African sociology, we know from Adesina (2008c: 664), 'takes African ontological standpoints as its point of departure, not just the description or analysis of the African conditions.'

Part of the said ontological standpoints entails what Prah referred to as 'culture'. One should caution, however, against Prah's use of the term acculturation, since it conjures up the same connotations such as the ones invoked when the same term was used by colonial administrators and their social science counterparts. At the level of curriculum, while lecturers prescribe writings of sociologists in the country, their lack of knowledge of the concept of 'African sociology' entails that even in the curriculum there is absence of African progenitors. We have seen a lone article by Archie Mafeje in one of the course outlines presented in chapter four, and since at least two lecturers, each independently, said they prescribe Magubane and Ibn Khaldun respectively, we should like to see more of such efforts. This is necessarily so because:

Recognition of theoretical insight in Ibn Khaldun's work would imply changes in sociology curriculum. Nevertheless, it is not our contention that the recognition of contextuality requires that Western sociological theory be deleted from sociology curricula in non-Western universities. Rather, we argue for a fresh approach to teaching classical sociological theory that attunes students in more meaningful and critical ways to the works of Marx, Weber and Durkheim (Alatas & Sinha: 2001: 317).

One would extend this proposition, in the South African context, and talk about contemporary sociological theory which attunes students in meaningful ways to the works of Mafeje, Magubane, Harold Wolpe and Ruth First among others. It is important for students to find themselves, as it were, in the curriculum.

Responses from students with regards to their experiences and the nature of their curriculum vary far and wide. While some students express the view that the curriculum spoke little to their lived experiences and collective memories, others thought such an oversight is justified because the issue is to teach them to think critically as opposed to inundating them with 'facts' about their locale. In other words, while they felt that such lack of exposure to local conditions and authors, they nevertheless do not see anything wrong with that. For some it does not seem to matter

because writing about (South) Africa is not the sole preserve of people living in Africa. As long as the writings are worth reading or are of good quality, they will read them. This, in and of itself, is not a problem, because in arguing for curriculum transformation, one is not asking for lecturers to substitute one erasure for another. That is to say, in deleting every reading that comes from places outside of Africa, one is not equipping students with sociological skills to locate South Africa and Africa globally. It needs to be said however that some felt quite strongly about what they perceived to be the absence of local authors and shortage of (South) Africa-centred modules i.e. modules which take (South) Africa as the point of departure.

6.2 Discussion

With the foregoing preliminary remarks in place, we should like, in this section, to engage in a more critical analysis of the data. Discussing epistemic values in curriculum transformation, Marrow (2009: 32) noted:

But whatever we mean by ‘curriculum change’, do we in reality have any choice about whether or not to change our Higher Education social science curriculum? There is an important sense in which we do have a choice; the whole terrain has shifted and bulldozers have already moved in and are busy obliterating the cemetery. There are forces abroad, especially in our post-colonial, post-Apartheid, post-modern historical situation, which make it at least extremely difficult to resist the demand to change our curricula. Anyone tempted to resist is digging their own grave, or is likely to be seen as dead wood that needs to be cleared to allow the new growth to flourish.

The forces which make it difficult to resist transformation are not only abroad, they are also local and continental. The question of curriculum transformation needs also to be seen in ontological/existential terms not just epistemological and political terms. As such, it is driven by the need to take local conditions seriously. Morrow (2009: 34) continues:

The actual substance of the teaching and research programme of Higher Education needs to change or be changed to reflect our political reality. Teaching and research activities need to be demystified and made transparent to all stakeholders, the Eurocentric curriculum needs to be got rid of and we need to acknowledge that we are in Africa with its own alternative forms of knowledge.

In this regard, then, the question of curriculum transformation is not purely about political reality but about ontological and epistemological concerns. This statement is given force by the words ‘Africa [has] its own alternative forms of knowledge’. Furthermore, ‘resistance to curriculum

transformation can very often reside in the inability of academics to disconnect the relevant epistemic values from the particular content in terms of which they gained an understanding of those values' (Marrow 2009: 37). Thus, the association of particular kinds of ontological narratives with (and disassociation of others from) scientific knowledge is the point being made here.

We have learnt, for example, from Oloyede (2006) that there is a link between what academics teach and their research interests. As such, those interests do not necessarily coincide with those of the students. Nor are those research interests necessarily driven by an Africa-centred or ontologically rooted (in Africa) paradigms. We have seen, for example, in the course outlines that most modules rely on textbooks from outside of the African continent. While they are supplemented by local readings, such readings tend to reflect empirical illustrations of paradigms or theories received from elsewhere rather than an articulation of theories/paradigms from within the African continent. This is made apparent, for example, by statements made in course outlines. In section 4.2.1 we have mentioned the use of Euro-American textbooks which are said to provide a theoretical basis for the modules and supplemented by excerpts from writings by South African authors. In other words, any country could be the subject matter because South Africa is brought in as an example to illustrate Euro-American theories. Very little attempt is made to find South African readings which will form part of the 'core', as opposed to 'additional', readings. The bulk of the core readings are imported from elsewhere. While the said textbooks offer basic introductory concepts to sociology, they are nevertheless not universally applicable. It may be objected to this point that there are no locally written textbooks which offer such basic introduction to sociology. Such an objection is, however, partially true. This is so because Oxford Higher Education in South Africa had an 'Introduction to Sociology' series which was edited by Johann Graaff. It had textbooks by Graaff, Suzan Ziehl, *Population Studies* (2002), and *Work and Organisations* (2004) by Eddie Webster, Sakhele Buhlungu and Andries Bezuidenhout. These textbooks are themselves Eurocentric of course.

Even if we grant that there is paucity of introductory sociological texts in South Africa, that would still constitute a challenge to South African sociologists in that there is a need to transcend Euro-American paradigms and concepts. In this regard, the presumed universality of the

textbooks prescribed to students (however important they may be) is counterproductive. This is so because ‘much of our curriculum reproduces the fixation on Europe and the disconnection with the collective memories of the non-European (by descent) segments of our student body’ (Adesina 2005: 31). Thus: ‘The point here is not simply one of lack of access; it is the reproduction of a disposition that places very little value on and often refuses to engage with alter native modes of knowledge production and outcome. I have encountered course outlines after course outlines in our social sciences and humanities where scant reference is ever made to African scholarship and social thought north of the Limpopo’ (Adesina 2005: 32). We may mention, as an example of this erasure, the frequent reference to Marx, Weber and Durkheim as the ‘founding fathers’ sociology. This assumption, as mentioned earlier on, is predicated on the view that the history of sociology is the same as the history of western modernity. Yet there are sociologists from places other than Europe who have written pioneering sociological texts before and during the times of Marx and Weber. Among these may be mentioned, Ibn Khaldun, Jose Rizal, Benoy Kumar Sarkar and WEB Du Bois. Their works, as pointed out by Alatas (2003), form part of the ‘canon’ of sociology.

We have seen in section 4.1.2 a course outline on ‘Race in South Africa’ in which there is very little acknowledgement or reference to black scholars. It is not, of course, necessarily the case that, because we are in Africa, black scholars must have the final word on race. But it is difficult to understand why, in a module on race in South Africa, with a history such as the one this country has, there is no reference to black scholars. It is difficult to imagine, in the context of patriarchy and gender-based violence, that one could convene a module on gender which would consist exclusively of male scholars. That, surely, would defeat the purpose of trying to problematise gender. In like manner, to problematise race in South Africa one would have to contend with the writings of Ben Magubane and Steve Biko among others.

Equally, in a second year module on ‘deviance’, the writings of Fatima Meer – her study of suicide in Chatsworth and her analysis of the mistrial of Andrew Zondo, respectively – are highly pertinent. To contend with her writings would be to reconsider much of the analyses we read on the sociology of crime in South Africa. We have also highlighted the lack of engagement with (i) Africa as a subject matter and (ii) writings on Africa by African scholars in the module

on 'Poverty and Development'. There is vast literature, as mentioned earlier, on these issues which has been written by African scholars from Africa-centred perspectives. Their works are thus not purely of epistemological value but have profound policy implications. Mafeje's paper, 'Democracy and Development in Africa' (1997d), offers important insights in this regard. We have mentioned, in section 4.1.2, a number of similar texts. Also, in the same section, while the module on 'Industrial Sociology' offers interesting reading material, largely written by South Africa sociologists, its foundational assumption, that the shop-floor can either be understood in Fordist or post-Fordist perspectives, assumes a false dichotomy. One is aware of the fact that South Africa does not exist in isolation and as such the said paradigms may very well be applicable. It remains the case, however, that workplace dynamics in South Africa need to be taken on their own terms before they can be related to the rest of the world. This point is made all the stronger by the fact that even in the West, there are alternative explanations to the ones mentioned above – feminism, post-modernism etc.

We have also reviewed the module on 'Sociological Theory' which features the works of South Africa scholars like Mafeje and Ally. Such readings should be accompanied by many others such as Magubane's, Ruth First's, Harold Wolpe's, Fatima Meer's etc. In like manner, the module on 'Political Sociology', while dealing with questions of authoritarianism, protests etc., it excludes the pioneering study, *The Barrel of a Gun*, by Ruth First. This book studies the political sociology of coups in Africa. It is therefore highly pertinent for this module. The postgraduate course outlines, as stated earlier, offer no reading lists except for the module on 'Research Methodology'. The methodological section in Fatima Meer's book on suicide is highly pertinent in its attempt to collapse the divide between qualitative and quantitative research. Equally, it is relevant, in its critique of Durkheim's work, to the postgraduate module on 'Social Theory'. The same can be said about the works of Mafeje, Wolpe and Magubane. Mafeje's work provides good counter-points to Mbembe's (who is featured in the module) post-modernist writings on Africa.

We should like to preface our analysis of responses from lecturers and students with these words:

The disconnection between pre-school collective memory and what is considered valuable enough to be taught in the school produces an alienating education – and here I

speaking largely of the humanities. The schizophrenia that results, in its worst forms, swings from acute self-loathing to intense anger against the educators and what they may represent. (Adesina 2005: 31)

Also, 'we cannot speak of Global Sociology when what comes through as sociology is the 'globalisation' of specific European ideographic discourses – on the back of an imperial colonial project' (Adesina 2005: 33).

It is worth recording here that while lecturers prescribe readings by South African sociologists, when students were asked to name some of the major texts in their curriculum, very few of them actually mentioned South African sociologists. What stood out is the frequent reference to Euro-American thinkers: Marx, Weber, Durkheim, members of the Frankfurt school, Goffman, Geertz, Hegel etc. While South African readings, as seen from the presentation of course outlines, are prescribed, students nevertheless do not conceive of them as major texts. This takes us back to the question of South Africa as nothing more than an empirical illustration of received theories and paradigms. As highlighted before, students' responses are varied when it comes to the question of whether South Africa was the central focus or not. Some felt that it was central while others felt that it was not. Equally, responses are varied on the question as to whether or not the reading material addressed their lived experiences. What stands out is the varied nature of students' ontological backgrounds in response to this question. This, of course, is to be expected in that given their different classes, races, and genders students cannot be expected to give uniform answers to a question of the kind. In this regard, it seems extraordinary that lecturers can confidently claim, as they did in their responses, to teach material that speaks to students' lived experiences. To show how this is so, some students' responses were as follows: 'there is a kind of disconnect', 'you need texts that are relevant', 'why can't we come up with our own theories?', 'they don't relate to my background' etc.

It is well to echo Adesina's warning that: 'The implications of an educational system that damages the inner self of students may not produce body counts but are fundamentally damaging nonetheless' (Adesina 2005: 29). What one finds particularly interesting is the fact that while lecturers prescribe readings written by sociologists in South Africa, as noted before, they nevertheless do not conceive of them as doing African sociology. Equally, they have not heard of

the concept of African sociology. The same holds true for students. This speaks not to the absence or scarcity of such material, but rather to the avoidance of African scholarship in the South African academy. The issue, as stated throughout the thesis, is not simply about producing data on Africa, but rather to generate theories which are existentially and epistemologically rooted on the continent. Importantly, lack of familiarity with the concept of African sociology, above everything else, speaks to what we have referred to as the ontological disconnect with Africa and cultural affinity with the West.

When lecturers were asked about the issue of ‘endogenising’ sociology in South Africa, while claiming not to be opposed to it, nevertheless had qualifications: ‘it depends on whether there is enough quality material’, ‘there is no problem if scholars’ work is of international standard’, ‘I also think we should be open to ideas from other parts of the world’, ‘sometimes people work with patronising assumptions of what indigenous knowledge is’ etc. These assumptions are predicated on the problematic view that to be rooted in the locale is to compromise international standards or that local knowledge is in conflict with being universal. Yet:

local relevance is never at odds with global and rigorous scholarship and being internationally reputable: a debate around such an idea is essentially a false debate. The assumption that a preference for the local under the global is a false dichotomy. Oxford and Cambridge will define themselves as English universities; much the same way as Harvard will define itself as American. It is inconceivable that anyone will argue that Oxford’s fundamental Englishness (albeit with aristocratic pretensions) is a negation of its global reputation. (Adesina 2005: 28)

There is, therefore, no reason to suppose that pursuing Africa-centred research and prescribing local readings will lower academic standards. It is at this point that we return to our original problematique and argue that what sociologists like Adesina, Alatas and Mafeje, each independently, refer to as ‘academic dependency’ or ‘extraversion’ prevails at the department under investigation. This is necessarily so because, while they do prescribe readings by local scholars, such readings are not only predicated on epistemologies from elsewhere but at the core serve only to illustrate, with South African examples, such epistemologies. Such a problem is both ideological and ontological. The claim to ‘international standards’, as though being local serves to compromise such standards, is itself, as stated earlier, a sign of cultural affinity with the

West and ontological disconnect with the local. This denies any possibility of there being an African sociology in the South African academy.

It is also at this point that we should like to return to the relevance of Mafeje's work. If we take seriously his argument that knowledge is primarily ideographic rather than nomothetic, then we would take seriously not only Africa-centred research, but teaching or prescribing readings of the same. We would thus be 'authentic interlocutors'. To the extent that this is so, Mafeje argues that knowledge is first local before it can be said to be universal. In making such a statement, it should be noted, one is not making an invitation to parochialism. Nor is one refusing to endorse universally upheld academic standards of reasoned and critical enquiry (or what Marrow (2009) calls 'epistemic values'). Following Mafeje, we have in mind the view that researchers ought to take their objects of enquiry or units of analysis on their own terms. He argued that researchers' theoretical inclinations should not dictate to data. But rather, researchers ought to generate insights from the data itself. If, Mafeje argued, data contrasts with established views, what we encounter is an 'epistemological rapture', and therefore new theories, not epiphenomena or aberrations. Mafeje's approach, then, is such that in enriching existing knowledge, it does not make data conform to theory, but makes theory give way to data – assuming that the two are in conflict. This, too, is no refusal to be critical of one's objects of enquiry – there is no conflict between empathy and critique, as Mafeje (1991) advises. His idea of authentic interlocution, therefore, provides the epistemological foundation for reworking the sociology curriculum in South Africa. At the level of teaching, this requires the three-step approach suggested in Adesina (2006a): (i) self-awareness or self-knowledge on the part of the teachers; (ii) critical engagement; and (iii) extraction of ideas and pursuit of sociological enterprise that promotes what he calls 'epistemic rapture'.

6.3 Concluding Remarks

Writing about the difficulties inherent in the question of curriculum transformation, Morrow (2009: 28) once said, echoing an applicant's response during a job interview, 'Trying to change a curriculum is like trying to move a cemetery.' This is necessarily so because, at least in part, what academics teach in their modules is usually aligned to their research interests (Oloyede

2006) – as we have also discovered in the previous chapter. Indeed, one lecturer said lecturers cannot know students’ interests beforehand. Thus, just as ‘moving a cemetery is always difficult and problematic – always characterised by passionate conflict, anxiety and resistance. Even in cases in which there are what appear to be overwhelming practical reasons to do so, it is always contentious’ (Marrow 2009: 29), trying to change curricula is just as difficult. It is understood that lecturers teach according to their research interests, and to ask that they teach something other than what they know is to ask that they either change or diversify their research interests – something which requires time. But it is well to remember Frederich Hayek’s advice to Arthur Lewis, ‘the best way to learn a subject is to teach it’ (quoted in Adesina 2006: 38fn16). So while it may be difficult to diversify one’s research interests (for various reasons) this does not take away the fact that teachers have ‘agency’ to act otherwise. The major task ahead for South African sociologists is one which has been put forward by some (South) African sociologists and Third World sociologists that we need to generate theories locally as opposed to importing theory and exporting data.



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Appendices

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

INTRODUCTION:

Good day, my name is Bongani Nyoka. I am currently conducting research in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Sociology at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). I would like to invite you to consider volunteering to participate in this study.

Before volunteering to participate in this study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose of the study, the procedures, benefits, and your right to withdraw from the study at any time.

You should fully understand what is involved before you agree to take part in this study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

You are being asked to participate in a study to help understand curriculum and pedagogic issues of sociology in a sociology department in a South African university. I would like to invite you to volunteer to participate in this study because you have told me that you are a student of Sociology/Sociology lecturer.

The overall aim of this study is to investigate sociology curriculum in your department. Specific objectives of the research are to:

- i. investigate whether or not sociology lecturers teach the writings of sociologists within the African continent; and
- ii. investigate the impact of curriculum transformation, or lack thereof, from the perspective of students studying for degrees in sociology and of sociology lecturers.

This study is funded by a grant from the National Research Foundation.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION:

The information that will be collected is purely for academic/research purposes and to learn more about epistemic and pedagogic issues of Sociology in South Africa. Participation is voluntary.

STUDY PROCEDURES:

If you volunteer for the study, you will be asked to have a conversation with me (the researcher/interviewer). The researcher will interview both undergraduates and postgraduates – about ten students from each group. The intention here, among other things, is to compare patterns in epistemic and pedagogy issues in curriculum of the Sociology departments from the students' and lecturers' perspectives. Student interviews will be followed by interviews of the

members of staff so as to assess, among other things, what the lecturers teach, their research interests and whether such interests have any impact on what they teach; to assess their views regarding the state of Sociology in South Africa and some of the changes they have seen and/or effected in their Sociology departments and so on.

AUDIO-RECORDING:

With your permission, I would like the interview to be audio-recorded. These recordings will be transcribed to make an in-depth analysis of the interview possible. Only the researcher and his supervisor will hear the recordings. The recordings will be saved on password protected computers at the office of the supervisor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at UWC. The recording of your interview will be destroyed once the interview is transcribed and checked, and not later than six months after the interview took place. You can withdraw your consent to record the interview. You also have the right to ask me to erase the audio-recording.

POTENTIAL RISKS & DISCOMFORTS:

Much of the information I would like you to share with me is of a sensitive nature. Some of the questions may make you feel uncomfortable. You may skip any question that makes you feel too uncomfortable. You may also stop the interview at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information that you provide may help academics, researchers, and students in this area of study to have a better understanding of the issues under investigation.

COMPENSATION:

Unfortunately you will not be compensated for participating in this study. Research ethics do not permit such.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The information you share with the researcher will be handled confidentially in order to protect your privacy and keep your participation anonymous. The interviewer will not collect any personal identifying information from you either on paper or in the recorded interview. The interviewer will not ask your name or identity number. Your response to the interview questions will be recorded on a computer file that only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to. The audio recording and the transcript of your interview will be stored on a computer and protected with a password. Only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to the audio computer file and transcript of your interview. Paper copies of interview transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the Anthropology and Sociology Department at UWC. Only the

researcher and his supervisor will have access to these files. Your name will not be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study.

RESEARCH STANDARDS AND RIGHTS OF PARTICIPANTS:

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk to the interviewer. You may also ask his supervisor or the head of his home department (Sociology, UWC) any questions you may have about this research. You may ask him questions in future if you do not understand something that is being done. We have received approval to conduct this study from the Ethics Committee at UWC.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS AND FURTHER INFORMATION:

1. Professor Jimi Adesina - Supervisor - jotadesina@uwc.ac.za
2. Dr Lionel Thaver - Head of Department - lthaver@uwc.ac.za

DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT:

AUTHORISATION: I have read the above and understand the nature of this study. I understand that I may contact the researcher's supervisor (Prof Jimi Adesina), or the Head of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of the Western Cape (Dr Lionel Thaver), at any time.

Signature of Participant

Date

Print Name of Participant

Interview Questions for Students

Interviewer:

Date:

Time:

University:

Interview No:

Label:

Background questions

1. What year of study are you in (undergraduate or postgraduate)?
2. Why have you chosen this university over others?
3. Why have you chosen to major in Sociology?
4. What do you hope to do with a Sociology degree?
5. Do you feel that it has prepared (or is preparing) you for the kind of career you wish to pursue?

Concerning course content

6. If you can remember, could you please tell me about some of the courses you had previously enrolled for in Sociology?
7. What were some of the major texts/readings in these courses?
8. Was (South) Africa always central to or the point of reference in all these courses?
9. Could you tell me about some of the African sociologists which you have been introduced to thus far?
10. Were you introduced to their original/primary texts? Or was it merely interpretations/critiques of their works?
11. Were their writings at central to the courses (i.e. were their texts 'essential/prescribed readings' for the courses or were they simply 'additional readings')?
12. Does it matter to you if you were taught the writings of African sociologists or not? If so, why? If not, why not?
13. If you were taught the writings of African sociologists, how did your fellow students respond to/receive the writings/readings in question?
14. How diverse were these readings?
15. Do you feel that these writings/readings speak to your personal history/biography i.e. are they 'relevant'?
16. Do you feel that the conceptual or theoretical frameworks adopted in these readings help you understand better your society (South) Africa)?
17. In general, would you say that (South) Africa is given enough attention in the readings prescribed to you?
18. If you have read the writings of African Sociologists, did you find that their writings are epistemologically/theoretically/paradigmatically distinct or did you think they simply regurgitate what their Western counterparts have written?

19. As you progress/advance in your studies (Sociology), have you noticed any difference in terms of the content of the courses/modules or would you say there's a certain level of redundancy (or perhaps overlap between them)?
20. Do you feel that the readings prescribed in these courses inspire you to continue doing Sociology? If so, how?
21. In the light of the courses you have enrolled for (over the years), would you say that there is a particular intellectual direction or 'school of thought' (e.g. Materialist, Liberal, 'Afropolitan', Pan-Africanist etc.) which your department is sympathetic to or which the department is gravitating towards?
22. Comparatively, would you say that your department is different (in terms of the course content) from other Sociology departments in SA? In other words, do you feel that you are getting something different (even better) from your contemporaries, say, at UCT? If so, how?
23. What are your views on the call (by Black academics) for 'endogenisation' of higher education curriculum, particularly the social sciences (Sociology) in SA?

Concerning pedagogy

24. How are these courses structured? (Are the readings prescribed in terms of major debates within particular topics/themes (say 'Understanding Domination') or is the focus on particular a author's ideas (say a course entitled 'Marx's Theory of History' etc)?)
25. What is the form of assessment (tests, essays, research papers, exam etc.)?
26. We know that in the social sciences there is an emphasis on learning the content of the readings and also on pedagogical issues (i.e. cognitive skills, argumentation, academic writing, critical reasoning etc.). Did you at any stage of your studies feel that there was a trade-off between the two? In other words, did you ever feel that, at some point, your Sociology lecturers emphasised content at the expense of pedagogy or vice versa?
27. Have you been taught how to conduct empirical/field research?
28. If so, what theoretical/conceptual frameworks/'tools of analysis' do you employ when conducting your research?
29. Do you feel that these frameworks help you make sense of your data? If so, how?
30. Would you say that the courses you have been taught prepare you for a particular career/field of work or would you say the emphasis is purely on critical reasoning and problem solving?
31. What, in your view, is the 'core-business'/*raison d'être* of Sociology? In other words, what do you think your lecturers should be teaching you in your Sociology classes?
32. What would you say is the major difference, in terms of how and what you are taught, between Sociology and other courses which you have enrolled for in your degree?
33. Would you recommend Sociology to people who wish to enrol for a degree in the social sciences? If so why? If not, why not?

34. Do you feel that the courses for which you enrolled suite your needs and interests or are they simply a reflection of your lecturers' (research) interests?
35. Are there issues that we have not discussed which you would like to raise?

**THANK YOU
END OF INTERVIEW**

Interview Questions for Members of Staff

Interviewer:

Date:

Time:

University:

Interview No:

Label:

1. What attracted you to Sociology?
2. How long have you been teaching in this department?
3. Could you tell me about your research interests?
4. Are those aligned to the courses you teach?
5. What are the major texts in these courses?
6. Is (South) Africa central to what you teach? If so why? If not why not?
7. Do you think that your courses help your students have a better understanding or make sense of their societies?
8. If so, which conceptual/theoretical frameworks do you employ helping them make sense of their societies?
9. How do you respond to the claim that more often than not, lecturers teach courses which reflect their research interests rather than their students' interests or needs?
10. Would you say that your students are getting something different (better) than their counterparts in other South African universities? If so how?
11. Would you say that you prepare your students for the world of work or simply equip them with critical thinking skills?
12. Which African sociologists have you introduced your students to?
13. Do you introduce the students to the said scholars' primary texts or is it interpretations/critiques?
14. Does it matter to you whether or not your students learn more about what African sociologists have to say? If so why? If not why not?

15. Would you say that there is anything particularly theoretically/conceptually distinct in the writings of African sociologists (vis a vis their Western counterparts)? If so how?
16. What are your views on 'endogenisation' of higher education curriculum and the social sciences (Sociology) in particular?
17. Have you actually heard of the concept of 'African Sociology'?
18. Have you taught African Sociology?
19. Do any of your colleagues teach African Sociology?
20. Would you recommend Sociology to people who wish to enrol for a degree in the social sciences? If so why? If not, why not?
21. Do you try to generate theories/paradigms of your own in your research/data or do you simply rely on existing theories/paradigms?
22. Would you say that it is useful to put strong emphasis on pedagogy as opposed to the content of the material? If so why? If not why not?
23. How do you assess your students (e.g. essays, research papers, exam)?
24. What are the benefits of this method of assessment?
25. How often, if at all, do you change the content of what you teach?
26. What would you say is the major difference, in terms of how and what you teach, between Sociology and other courses which your students enrolled for?
27. At one of South Africa's 'leading' universities undergraduate students heckled their lecturers protesting that they are tired of learning about 'dead European men'. As a result of that, some African scholars concluded that most of the courses taught in the social sciences are 'alienating' to the students – insofar as they lack 'relevance'. Is there any basis to such claims? What are your views on the matter?
28. Would you say that there is a particular intellectual direction or 'school of thought' (Pan-Africanist, 'Afro-Politan' etc.) which your department is sympathetic to or which the department is gravitating towards?
29. What are your thoughts on the state of the discipline of Sociology in South Africa?
30. When you look at your department, would you say that it is different (in terms of research and course content) from other Sociology departments in South African universities? If so how?
31. In terms of the course content or intellectual direction, what have been some of the changes you have seen/effectuated in this department?

32. Are there issues that we have not spoken about which you would like us to discuss?

**THANK YOU
END OF INTERVIEW**

Annexure A

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Annexure B

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