

Reading race: The curriculum as a site of transformation

by

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Declaration

I declare that: “Reading race: The curriculum as a site of transformation” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated or acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Keywords

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Summary

Transformation of post-apartheid higher education institutions has shown itself to be deeply complex and contentious. Exploring transformation at a former whites-only Afrikaans university, this study leans on Michel Foucault's archaeological methodology and uses a qualitative case study approach. In accordance with this methodological approach the study excavates, de-layers and probes at an inter-departmental conflict which ensued over how racial identity is being re-imagined within the curriculum. The study further seeks to explore what this conflict says about institutional ideologies and commitments to change.

Ostensibly, the conflict was over the contents of a module, the Ubuntu Module, presented at both the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Humanities. Contested views on the nature of knowledge presented in the module, which deals overtly and explicitly with racial and cultural identity, emerged between the two faculties. The Faculty of Education removed the module from its curriculum, asserting that its' contents were antithetical to the faculty's ideological tenets with regards to curriculum transformation. Amid attempts by the Faculty of Education to have the module removed from the university's curriculum, the Faculty of Humanities took the decision to continue offering the module. What this study suggests is that the debate went

beyond a mere inter-faculty contention over curriculum contents, and can offer a lens into broader institutional transformation ideologies, and commitments to the decommissioning of apartheid identities.

The study was explored and analysed through the lens of critical theory, and in so doing it offers a critical look at the intellectual and ideological foundations of the university, and how the university navigates transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. The literature review uses eclectic literatures to historicise and contextualise the study. It underscores how the focus of literature on curriculum transformation on post-apartheid higher educational institutions has essentially skimmed over the links between the inherent dynamics of knowledge and power as is reflected in curriculum contents. As the findings of the study point to, pressures exerted on the university from both government, and grassroots level at the university, that being students and staff, are having an unequivocal impact on how the university thinks about and implements transformation. The findings of the study suggest that although rhetorically committed to transformation, the university is struggling to emerge from its own politically instrumentalist past.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1 General introduction: race, knowledge and transformation - a messy business	1
1.2 Contextual introduction	2
1.2.1 “Race isn’t real - but it’s a reality”: South Africa’s legacy of race	2
1.2.2 Education and race: reification and resistance	3
1.2.3 Universities as capillaries of power	4
1.2.4 Post-apartheid re-positionings	5
1.3 Problem statement	6
1.4 Statement of purpose	6
1.5 Research questions	6
1.6 Rationale behind the study.....	7
1.6.1 Personal, socio-contextual and academic motivations.....	7
1.6.2 The social context	8
1.6.3 Academic rationale	9
1.7 Definitions of terms	11
1.7.1 Race.....	11
1.7.2 Racialised	12
1.7.3 Racist.....	12
1.7.4 Identity	12
1.7.5 Culture.....	12
1.7.6 Ethnicity	13
1.7.7 Hegemony.....	13
1.7.8 Normativity.....	13
1.7.9 Transformation.....	13
1.7.10 Curriculum.....	14
1.8 Outline of the thesis	15
1.8.1 Chapter 1: Introduction	15
1.8.2 Chapter 2: Methodology.....	15
1.8.3 Chapter 3: Literature review: historicising context and contextualising history	15
1.8.4 Chapter 4: Analysis and findings.....	15
1.8.5 Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	16
Chapter 2: Methodology	17
2.1 Introduction: transformation and appropriate methodologies.....	17
2.2 Finding a focus	18
2.2.1 Unearthing an area of study.....	18
2.2.2 The Ubuntu Module	18

2.2.3 Conflict over curriculum content	19
2.2.4 A change of focus in my study	20
2.3 The need for a responsive methodology	21
2.4 Archaeological research: a qualitative case study	22
2.5 The research site	23
2.6 Methods: data collection and sources	24
2.6.1 Interviews and participants	24
2.6.1.1 Semi-structured interviews	24
2.6.1.2 Primary participants (formal interviews).....	25
2.6.1.3 Subsidiary participants (informal interviews).....	26
2.6.2 Documents	26
2.6.3 Field notes	28
2.7 Delimitations and possible concerns	28
2.7.1 Students	28
2.7.2 Concerns raised about the study	28
2.8 Data analysis: conversing with the data.....	29
2.9 Critical theory.....	30
2.10 Document analysis: post-colonial archiving	31
2.11 Validity and reliability: ensuring a credible and trustworthy study	32
2.12 Ethics	33
2.13 Anticipated limitations of the study.....	35
Chapter 3: Literature Review: historicising context and contextualising	
history	36
3.1 Introduction	36
3.2. Race, culture and racisms.....	37
3.2.1. Global racisms	37
3.2.1.1 “The problem of the colour line”	37
3.2.1.2 Historicising race: Du Bois’s overturning of the enlightenment canon	38
3.2.1.3 Race as a construct: post-structural repositionings of race.....	39
3.2.1.4 Racist culture: modernity and the centrality of race	40
3.2.2 The South African experience	41
3.2.2.1 Colonial constructions of race	41
3.2.2.2 The myth of South African exceptionalism.....	42
3.2.2.3 Separate and unequal.....	44
3.2.2.4 Culturation of race and racialisation of culture: racism’s last word?.....	45
3.2.2.5 Counter discourses: defying the logic of apartheid identities.....	46
3.2.2.6 Black Consciousness: race as experience	48
3.3 Racialised and racist education	49
3.3.1 A legitimising discourse.....	49

3.3.2	Apartheid’s academics	50
3.3.3	Mind forg’d manacles	51
3.4	A historical backdrop.....	52
3.4.1	The role of universities during apartheid: higher education as a technology of rule	52
3.4.2	<i>Volkekunde</i> : the curriculum as a site of racist culture.....	55
3.5	The curriculum and power: the production of racial knowledges (‘truths’) and ideologies	56
3.6	Post-apartheid discourses.....	59
3.6.1	The problem of non-racialism	59
3.6.2	The official voice: the rhetoric of transformation.....	60
3.6.3	Transformation and the convergence of globalisation and redress.....	61
3.6.4	Globalisation’s influence: a myopic focus	62
3.6.5	Curriculum transformation: the response of universities	63
3.6.6	Curriculum transformation: oversight in the literature	64
3.6.7	The struggle over curriculum reform: “the great curriculum debate”	65
3.6.8	Opening the coffin of apartheid	67
3.7	Final words.....	67
Chapter 4:	Analysis and findings	69
4.1	General introduction	69
4.2	Race: discourses of evasion	70
4.2.1	“Culture: a smokescreen for racism”	70
4.2.2	Contested readings of race.....	72
4.2.3	“Nobody gives me an answer”: institutional evasions of re-imagining race	73
4.2.4	“Let them give definitions of race in the constitution”	76
4.2.5	Institutional readings of race: the influence of governmental and normative discourses	77
4.2.6	Institutional transformation: complex and uneven	79
4.2.7	Taken-for-granted understandings of race	80
4.3	The institutional setting: transformation in higher education	81
4.3.1	The rhetoric of transformation.....	81
4.3.2	Transformation? Institutional ideologies and individual interpretations	82
4.3.3	Is the institution “dischargeng [its] social responsibilities”?	84
4.3.4	Policy hindrances or institutional inertia?.....	85
4.3.5	Laissez-faire.....	86
4.3.6	The focus of transformation: “they pay lip service to transformation”	86
4.3.7	“We can only deconstruct race as far as we are afforded the space do that” ...	88
4.3.8	Curriculum transformation: going below the radar	89
4.4	The Ubuntu Module: case study.....	92
4.4.1	A knowledge and epistemological inertia	92
4.4.2	Complexities of curriculum change: “think of the curriculum institutionally” 93	
4.4.3	Aims of the Ubuntu Module: “an awareness of cultural differences”	95

4.4.4 “Let’s just show you how really different they are from us”: difference as politically manoeuvred.....	97
4.4.5 “We are not going to be studied like little monkeys - as if we are in a cage at the zoo”	98
4.4.6 Is Ubuntu studies representative of broader institutional ideologies?	100
4.4.7 Institutional cover: “It does not jar the senses”	102
4.4.8 Innovation certificate for teaching	104
4.4.9 “Even when it was detected it could be defended - that is astounding”	105
4.4.10 Ethnic credibility and the institutional cover: “this monster called Ubuntu was created”	106
4.4.11 Nature of knowledge: “profoundly racist” vs “certainly not outdated and relevant”	107
4.4.12 “We do not want to dig up apartheid every time”	109
4.4.13 Understanding conservatism.....	111
4.5 Final words.....	111
Chapter 5: Conclusion	113
5.1 Introduction.....	113
5.2 Personal observations	113
5.3 The continued burden of readings of race.....	113
5.4 Higher education discourses: the silenced salient	114
5.5 Race and the nature of knowledge: the curriculum as a site of conservatism	115
5.6 Relics of <i>Volkekunde</i>	115
5.7 Marginalisation of struggle	116
5.8 Institutional apathy or pressure placed on institutions?.....	117
5.9 Pressures exerted on the university	118
5.9.1 Pressures from above	119
5.9.1.1 Governmental directives.....	119
5.9.1.2 Marketization pressures.....	120
5.9.2 Pressures from below	121
5.10 Final thoughts	122
5.11 Areas for further possible study	123
Bibliography	124

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 General introduction: race, knowledge and transformation - a messy business

I think intellectually the Ubuntu Module is a wonderful discovery. I would have been disappointed if there wasn't something to study in curriculum terms, because as I said at a CHE [Council for Higher Education] conference, it's not enough to measure success rates on how many kids get through university; we must ask at the same time: what is [it] that they are learning about each other?¹

Transformation of higher education institutions is a messy business. From the well-publicised² Mamdani and Makgoba affairs, to the Prof. Benatar debate and student protests against transformation initiatives proposed by the University of the Free State, which culminated in the recent surfacing of an incendiary racist video³, transformation has shown itself to be a deeply emotional, contentious and complex matter. This study examines one such transformation struggle - although this struggle has not been generally recognised as such, even within the university at which it took place. In the process, the study touches on a number of thorny issues in higher education. Firstly, it looks at a struggle surrounding how racial identity is being re-imagined within the curriculum at a former Whites-only Afrikaans university. Secondly, it seeks to explore what this struggle says about institutional ideologies and commitments to change. Exploring race, transformation and the challenging of knowledge structures, it covers a volatile combination of issues in post-apartheid higher education.

¹ (Formal interview with a Head of a Faculty of Education at a South African university, and a participant in my study, 2007).

² For further reading on the Makgoba affair see: Retrieved 01 January, 2008, from <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v1/3/6.htm> and <http://www.africafiles.org/article.asp?ID=3813>. For further reading on both the Mamdani and Makgoba affairs see: Retrieved 28 February, 2008, from <http://www.iiav.nl/eazines/web/FeministAfrica/2005/No4/feministafrica/review-vokwana.html> For further reading on the Prof. Benatar debate see: Hautb, A. (2007). *We dare not erase 'race' from the debate*. Retrieved 27 December, 2007, from http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=308292&area=/insight/insight__comment_and_analysis/ For further reading on protests against transformation at the University of the Free State see: Retrieved 01 January, 2008, from

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?click_id=13&set_id=1&art_id=nw20070725121146744C221312
³ For further reading on the surfacing of the racist video at the University of the Free State see: Retrieved 27 February, 2008, from http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=333382&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/

My study seeks to look at transformation from beyond the conventional focus on examining demographic change, by broadly exploring “what [it] is that [students] are learning about each other”⁴, and how this then reflects on institutional ideologies of change (or, as one of my participants puts it: institutional “success rates”⁵ with regards to transformation). To do this, it employs a qualitative case study approach. Leaning on Michel Foucault’s⁶ archaeological methodology, I excavate, de-layer and probe an inter-faculty contest over curriculum transformation. Ostensibly, the controversy that ensued from this contest was over the contents of a module - the Ubuntu Module - taught in both the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Humanities. On assessment of the module, the Faculty of Education deemed it to be “profoundly racist”⁷. Yet, adopting an antithetical stance, the Faculty of Humanities countered that it was “certainly relevant and not outdated”⁸. What my study suggests is that the debate goes beyond a mere inter-faculty contention over curriculum contents, but offers a lens into broader institutional transformation ideologies and commitments to the decommissioning of apartheid identities. As the Head of the Faculty of Education commented “when people talk transformation, the real struggle is the struggle over knowledge”⁹. To facilitate understanding of the implications of this struggle, the debate needs to be contextualised and located within the historicity of South African race ontologies and epistemologies.

1.2 Contextual introduction

1.2.1 “Race isn’t real - but it’s a reality”¹⁰: South Africa’s legacy of race

Mass social engineering, an integral feature of colonial rule¹¹ in South Africa, sought to do more than physically segregate South African society along the racist constructs of White,

⁴ (Formal interview with the Head of the Faculty of Education, 2007).

⁵ Although the term “success rates” may seem to imply an approach to transformation that leans to the quantitative, in context during my interview with this participant, the Head of the Faculty of Education, it connoted a qualitative view of change.

⁶ See: (Deacon, 2003: 65).

⁷ (Formal interview with Head of the Faculty of Education, 2007).

⁸ (Formal interview with a senior member of the Faculty of Humanities and the department in which the Ubuntu Module is presented and from which it is outsourced, 2007).

⁹ (Formal interview with the Head of the Faculty of Education, 2007).

¹⁰ (Hall, 1997).

¹¹ Mahmood Mamdani (1997) and Harold Wolpe (1974) contend that colonialism in South Africa continued through the twentieth century in the form of internal colonialism, in terms of which Whites were the colonisers and Blacks the colonial subjects.

Indian, Coloured and African. As Stephen Bantu Biko (2004) and other scholars of colonialism like Frantz Fanon (1986) and Ann Laura Stoler (1995), have pointed out, racial segregation's principal objective was to colonise the mind into accepting such hierarchical constructs as pre-ordained truths. Legislative as well as informal structurings of race experienced globally (Goldberg, 1996) and in South Africa, most perceptibly during apartheid, aimed to normalise and naturalise race (Maylam, 1998; Reddy, 1995; Roos, 2005; Zegeye, 2001a). These capillaries of structural racism intended to inure South Africans into accepting ontological framings and epistemological understandings of race as unquestioned 'truths'. As such, South Africans were 'taught' to identify and socialise within broad racial categories and 'their' ethnic subdivisions, with racialised identities being officially constructed as unalterable historical, ethnographic and cultural truths. Moreover, reified by the ideological myths of apartheid and scientific racism (Dubow, 1995), race became a primary socio-economic divider. Further entrenching 'othering'¹² in South Africa was the inequitable and discriminatory allocation of resources and privileges along racial identity demarcations (Reddy, 1995; Roos, 2005; Zegeye, 2001a).

1.2.2 Education and race: reification and resistance

The centrality of the role of education in the normalisation, reification and naturalisation of racial identities has been particularly underscored in critical and post-colonial literatures (Apple, 2004; Coetzee, 1991; Comaroff, 2001; Deacon, 2005; Mamdani, 1997; McCarthy, 1990; Said, 2003). In comprehending the extent to which hegemonic ideologies have been inscribed into the everyday practices and discourses of South Africans, it is important to read education as not confined merely to traditional domains such as schools and universities. Rather, from a Foucaultian perspective, under apartheid, state controlled education under apartheid extended well beyond formal schooling. Thus, going beyond the immediate and formal aims of curricula, 'education' could be observed in the very structures of state and civil society. Through these capillaries of power, knowledge production and reproduction were further regulated and controlled by the state (Deacon, 2005). Because of this, state and civil structures instilled practices of structural and institutionalised racism into everyday particularities (Cooper & Stoler, 1997; Goldberg, 1996). As Cooper and Stoler (1997) infer,

¹² And, indeed, 'otherness'.

hegemonic ideologies and discourses sought to normalise the South African *mentalité*¹³ through mechanisms of state and civil society which further “helped to define moral superiority and maintain cultural differences” (4).

1.2.3 Universities as capillaries of power

Central to the reading of this thesis is the role of formal sites of education in structuring the normalisation and naturalisation (and, indeed neutralisation) of racialised identities. As John Comaroff (2001) maintains, from the advent of colonial rule up until the dismantling of legislative apartheid, “invasive [pedagogical] technologies of mind and body was a crucial vector in the effort to insinuate new signs and practices amongst colonized peoples” (50). This was particularly so under the apartheid regime (or internal colonialism), where racisms were further rooted into the everyday actions of South Africans (Reddy, 1995) through schemes of official legitimization (Ashforth, 1990) (or educational institutions) and scholarly discourses on racial superiority (Coetzee, 1991; Dubow, 1995). Universities were posited by the apartheid state as integral structural agents in the organisation and justification of apartheid’s logic and they served as key locales where racial and cultural difference could be academically validated (Badat, 1999, 2004; Bunting, 2002; Coetzee; 1991; McCarthy, 1990; Reddy, 2004). As the literature attests (Badat, 2004; Bunting, 2002; Jansen, 1998; Mamdani, 1997; McCarthy, 1990; Reddy, 2004), the epistemological foundations of universities were deeply influenced by the prevailing normative ontologies of racial identity - which were reciprocally influenced by formal academic epistemologies (Deacon, 2005). Under the rule of the apartheid state,¹⁴ the establishment of universities in South Africa essentially mirrored apartheid’s racial and ethnic divide (Bunting, 2002; McCarthy, 1990).

Yet, different institutional contexts commonly reflected dramatically disparate and oppositional ideologies¹⁵. The positioning of universities as structures of civil society

¹³ I have borrowed this concept from the French Annales School. The meaning thus infers: spirit of an age

¹⁴ The ‘apartheid state’ implies legislative and formal apartheid from 1948 to 1994. Bunting (2002) explains that “In terms of South African law, historically white universities remained part of the Republic of South Africa throughout all the years of apartheid” (65).

¹⁵ Due to the highly politicised and racialised history of South African universities, when talking about higher education institutions I speak of historically black institutions or historically/former/previously

may have been intended to serve state ideology in its implications of neutrality (Reddy, 1995; Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research [WISER], 2006), but that very positioning opened the ideological boundaries of universities up to contestations and resistance (McCarthy, 1990; Reddy, 1995). This resulted in the emergence of counter-hegemonic discourses amongst progressive intellectuals and students, mainly at historically black and historically white English-speaking institutions. This saw both the production (and reproduction) of normative racial identities, and counter-hegemonic identity contestations, often within a singular institution. However, historically white Afrikaans institutions were overtly supportive of the apartheid state. Higher education institutions were thus sites of hegemonic conservatism as well as of struggle and resistance.

1.2.4 Post-apartheid re-positionings

With the official demise of apartheid in April 1994,¹⁶ South Africans had to confront a legacy of racism, and by extension human rights violations, which should in no way be underplayed. Government and civil society have been officially tasked with the reconciliation and reconstruction of a nation divided by years of racially motivated injustices (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Department of Education, 1997). Central to post-apartheid transformation has been the need to redress extensive inequities and inequalities resulting from pervasive race-based dispossession and human rights abuses (Cloete & Bunting, 1999; McKinney, 2004; Zegeye, 2001a). Thus, as this thesis argues and as is voiced particularly by Africanist intellectuals and proponents of the Black Consciousness Movement, a crucial factor in transformation is the need to go beyond demographic and material change and to break the cultural and social power of apartheid's hold on identity.

white institutions. However, as Bunting (2002) explains, historically white institutions should, imperatively, also be further distinguished as Afrikaans and English-speaking institutions, as the approaches of these two groups of institutions towards apartheid and the national government were ostensibly opposed. Bunting (2002) elaborates on this distinction: "The key element in making the distinction between the two sub-groups is that some universities in the group supported the National Party government, including its higher education policies, and others did not" (65).

¹⁶ 27 April 1994 marks the official demise of apartheid when South Africa's first democratic election both legally and symbolically ended white rule.

1.3 Problem statement

In light of the significance of education in the structuring of South Africans' everyday lives, interrogating the role that formal education has played - and is playing - in the reproduction or challenging of identity articulations and understandings is crucial in South Africa's attempt to construct a society based on equality and actualised human rights. Despite the role of universities in elaborating, nurturing and normalising racial identities, universities can (and do) play a significant role in redress and social transformation (Morrison as cited in Giroux, n.d.), as "humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice" (Delors, 1996: 12).

Yet, as an area of critical research, the role of universities' curricula in critical readings of the social transformation enterprise – and particularly how curricula reinforce or contest identities and ideologies stemming from apartheid - has been virtually overlooked. Curricula, it appears, are not studied, but are taken for granted. Indeed, as the Mamdani affair reveals (cf. 3.6.7), when there are challenges to curriculum contents, because of the ideological nature of knowledge, tensions and contentions ensue. Thus, this thesis underscores that readings of curriculum transformation can offer a lens into understandings of broader institutional, and arguably broader social, transformation. As a result, studies of the role that curricula play in conserving or contesting racialised knowledges are useful in gauging not only institutional practices relating to transformation, but also institutional commitments to and ideologies surrounding social transformation.

1.4 Statement of purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore and reflect critically on the struggles for curriculum transformation as it reflects broader institutional and social contests surrounding the re-imagining of apartheid histories and identities.

1.5 Research questions

I will attempt to fulfil this purpose by exploring the following questions:

1. How are national ideologies of social transformation represented in institutional discourses of transformation?
2. How does a South African university seek to re-imagine (racial) identity within its curriculum?
3. How does a university respond to challenges to curriculum content?
4. How does this then reflect on the institution's ideologies of, and commitments to change?

1.6 Rationale behind the study

1.6.1 Personal, socio-contextual and academic motivations

Since embarking on my studies, I have been inexorably drawn to the political, moral and intellectual problematics of race. This interest extends beyond an academic concern, and emanates from a social consciousness based on the ideal of equality and a respect for the rights of a common humanity - although I am only too conscious, as a 'white'¹⁷ South African, that my whiteness has endowed me with privilege.

The past four centuries of South Africa's history have witnessed race being inextricably linked to discriminatory human rights abuses. Fourteen years into a democracy which espouses ideologies of equity, equality and non-racialism, racial categories stemming from the apartheid era continue to inform how identity is thought about. This, I would posit, underscores the fact that we live in a society that is rhetorically committed to freedom - which perforce must transcend racial categories - yet that rather appears to be influenced by a normative, unreflective approach to historical expedients. Moreover, I would argue that South Africans remain race-obsessed and constrained by their tick-box and fetishised¹⁸ understandings of race. These understandings of race are continuously

¹⁷ Although I generally do not put race or race categories in inverted commas in this thesis, it is a personal imperative here that I indicate my race as an imposed construct - yet acknowledge it as one which has inscribed privilege.

¹⁸ The concept of 'fetishising' was first elucidated by Karl Marx when, in his diatribe on capitalism and bourgeois society, he spoke of the 'fetishizing of commodities'. For further reading see: Marx, K. (1977). *The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof*. In J. Dolgin, D.S. Kemnitzer, & D.M. Schneider (Eds), *A symbolic anthropology: a reader in the study of symbols and meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press.

reinforced by government, media, civil society and the lay South African (in other words, by normative discourses). Indeed, the recent barring of white journalists, by the Forum of Black Journalists (FBJ), from attending a meeting addressed by ANC President Jacob Zuma¹⁹, patently illustrates how apartheid readings of identity continue to frame understandings of race. Ultimately, the persistent use of inscribed racial categories accepted without critique has exposed the fragile veneer of non-racialism.

I subscribe to Toni Morrison's (Morrison as cited in Giroux, n.d.) standpoint that universities are not merely sites where skills and professions are produced, but are fundamental structures of society which should play a critical role in aspirations for equality and the betterment of both national and global society. Yet, it is the words of Kwame A. Appiah which best encapsulate and reflect my underlying motivations for undertaking this study: "it [is]n't a matter of belonging to a community; it [i]s a matter of taking responsibility with that community for its destiny" (Appiah, 2003: 189).

The underlying assumptions and motivations that have catalysed me to undertake this study can thus be summarised as follows. There have been no substantive moves to challenge core categories of apartheid, but rather they have been inverted in the politics of redress. This, in effect, sustains and reproduces racialism, and such reproduction is not emancipatory politics. Yet, as a nation, we remain rhetorically committed to the politics of freedom. In light of such rhetorical commitments, what then is the role of universities in the decommissioning and re-imagining of apartheid-inscribed identities?

1.6.2 The social context

President Thabo Mbeki's (2000) state of the nation speech explicitly slated the polarised state of South African society, suggesting that South Africa is in effect a country comprised of two nations, one predominantly white and prosperous, the other black and disadvantaged. Mbeki called on the Human Rights Commission to investigate the extent of, and reasons for, deepening racism. Furthermore, Paul Gilroy (2004) issues a stern warning to South Africa

¹⁹ For further reading on the controversy of the FBJ see: Retrieved 28 February, 2008, from http://www.mg.co.za/articlepage.aspx?area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/&articleid=333298&referrer=RSS

about the far-reaching and dire implications of ignoring racism. Gilroy cautions that if overlooked, “racism can generate particular political forms or ... can consistently transform official political processes into something cruder, more vicious, more hierarchical and predisposed to brutality” (3).

Yet, despite global and national scholarship that has shown race to be a politicised social, cultural and ideological construct (Du Bois, 1965; Goldberg, 1996; Maylam, 1998; Morrison, 1993; Roediger, 1999, 2001, 2003; Roos, 2005; Winant, 2000; Zegeye, 2001a), normative understandings of race in South Africa continue to reflect the apartheid system of classification. Discourses of race as a social construct have received little more than sporadic governmental and academic acknowledgement, and have scarcely penetrated everyday thought and practices. As a social and biological ‘fact’, race has arguably maintained its prominence in both macro and micro social, political, economic and intellectual²⁰ discourses. Armed with a bureaucratic logic, official discourses have simply inverted hierarchical structure of old - a type of looking glass effect - with whiteness and privilege having taken on new forms that sometimes - but not always - intersect. The mercurial nature of whiteness has seen it morph and go under the radar, whilst fixed categories of race have been reasserted in the public domain (including in higher education institutions) as tools for redress. This has arguably served to further ingrain identities structured under apartheid, and sustain racial divides.

1.6.3 Academic rationale

Michael Apple (2001) contends that without critically probing the struggles and contestations that surround education, any analyses and understandings of the educational terrain will undoubtedly fall short. Thus, as this study asserts, an integral component in reading and understanding a university’s commitment to social transformation is to go beyond the numbers game of demographic change. Rather, a critical exploration of the nature of knowledge taught at the university is necessary, particularly in discourses and practices that exist outside of white hetero-normativity, such as critical readings of race. Apple further asserts (1993) that the curriculum “is never a neutral assemblage of knowledge” (222), but is a site of broader social

²⁰ Recent debates surrounding the presidential project of the Native Club attest to this. For further reading on the Native Club see: Retrieved 16 February, 2008, from <http://ruactivate.wordpress.com/2006/08/28/the-native-club-controversy/>

histories and contradictions, a reflector of change or conservatism. Apple (1993) explains that the curriculum is not simply a medium for the transmission of knowledge, but “says something extremely important about who has power in society” (222). Thus, a critical reading of how racial identity is represented in the curriculum works towards a university’s idealised role “as a guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator of more and more complex ethical problems, as servant and preserver of deeper democratic practices” (Morrison as cited in Giroux, online: n.d.).

As I have already said, identities, stratified according to their respective colour-bands were, under apartheid, “associated with a complex range of practices, institutions and rules that people took for granted in their everyday interactions with each other” (Reddy, 1995: 4). Given the significance that education has played in the fixing and internalising of identities, considerable attention should be given to the way that universities (re)constitute identities.

Post-apartheid educational policies also make direct reference to social redress, both in macro and in micro spheres of universities (Department of Education, 1997). Ultimately, effecting policies lies within the jurisdiction - and social commitment - of each individual university or faculty (Cross, 2004). However, social transformation has, in many instances, taken a backseat to, amongst other issues, marketization priorities (Cross, 2004). Transformation in South African higher education institutions is thus multifaceted, complex and uneven (Thaver, 2003). Important for understanding how higher education institutions address social transformation is acknowledging the juncture of a post-apartheid South Africa and a world dominated by the discourse and practice of neo-liberal globalisation²¹ (Thaver, 2003). Thus, for universities, the onerous task of redressing past social and educational inequities is compounded by having to concurrently become competitive national and global players (Reddy, 2004; Thaver, 2003).

²¹ My study draws a distinction between globalization which, as Amartya Sen suggests “has been around for thousands of years”, and neo-liberal globalisation. I thus ascribe to Susan George’s view that neo-liberal globalisation captures the contemporary economic dominated form of globalisation, and when I refer to globalisation it is this understanding I evoke. For further reading see: Sen, A (n.d.). *How to judge globalism*. Retrieved May, 2005, from <http://www.arab2.com/articles/a/globalism.htm>
See also: George, S. (2003). Globalizing Rights? In M.J. Gibney (Ed.), *Globalizing rights*. Oxford University Press.

Much has been written on the diverse nuances of race at primary and secondary schooling institutions. However, there is still a dearth of research and literature dealing with the epistemology of racial identities and “the political ontology of race” (Gilroy, 2004: 3) - particularly as these feature in higher education curricula (Cross, 2004). This could be symptomatic of a general apathy that institutions display in actively addressing social transformation, a situation which Michael Cross (2004) comments on:

institutions have relegated diversity [which includes race] issues to a lower priority – or simply do not have the energy or the resources to address it. ... [W]here attempts have been made to make the curriculum relevant to or responsive to wider social needs, the focus has been mainly on responding to market pressures (394).

Arguably, institutions use race to affirm and stay within legislative transformation guidelines. Superficial changes have been implemented in accordance with governmental requirements (Jansen, 1998). Put crassly, the focus is simply on achieving the appropriate racial *mélange* among students and staff (WISER, 2006). Concomitantly, many universities and faculties continue to ignore the implications of disregarding the teaching and re-imagining of how racial identities have been ascribed in South Africa. This thesis maintains that race, overtly and covertly, is entrenched in hierarchies of power, discourses of transformation and particularities of practice. It appears that the outlook of research dealing with how discourses of power and ideologies of transformation are reflected in particularities of practice has been myopic, specifically- for this study, with regard to curriculum contents. Literature and research on the role of curriculum transformation in higher educational institutions in reflecting hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses and contestations in a post-apartheid South Africa are nebulous at best. It is this critical gap in academic research and literature which this study aims to breach.

1.7 Definitions of terms

I will now briefly define certain central terms as they are used in this thesis.

1.7.1 Race

This thesis holds that race is a socially, politically and economically expedient construct. As such, it is not pre-existing, but through discursive epistemologies has become a global reality (Hall, 1997), and is a central organising factor in the social world. This thesis

subscribes to the position that race and its “attendant forms of racist articulations emerge only with the institution of modernity” (Goldberg, 1996: 1). Race constantly changes within and beyond the social-political and temporal context but in “ways *not simply* determined (as dependent variables) by social conditions at specific times” (Goldberg, 1996: 1).

1.7.2 Racialised

The term ‘racialised’ is used to evoke the non-singular influence of race on a concept; that is, how race interacts with other constructs of identity, such as culture. Meanings and understandings of race are thus contingent on these multiple and interacting constructs.

1.7.3 Racist

This thesis subscribes to a definition of racist which “invokes those exclusions prompted or promoted by racial reference or racialised significance, whether such exclusions are actual or intended, effects or affects of racial and racialised expression” (Goldberg, 1996: 2).

1.7.4 Identity

For the purposes of this thesis, ‘identity’ can be read as “open-ended, fluid and constantly in a process of being constructed and reconstructed as the subject moves from one social situation to another, resulting in a self that is highly fragmented and context-dependent” (Zegeye, 2001a: 1).

1.7.5 Culture

This study concurs with John and Jean Comaroff’s (1992) postulation of culture as “the semantic space, the field of signs and practices, in which human beings construct and represent themselves and others, and hence their societies and histories” (27). Importantly for this study, the Comaroffs underscore how hegemony has framed culture, and, thus, how power enters culture. Thus, culture “is a domain of contest... often a matter of argument, a confrontation of signs and practices along the fault lines of power” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992: 18).

1.7.6 Ethnicity

This thesis aligns with Mahmood Mamdani's (2004) theorising of ethnicity as a hegemonically-inspired political identity. As such, ethnicity was used to subjugate the colonised where "cultural difference was reinforced and exaggerated" (5) to revoke rights and agency of the 'ethnic' subject.

1.7.7 Hegemony

This thesis follows on a Gramscian understanding of hegemony which evokes a sense of dominant power relations "where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but ... [through] consent" (Said, 2003: 7). In understanding how domination works through consensus, Comaroff and Comaroff (1992) explain that "power is itself not above, nor outside of, culture, [race] and history, but is directly implicated in their constitution and determination" (28).

1.7.8 Normativity

Emerging from the notion of hegemony, normativity is the consensual assumption of that which sustains superiority, privilege and hierarchy. Normativity is thus achieved when the assumed behaviour of one category (that is, the hegemonic category) is employed as a measuring rod for everyone else (Roediger, 2003).

1.7.9 Transformation

Common understandings of transformation within the post-apartheid context take into account the two dominant streams: redress and reconstruction; the latter, this thesis suggests, is primary influenced by neo-liberalist concerns. However, this thesis primarily uses the term 'transformation' to refer to the former, and thus speaks of 'social transformation'. Unless otherwise stated, 'social transformation' and 'transformation' are used interchangeably in this thesis.

At the same time, this thesis posits the term 'transformation' as akin to David Theo Goldberg's (1996) positioning of the concept 'race'. That is, it is positioned as an empty concept, a shell concept: "the reason, then why [transformation] is such an effective

conceptual tool is that it is broad, yet almost empty of content” (Goldberg as cited in Roos, 2005: 8). This has allowed for a myriad of expedient, contradictory readings of transformation in official governmental and higher education discourses and practices.

1.7.10 Curriculum

As David Smith and Terence Lovat (2003) explain, the concept ‘curriculum’ has a multiplicity of context-bound meanings and definitions. However, the purpose of this study is not to attempt to explore the numerous definitions of curriculum, but rather to tease out a more nuanced understanding of the epistemological reading as lodged within a particular theoretical understanding of curriculum discourses: critical theory²². Thus, this study positions the curriculum as politically and ideologically loaded, as a site where power is produced, reproduced and contested (Apple, 2004; Jansen, 1998; Smith & Lovat, 2003) and where “the structuring of knowledge and symbol in our educational institutions is intimately related to the principles of social and cultural control in a society” (Bernstein as cited in Apple, 2004: 2). As Smith and Lovat (2003) explain: “Curriculum, whether the intended or actual, is a deliberate selection of knowledge and experiences which presents certain messages, rather than others” (33).

Further, the curriculum is not static and unchanging but is dynamic and responsive to the social, political and economic climate, and is implicitly and explicitly imbued with discourses of race and identity (Apple, 2004; Smith & Lovat; 2003). This study posits that any understanding of the power dynamics imbued in the curriculum needs to take into account not only knowledges espoused overtly and officially, but also knowledges inscribed as normative via the hidden curriculum. Smith and Lovat (2003) elaborate on the definition of the hidden curriculum: “[the hidden curriculum is the] outcomes from teaching/learning activities that are not part of the explicit intentions of those responsible for the planning of those activities... [and] is the product of the relationship between teachers and students that are developed and reinforced as ... ideological agency ... for the purposes of social control” (34 & 36-37).

²² My use of critical theory as a tool of analysis will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

1.8 Outline of the thesis

The following is a brief breakdown of the chapters that make up the thesis.

1.8.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces and outlines the study. The chapter, thus, includes the problem statement, statement of purpose and research questions. It further looks at the personal, social and academic rationale behind the study. Central terms, as used in the study, are defined in this chapter.

1.8.2 Chapter 2: Methodology

In this chapter I explain the background to my study, its methodological approach and my choice of theory. This chapter avoids generalised regurgitations on methodology, but rather explicates why and how I have come to employ my choice of methodology, a qualitative case study within an archaeological research paradigm. It also expounds on my selected methods of gathering data for my empirical research. It further discusses the use of my theoretical framework, critical theory, which has formed the central lens in both the framing and the analysis of this study.

1.8.3 Chapter 3: Literature review: historicising context and contextualising history

My literature review uses eclectic literatures to historicise and contextualise my study. Importantly, the review serves to flesh out the analytic lens, critical theory, while critical theory, reciprocally, serves to mediate the literature review. The review first seeks to explore critical literatures on race and culture. It then goes on to explore research and literature on higher education transformation in post-apartheid South Africa, particularly curriculum transformation.

1.8.4 Chapter 4: Analysis and findings

Through the analytic lens of critical theory, I discuss the findings that emerged from my empirical research. This chapter explores how race is framed, understood and articulated at the institution where my research was conducted. It goes on to explore governmental directives on transformation and race, and how these are impacting on the rhetoric, and

indeed the discourses and practices, of transformation at the university. It then looks at how the struggles surrounding the transformation of one module, the Ubuntu Module, may be seen as reflective of broader institutional struggles surrounding the re-imagining of racialised identities.

1.8.5 Chapter 5: Conclusion

This final chapter draws together the salient findings that emerged from my study. Where relevant, it also expands on understandings of certain findings. I conclude my study by making suggestions for possible areas for further research as suggested by the findings of my study.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction: transformation and appropriate methodologies

Jonathan Jansen (1998) asks: “What methodologies are appropriate for the study of transformation” (106). In considering this question, he suggests that the questions we pose and the methodologies we select are intricately linked. In so doing, he underscores the deficits and oversights of current methodological approaches in the area of transformation. As he argues (1998), conventional designs and foci, which examine official governmental and institutional directives or employ purely quantitative methodologies with “a fixation” (106) on numerical change, “signal little of the depth, quality and sustainability” (106) of transformation. Rather, endeavouring to scratch below the surface gloss of change, Jansen suggests more qualitative, nuanced and in-depth approaches to researching transformation. My thesis aims to explore this gap, and in so doing seeks to occupy a vantage point which is not commonly employed within studies of higher education.

As a result, this study follows an unconventional approach, in that it explores how the extent to which institutions deconstruct - or reproduce - apartheid histories and identities can be seen as a barometer by which to read “the depth, quality and sustainability” (Jansen, 1998: 106) of transformation. This is done by excavating, de-layering and exploring how the struggle surrounding curriculum transformation (particularly regarding the decommissioning of normative positionings of racial and cultural identity in curriculum content) may be read as reflective of broader institutional commitments to change²³. Further, in situating the curriculum as “an ideological selection from a range of possible knowledge[s]” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 33), my study follows a qualitative approach employing a critical theoretical framework. This implies that it excavates the constitution, maintenance and disguising of power in higher education discourses and practices.

²³ Indeed, it can even reflect broader institutional struggles around the re-imagining of apartheid histories and identities.

2.2 Finding a focus

2.2.1 Unearthing an area of study

When I first embarked on this study, my intention was to explore how the Faculty of Education of the university in this study seeks to re-imagine racial identity within its curriculum. This was driven by a personal ideological belief that since teachers are heralded as agents of change in post-apartheid discourses, it is essential to the social enterprise for (trainee) educators to explore the “forces that shape them” (Giroux, 1993: 6). Thus, my initial point of departure was that of probing the representation of discourses of race and culture in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) programme²⁴ of the university.

As part of the initial stages of my study, I endeavored to locate subject areas dealing specifically with how the praxis of identity is taught²⁵ to undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education. Due to the limitations inherent in a Master’s Degree study, I intended to narrow my focus down to a single module offered in the faculty, which dealt explicitly with racialised identity. With this in mind, subject areas with a propensity towards engaging with issues of identity were explored²⁶. However, it transpired that in the Faculty of Education, where my research was to be conducted, there was but one core module dealing overtly and explicitly with racial and cultural identity: the Ubuntu Module.

2.2.2 The Ubuntu Module

My curiosity was piqued by both the name and the general descriptor for the module. A cursory reading of the descriptor suggested a fissured presentation of culture: “A general overview on the most prominent *culture groups* in South Africa and *their viewpoints*²⁷ regarding selected topics concerning the South African cultural milieu” (Faculty of Education, 2005: 54). Furthermore, the use of the name ‘Ubuntu’ for the module is certainly not unproblematic. The popular understanding of *ubuntu* is of an, arguably, romanticised and static philosophical tenet which posits that “there exists a common bond between us all and it is

²⁴ The BEd programme is a four-year undergraduate degree.

²⁵ Although I feel it is necessary to stress here that teaching and learning are by no means synonymous.

²⁶ The subject areas explored and considered were religious studies and history were considered.

²⁷ My italics

through this bond, through our interaction with our fellow human beings, that we discover our own human qualities. Or as the Zulus would say, ‘Umntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu’, which means that a person is a person through other persons” (Panse, 2006: online). Abebe Zegeye and Maurice Vambe (2006) point out that the evocation of idealised pre-colonial Africanist philosophies should be read as “a response to the destabilizing flux of colonial modernity” (329), which in effect serves to “credit colonialism with dynamising the assumed ‘static’” (329). Moreover, a critical reading of the concept of ‘*ubuntu*’ needs to take into account how it was expediently mobilized in the 1980s by The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)²⁸. Read critically (Zegeye & Vambe, 2006), ‘*ubuntu*’ was deployed as a propagandised political-educational ideology to promote an exclusionary Zulu nationalism (Mdluli, 1987).

A further point of relevance to my potential study was that the Ubuntu Module was not taught exclusively at the Faculty of Education, but had been conceptualised and outsourced from the Faculty of Humanities. Being an inter-faculty module, I felt that it had the potential to offer a deeper insight into prevalent institutional epistemologies on race and culture (and indeed institutional ontological beliefs, as epistemological knowledges are premised on ontological beliefs).

2.2.3 Conflict over curriculum content

After my initial investigations into the Ubuntu Module as a possible area for my empirical study, senior members of and lecturers in the Faculty of Education reviewed the contents of this compulsory module for the BEd programme, and declared the course to be antithetical to the faculty’s ideological tenets with regards to curriculum transformation. Of particular pertinence to my study, it was contention over the treatment of racial and cultural identities that sparked an outcry from the Faculty of Education. As a

²⁸ The roots of the IFP, a political party in South Africa which was founded by Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi in 1975, can be traced back to the 1920s. As the IFP’s website explains “The philosophy of Ubuntu-Botho played a crucial role then as it does now in the struggle for the promotion of African patterns of thought and value systems. It has consistently underpinned all political developments and strategies undertaken by Inkatha in its various evolutionary stages” (Inkatha Freedom Party, n.d.).

result, the module was abruptly and unceremoniously withdrawn from the Faculty of Education's curriculum on the basis that:

the course runs contrary to the basic commitments of curriculum transformation in the Faculty of Education, and works in ignorance of theoretical advances in studies on race, culture, identity and education over the past 25 years... It presents a uniformly naïve understanding of Ubuntu, ignoring its multiple and contested meanings within recent South African history, including its specific mobilization under Zulu nationalism to promote an ethnic separateness for narrow political ends. This romanticized representation of Ubuntu might be the subject of crass commercialism in the world of business tourism but cannot be defended in any serious scholarly context. Further, the promotion of Ubuntu as representing contemporary practice is so incredibly out of whack with empirical reality---such as one of the highest crime rates in the world---that it begs the question as to the knowledge claims surrounding this concept. Yet the demise of Ubuntu within South African society, if taken seriously, would have to take account of colonialism and apartheid, racism and the migrant labour system, forced evictions and the criminalization of black people (e.g. the hated pass law system)—and on, and on. None of this is dealt with in this partial account of Ubuntu, thereby denying students access to the social context within which such terms emerged, were contested, started to change, and became marginal to mainstream society (Head of the Faculty of Education, n.d.).

In addition to these strongly-worded criticisms, the Head of the Faculty of Education also attempted to have the module withdrawn from the syllabus at the Faculty of Humanities. However, opposing both the decision taken and the request made by the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Humanities took the decision to continue offering the module²⁹.

2.2.4 A change of focus in my study

With discordant decisions taken by two faculties within the same university, in accordance with the archaeological method I felt compelled to ask the following questions. Was the Faculty of Education justified in pulling an award-winning module from its syllabus?³⁰ Why - and indeed how - had the module's contents, deemed so offensive by the Head of the Faculty of Education gone undetected at that faculty, where it had been taught for on four years? Why was there such a discrepancy in attitudes towards the module between the two faculties, and did this imply opposing approaches and ideologies with regard to the decommissioning of

²⁹ At the Faculty of Humanities the module is a first year elective module.

³⁰ An award for innovative teaching was presented to the course writer and presenter by the university's Department for Innovative Teaching and Learning. Although the award was not for the subject per se, but was presented for how the module was taught.

apartheid identities, and, by extenuation, social transformation, between the faculties? And, could the decision taken by the Faculty of Humanities to continue with the module be read as reflective of broader institutional ideologies and understandings of not only racial identity, but also approaches and attitudes to transformation?

These questions necessitated an alteration of the slant and focus of my study.

Ostensibly, the contradictory approach to the module can be seen as an inter-faculty conflict over the content of a single module. However, what this contestation suggested was a more deeply-rooted ideological stance over the struggles surrounding not just what knowledge is taught, but whose knowledge and whose epistemological ‘truths’ are taught and given pre-eminence at the university. As such, I felt that this controversy went beyond a dispute over a singular module, and had the potential to offer a lens into an institutional stand towards readings of and commitments to qualitative and sustainable transformation. I thus decided to explore whether and how the abundance of questions arising from the conflict surrounding this module could be read as relating to institutional ideologies regarding change.

Thus, not only had the focus of my study shifted, but my site of study had been expanded. As a result, my study was compelled to move beyond the Faculty of Education, to occupy the institutional domain. As this change in focus reveals, research is indeed not a formulaic exercise.

2.3 The need for a responsive methodology

Social anthropologist John Comaroff points out that methodologies should not dictate enquiries, but should rather be responsive to “prior theoretical considerations, or the questions that scholars ask” (Comaroff cited in Roos, 2005: 8). As my research progressed I came to realise that any study which ultimately deals with the complexity of the human subject should not be constrained or limited by methodological decisions and research designs. Rather, the design I employed had to accommodate and respond to the inherent dynamism and unpredictability of what was manifestly an archaeological study. Thus, when I selected a

methodology, it was imperative that it should contain the necessary flexibility to allow for and respond to the fluidity of my area of research, without compromising on the presentation of a rigorous study.

2.4 Archaeological research: a qualitative case study

My research is manifestly archaeological. It thus demands a qualitative methodology. Roger Alan Deacon (2003) elucidates the archaeological approach to research:

Archaeological research examines not the meaning or truth but the ‘positivity’ of discourses, their *historical a priori* or conditions of possibility, existence and transformation. In addition, by treating the practices, institutions and theories of a particular socio-historical period as on the same plane in terms of their “common traits”, “structures” or invariants, archaeology is intended to permit the researcher to avoid “every problem concerned with anteriority of theory to practice, and the inverse” (Foucault as cited in Deacon: 65).

A qualitative methodology within an archaeological approach allows for an interpretive and subjective exploration of the nuances of both the ontological and the epistemological complexities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) within contemporaneous racial, as well as transformational, ideologies of discourse and practice. The aim of this study is not to conform to a methodological design which would at best yield compartmentalisable or anticipated responses. Rather, the need is for a methodological design which allows for a subjective (and inter-subjective) understanding of the “complexity of human nature and the elusive intangible quality of the social phenomena” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 9) as read at a particular historical juncture.

This study has lent itself to the use of a case study approach which is appropriate for “any social entity that can be bounded by parameters and that shows a specific dynamic and relevance, revealing information that can be captured within these boundaries” (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004: 32). This study, thus, looks at the “bounded” case of a particular module, the Ubuntu Module, within a particular institution, a historically white Afrikaans university. It not only explores the possible implications that this module may have for readings and understandings of the broader social transformation enterprise at the university, but may offer insight into issues of transformation that other South African universities are

grappling with. It thus attempts to probe whether the subject area of the Ubuntu Module is characteristic of a case study's "specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 181). However, with a case study demanding an in-depth exploration of a "specific instance [or] specific dynamic", it does not claim to demonstrate generalisability (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004: 32). To attenuate this possible limitation of my case study, I have employed the use of 'thick description': "[which] gives an account of the phenomenon, that is coherent and that gives more than facts and empirical content, but that also interprets the information in the light of the other empirical information in the same study, as well as from the basis of a theoretical framework³¹ that locates the study" (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004: 6). Although my findings do not claim to be generalisable, through the use of 'thick description' readers may thus be able to see application to other instances. As Elizabeth Henning, Wilhelm van Rensburg and Brigitte Smit (2004) explain: "The aim is not simply to describe the case for description's sake, but to try to see patterns, relationships and the dynamic that warrants the inquiry" (32).

2.5 The research site

This study was conducted at a previously whites-only, Afrikaans university. Researching how the struggles surrounding curriculum transformation reflect broader institutional re-imaginings of apartheid histories and identities is particularly pertinent at this institution. During apartheid, this university was a bastion of white Christian National Education³², with a strong tradition of providing verification for apartheid ideologies, such as in the now academically archaic discipline of *Volkekunde* (Sharp, 1983). With deep-rooted ideological conservatism and a history of legitimising scientific racism and racist knowledges, institutionalised racism was a discernible signifier of the university's ethos. In consequence, in post-apartheid discourses, with universities tasked as guardians and initiators of social justice (Morrison as cited in Giroux, n.d.; Department of Education, 1997), researching aspects of social transformation - particularly as read in the context of racial identity - at this university is of significance to not

³¹ The theoretical framework used in this study is that of critical theory.

³² The (educative) ideology of Christian National Education formed the underpinning of the National Party's curriculum. It supported the National Party's ideology of apartheid "by calling on educators to reinforce cultural diversity [by which it meant difference]... This philosophy also espoused the idea that a person's social responsibilities and political opportunities are defined, in large part, by that person's ethnic identity" (United States Library of Congress, n.d.: online).

only institutional but arguably also national discourses and practices relating to redress and equality.

2.6 Methods: data collection and sources

As Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004) suggest: “case studies require multiple methods in order to truly capture the case in some depth” (42). In following this advice, my study employed multiple methods to excavate and de-layer the nuances and complexities of my study.

2.6.1 Interviews and participants

2.6.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

As interviews are able capture the inherent complexities of subjective opinions, they were a central method in my study. Further, semi-structured interviews cohere with a qualitative methodology, as this form of data collection has the ability to evoke an “inter-subjective” and nuanced understanding of the subject of research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 267). The employment of semi-structured interviews allowed for a degree of structure for myself as the researcher to steer the interviews, yet were sufficiently open-ended to allow the participants to give their perception and understanding of the situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). This was imperative to my study, which is lodged within an interpretive framework. Furthermore, subjective responses are critical in understanding ideological positionings in relation to transformation and readings of racial identity. Importantly, this study positioned my participants as discursive agents implicated in ideological formations. Indeed, my study framed my participants as conveyors of ontological beliefs and epistemic knowledges. As Deacon (2003) indicates, this represents archaeological research due to the implication that my participants are (re)producers of the historicity of the present.

2.6.1.2 Primary participants (formal³³ interviews)

In view of the deeply divergent stances adopted on the Ubuntu Module (and indeed deeply divergent understandings of racial identity and approaches to transformation), it was imperative to capture the array of positions and opinions held. This was necessary in order to obtain not only as deep a reading, but also as balanced an approach, as is possible in an openly subjective study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff members at the university involved in the writing, teaching, instituting, sanctioning and challenging of the course. I also conducted interviews with senior management at the university, in order to attain a broader institutional voice on ideologies, discourses and practices of transformation.

Formal interviews were conducted with:

- a senior member of the management of the university. (In discussions of this interview, I refer to this interviewee as Prof. A).
- the Head of the Faculty of Education. (In discussions of this interview, I refer to this interviewee as Prof. B).
- a lecturer and course convenor from the Faculty of Education who was one of the faculty members responsible for the incorporation of the Ubuntu Module into the BEd programme. (In discussions of this interview, I refer to this interviewee as Mrs E).
- a senior member of the Faculty of Humanities and the department in which the Ubuntu Module is presented and from which it was outsourced. (In discussions of this interview, I refer to this interviewee as Prof. C).
- The lecturer, from the Faculty of Humanities, who wrote and presents the Ubuntu module. (In discussions of this interview, I refer to this interviewee as Mrs. D).

I further approached other relevant actors, such as a senior staff member at the university and some of the other Faculty of Education course convenors involved in incorporating the Ubuntu Module into the BEd programme. However, for various reasons, they declined to participate in my study.

³³ Formal interviews were transcribed and were a fundamental core of my empirical research. I thus refer to all transcribed interviews as 'formal' interviews.

2.6.1.3 Subsidiary participants (informal interviews³⁴)

In order to attain as holistic an understanding as possible of the research area, I spoke informally to a large number of people who, although not necessarily directly related to my study, I felt could offer insight into it. These included:

- administrative staff, specifically those who were involved administratively with the incorporation of the Ubuntu Module into the syllabus. Speaking to them allowed for broader insight into the official channels through which courses are implemented at the university.
- members of staff from the university's Department for Innovative Teaching and Learning³⁵, who I approached in order to gain insight into the award given for the Ubuntu Module. However as the certificate had been awarded in 2004, they informed me that they were not able to assist me due to the time lapse. Rather, they suggested that I should speak to the recipient of the certificate. This was thus discussed with relevant participants during the formal interviews³⁶.
- the chair of the South African Students' Congress (SASCO). This was to obtain a broad range of perspectives on institutional transformation.
- academics from other institutions who are experts on cultural and racial identity. I did this in order to gain a greater understanding of the complexities involved in the formal re-conceptualising of identities.

2.6.2 Documents

Concurring with Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004), my study suggests that documents and materials have the potential of offering a deeper understanding of the university's ideological stance on social transformation and the re-imagining of racial identities. The sources that my study considered included:

³⁴ These were conducted on an informal basis and were thus not transcribed.

³⁵ Due to issues of anonymity, I do not use the actual name of the department. The name that I use is the name as suggested by the department.

³⁶ The certificate acknowledges "exceptional contributions to education innovation". However, the certificate was not presented for the actual contents of the module, but rather for: "The creation of a vibrant and authentic learning environment" (Department referred to herein as the Department for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2006: online).

- The Ubuntu Module's study material (Department of ____, 2005). This 76 page booklet, written and published by the department responsible for the module, was analysed in order to obtain an understanding of how racial and cultural identity are formally presented in the module. With personal insights and examples permeating this study material, it offered invaluable insight into the nature of the module, and indeed into the controversy that erupted over what knowledge is taught in it. The contents of the study material were primarily analysed as illustrative examples clarifying the ensuing contestations over the re-imaging of apartheid histories and identities.
- The letter of response critiquing the Ubuntu Module (Head of the Faculty of Education, n.d.). This letter, written by the Head of the Faculty of Education (Prof. B) offered insight into not only the oppositional understandings of racialised identity, but also divergent understandings and readings of transformation. It was sent by the Head of the Faculty of Education to various senior members of staff at the university, to the Faculty of Humanities, as well as to the members of the department that presents and outsources the Ubuntu Module.

Other sources which were analysed were the university's policies and institutional text-based sources that specifically refer to or imply transformation. These include sources such as the university's mission and vision statement (University of ____, 2007a) and strategic plan (University of ____, 2007b).

Other documents that I utilised include emails and other forms of correspondence. These were used to gain greater insight into the ongoing struggles of individual role-players in curriculum transformation. Further documentary sources used to help direct enquiries were university newsletters and magazines. As James McMillan & Sally Schumacher (2001) suggest, and in accordance with post-colonial archiving (cf. 2.10), these are valuable but often overlooked materials, which have the potential of revealing institutional readings of transformation and understandings of post-apartheid identities.

2.6.3 Field notes

The aim of my study was to present a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of transformation. Therefore, field notes, “the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992: 107), were methodically kept. These notes particularly assisted in my reflections on the study, allowing for subjective, analytical insight into both the said and the unsaid in the interviews.

2.7 Delimitations and possible concerns

2.7.1 Students

When I initially started with my study, students were to be central participants. However, as the study developed and changed, its focus shifted away from capturing their voices. Although the role of the student in my study is certainly not inessential, I realised that it was necessary to be judicious about who I would be interviewing and why. I did not feel that interviewing students would add the necessary weight to my study, which is primarily concerned with capturing the dynamics of broader institutional ideologies surrounding contested readings of racialised identity and transformation. Therefore, although students are certainly not unimportant in readings of the institutional positioning of knowledge production and reproduction, they are arguably subsidiary in this study.

2.7.2 Concerns raised about the study

One of the major problems - probably the major one of our concerns - was that our course was judged on about 30% or a third of its entirety. The other two thirds were [the lecturer’s] huge collection of visual materials and her stunning performance in class. [The lecturer’s] absolute talent as a narrator was completely ignored. She is an excellent presenter: she is dancing that course and not presenting it - and we were extremely disappointed that by only looking and judging it on a third it could be judged as “crap to the extreme”. We would have expected, actually felt very strongly, that the entirety of the module would be judged. That would only have been fair. At least they should have inspected the visuals - [the lecturer] has a thick pile of visuals which she uses in the course (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

As the above response suggests, various valid concerns were raised by the department that presents and outsources the Ubuntu Module. These concerns also pertained to the seeming

oversight of the voice of students. Because of this, the department suggested that I analyse the student evaluation forms³⁷ for the course. Although I had initially considered doing this, as my study progressed I realised that these would, in essence, be superfluous to it. The above quote intimates and the feedback forms attest that the lecturer's teaching skills are superb. That said, this study is not about the pedagogical skills of the presenter. Although lectures were not attended as part of the study, the nature of the knowledge that the course expounds was more than adequately captured in the study materials, and was further expanded on during the interviews. Concerning the visual aids, when I interviewed the lecturer she brought along her "thick pile of visuals". I would describe these as merely complementary to the study materials, and certainly not indispensable empirical data.

2.8 Data analysis: conversing with the data

The data analysis for this research project is consistent with Henning, van Rensburg and Smit's (2004) description of analysis as an "ongoing, emerging and iterative or non-linear process" (127). As Tehmina Basit (2003) explains: "analysis of qualitative data continues throughout the research and is not a separate self-contained phase" (144). Thus, as is typical in qualitative research, data analysis was an ongoing process (Basit, 2003; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Formal analysis did, however, take place once the bulk of data had been collected and put into textual format, for example by transcribing interviews (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit: 2004).

Although directions of enquiry were determined before data collection, as data was collected I sought out themes, concepts, key issues and patterns, allowing me to "continually refine [my] interpretations" (Basit, 2003: 143). Each source, for example interviews and study materials, was initially analysed separately and "chunk[ed]" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 148) using coded thematic descriptors. Once this had occurred, all data from the different sources was collated and synthesised, and further analysis and chunking was done from the synthesis of all the data. Once again, this data was organised according to dominant themes and sub-themes.

³⁷ These forms are completed by students at the end of a module to assess both the content and the presentation of the module.

This describes the mechanistic approach to the analysis of data. However, in the hallmark of qualitative research, “the analytical instrument is largely the researcher” (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004: 6). As a result of this positioning of the researcher, how my data was analysed was fundamentally influenced by the theoretical underpinning of my study, which coheres with my own ideological stance and leaning. Unlike some forms of qualitative research, where analysis of the data collection is undertaken “so that theory generation can be undertaken” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 148), in my study data was continuously analysed - both consciously and unconsciously - through the framework of critical theory.

2.9 Critical theory

As I have mentioned, my theory did not emerge from my study, but my study was navigated, and essentially propagated, by critical theory. From my selection of literature to my reading and interpretation of data, as well as my approach to my study, critical theory has played an integral role. As Apple (2004) underscores, critical theory encompasses a broad range of theoretical considerations:

it includes Marxist and neo-Marxist work and also includes work that is more related to the Frankfurt school... it also includes work in critical cultural studies, in post-structural feminist analysis, in queer theory, in critical race theory, and other critical approaches. Because of this, I’m going to define it as that broader set of approaches (182).

With the elucidation and critique of power being central to critical theory, this theoretical stance, in its breadth, not only lends itself to the deconstruction of the ontologies and epistemologies of racialised identity, but also challenges the ideologies of knowledge production and reproduction. Further, in “challenging the social status quo” (Calhoun & Karaganis, 2003: 179), critical theory is a central tool in analysing how discourses and practices of transformation may be read in light of sustaining or challenging power and privilege inscribed by hegemony. This “theorises the relationship between human action and the reproduction of the social order” (Calhoun & Karaganis, 2003: 180).

Instead of diverging into a discussion of the origins and myriad understandings (so true to its own ideological refrains) of critical theory, I choose rather to explore its personal and academic integration, and the critical stance it implies within the whole body of my

research as presented through this study. Central to my study, critical theory not only underscores the constructedness of the social context, but critically considers social constructs imbued within the dynamics of power and used to support and maintain hegemony. Fundamentally, it examines power. Craig Calhoun and Joseph Karaganis (2003) intimate the pertinence of critical theory in post-apartheid South African higher education, where the rhetoric of redress proliferates: “[critical theory sees] human subjectivity, whether by history or nature, as fundamentally constituted and defined by increasing coherent structures of power - even and, in some cases, especially, where the dominant ideology emphasizes autonomy and freedom” (194). Further, critical theory looks at the complexities inscribed in modernity and liberalism as implicated ‘truth’ productions and reproductions (Calhoun & Karaganis, 2003). Importantly for my study, it underscores the said, unsaid (or hegemonic) and counter discourses surrounding how knowledge is ideologically loaded, and accentuates how the curriculum can be read as a broader site of institutional ideological practices.

2.10 Document analysis: post-colonial archiving

Documents must be read using a critical theoretical perspective. Cooper and Stoler (1997) maintain that materials and archives created by institutions have the potential of revealing hidden histories of power and privilege. Post-colonial archiving, conceived by Jean and John Comaroff (Cooper & Stoler, 1997) is an ideological alternative that looks at archives as epistemological sites rather than as sources to be mined (Stoler, 2002), and at colonial archives as “technologies of rule in themselves” (Stoler, 2002: 87). Colonial archives, as developed in institutional structures such as universities, “erased certain kinds of knowledge, secreted some, and valorised others” (Cooper & Stoler, 1997: 17). Cooper and Stoler (1997) call on scholars to use archives in new and critical ways to understand and challenge how received materials “organized knowledge [to] constrain the scholar who returns to those archives (oral as well as written) in an attempt to analyze the ... situation” (4). The objective of post-colonial archiving is to read sources from a starting point of critical questioning that can yield important insights into hidden instances of power and the external logic which may inspire it.

This objective has salience for my project and how I gather, analyse and critically read sources. In appropriating this concept of critical reading, this study argues that the need is to analyse received materials as epistemologies of possible hidden power, and to determine whether these materials reinforce racialised identity as it is normatively understood (that being apartheid readings of race). The imperative is then to look at how this may influence the nature of knowledge production and reproduction. I attempt to do this by creating new archives drawing on a myriad of literatures on identity and modernity in my literature review. In an effort to move beyond ingrained and essentialised notions of identity, this works towards critically challenging embedded implications and structures upholding knowledge production and reproduction relating to race and culture.

2.11 Validity and reliability³⁸: ensuring a credible and trustworthy study

Critical theory exposes the non-neutrality and inherent power dynamics lodged within social subjects and the terrain they occupy. The dynamics of subjectivity allow for the researcher to self-consciously frame a study from the viewpoint of personal understandings, while simultaneously attempting to present the participant's voice. As such, I, as a social subject enmeshed in the societal fabric, acknowledge that my own subjective positioning erodes purported neutrality within the study. I too am framed and shaped by my epistemic lens and my ontological and historical layering. As a researcher employing critical theory, I am compelled to acknowledge my inherent power position as ultimately steering and interpreting the research. Indeed, the positioning of the participant's voice is ultimately framed by the researcher as well as the researched.

As I have intimated, during this research project it was critical that the research not only fulfil the necessary contextual and academic rationales but resonate with my own political ideologies and concerns. However, one of the central criticisms against critical theory in research is that "critical theory has a deliberate political agenda, and that the task of the researcher is not to be an ideologue or to have an agenda, but to be

³⁸ Although I use the terms validity and reliability, I acknowledge that their use is more consistent with quantitative studies (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). In recognising this, I have used the ideas of creditworthiness and trustworthiness (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004) to underscore the qualitative nature of my study.

dispassionate, disinterested and objective” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 32). In recognising this, I subscribe to German sociologist, Max Weber’s observation that “an attitude of moral indifference has no connection with scientific objectivity” (Weber as cited in MacRae, 1950). Thus, in acknowledging my own subjectivity, as a researcher I recognise that “it is unwise to think that threats to validity and reliability [credibility and trustworthiness] can ever be erased completely. Rather, the effects of these threats can be attenuated by attention to validity and reliability throughout a piece of research” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 105).

I thus took measures to ensure that the research was conducted thoroughly and honestly. As broad a perspective as possible was obtained through the scope of participants interviewed. My participants were given the opportunity to review and comment on the transcripts of the interviews, which some of them chose to do. This allowed them the opportunity to ensure that their comments were presented as accurately as possible. Further, a condition stipulated by certain of my respondents when granting me permission to collect data from them was for them to “be given the opportunity to comment on [my] findings” (Department of ____, 2007). These would have been attached as annexure. Although I feel this would have helped to ensure that their ideological positionings would be taken into account, none of the participants responded formally to my findings as annexure.

2.12 Ethics

When conducting research, it is essential that ethical issues are addressed meticulously. It was an imperative that the rights to dignity of my participants be maintained throughout the entire research project. From the outset of this study I encountered certain ethical problems and tensions. These included the direct naming of the university, as well as the department and module/subject involved. In consultations with senior members of staff I was advised that, both ethically and academically, it is permissible, and even desirable, to be fully transparent in the naming of institutions. However, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) stress, it is necessary for “researchers to strike a balance” (50) between their duty as social scientists in their quest for ‘truth’, and the rights and values of the subjects that may be compromised by the research

project. After weighing up the “costs/benefits ratio” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 49), I selected anonymity for the participants and the institution.

I am well aware of the ethical implications of this study, and the difficulties involved for participants in having their epistemic beliefs and value systems opened not only for scrutiny, but for criticism. In order to maintain participant anonymity and protection to the highest degree, I do not refer to the institution by name. Furthermore, although all the source materials of the university and relevant departments (the department presenting and outsourcing the Ubuntu Module and the Department for Innovative Teaching and Learning) are referenced, I have done so in such a manner that does not compromise anonymity. I have also excluded certain documents from annexure, such as the letter by the department presenting the Ubuntu Module granting me permission to conduct research in their department, as these could compromise anonymity of the university or the department. Further, instead of his or her name I use a description of each participant such as ‘a senior member of management’, ‘a senior member of a department’, and ‘course convenor’, etc. The descriptions used in the study are the ones suggested by the participants. I also consulted the department that presents and outsources the module studied, and refer to it as the Ubuntu Module, in accordance with their directives. However, as a researcher I am aware that “there is no absolute guarantee of total anonymity as far as life studies are concerned” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 62). Because of this, my participants were informed of the possibility that anonymity may not be absolute.

As is judicious in all ethical and moral endeavours, informed consent was obtained from all participants interviewed and involved. I attempted to ensure that participants were fully aware of what the research project entailed. Each participant interviewed was given a copy of the research proposal to peruse, and I attempted to meet each participant prior to the actual interviews so that the study and my theoretical underpinning and procedures could be explained to them in greater detail.

It is crucial that neither my personal and academic integrity nor that of my participants is intentionally compromised, and I scrupulously attempted to maintain a principled approach.

However, as the change of focus of my study may suggest, the unpredictability inherent in qualitative research created numerous ethical challenges for me as a researcher. Although this is indeed one of the strengths of qualitative research, creating the ability to capture the dynamism of the human experience, it has also been a challenge in that the findings which emerged from my study have, in many ways, steered the direction of my thesis.

Finally, my research project has been subject to the scrutiny of the ethics board at the university where I am registered.

2.13 Anticipated limitations of the study

This study fully acknowledges the complexity and intricacies of identity, and its kaleidoscopic and mercurial nature. In the course of my readings I have come across numerous definitions of identity. As a result, I am loathe to define identity in a conclusive and finite way. However, this study has tried to extract what is arguably the most salient historically-located aspect of identity in the South African context - racial and cultural identity.

At the same time, it recognises that race cannot be looked at in isolation, as it is mediated through, interacts and intersects with other prominent aspects of identity, such as ethnicity, age, class, religion, nation state and gender. It also acknowledges its shortfall in not dealing comprehensively with gender and its intrinsic relationship with racialised identities. However, due to the limitations inherent in an MEd thesis, I had to concede that at this stage in my studies, such integral aspects of racialised identity, and how they interact with ideologies of knowledge production and reproduction, would have to be set aside.

Chapter 3: Literature Review: historicising context and contextualising history

3.1 Introduction

This review aims to historicise and contextualise the complexities of change³⁹ through the use of an eclectic array of literatures. The review further serves to flesh out my analytic lens, critical theory, while critical theory, reciprocally, serves to mediate my literature review.

Thus, my review starts by locating and contextualising my study within the broader analytic framework of global, and by extension, national racisms. The principal purpose of this is to highlight the deep-rooted complexities of race, and to show the linkages between historicised positionings and contemporary understandings of race. As such, this review looks at how and why race has come to occupy a central position in global and national discourses and practices. This serves to ground an understanding of the contextual space from which my study has emerged. I explore particular South African themes: the legislated and structural forms and expressions that race has taken in South Africa, and the “myth of [South African] exceptionalism” (Lazarus, 2004⁴⁰). The review further underscores how South Africa’s hegemonic ideologies have conflated race and culture. To accentuate the complexities found within race discourses and practices, this review goes onto explore how counter-hegemonic discourses have sought to challenge received racial ‘truths’.

This chapter particularly aims to underscore how the reification of race in South Africa was sought through state-sanctioned education, and, in particular, how racial categories were justified through schemes of official legitimisation and academic validations. The review discusses the politically expedient role of higher education in South Africa and how the ideological legitimisation of, or challenges to, race were (and are) reflected in

³⁹ Specifically, for my study, it historicises and contextualises how curriculum transformation at higher education institutions in post-apartheid South Africa can be read in relation to broader institutional and social transformation discourses and practices.

⁴⁰ No page number is given for this reference as the phrase: “myth of exceptionalism” is not only the title of the article, but also appears throughout the article.

conflicts surrounding the university curriculum. It goes on to examine an example of the broader social ideology of apartheid as manifested in Afrikaans university syllabi: *Volkekunde*. This example helps render an understanding of how the curriculum has been used as an ideological site, thereby also accentuating the linkages between knowledge, ideology and power. The review then explores post-apartheid rhetoric and national ideologies that speak of challenging received racial ‘truths’, particularly through discourses of non-racialism. It furthermore examines the complexity of curriculum transformation at universities as situated in the broader transformation enterprise, and explores the struggles and challenges of social transformation at a time of increasingly neo-liberal state ideologies and policies.

3.2. Race, culture and racisms

3.2.1. Global racisms

3.2.1.1 “The problem of the colour line”⁴¹

Paul Gilroy (2004) suggests that South Africa may have “served worldwide debate about the politics and morality of race by being the one place where the centrality of racism could never be denied” (3). As critical theorists and scholars of modernity and post-colonialism underline, however, South Africa certainly does not stand alone in being structured, and dominated, by race (Goldberg, 1996, 2002; Hall, 1996; Morrison, 1993; Roediger, 1999, 2003; Said, 2003; West, 2001). This is pithily encapsulated in Morrison’s (1993) assertion that we live in a “wholly racialized world” (4). Indeed, the international prominence that race has had (and continues to have) is perhaps most vividly captured in W.E.B. Du Bois’s (1965) prophetic statement that “[t]he problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colo[u]r line - the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men ” (9). This was recently re-affirmed by Cornel West (2001), in his re-articulation of Du Bois’s polemic: “the problem of the *twenty-first* century *remains*”⁴² the problem of the colo[u]r line” (xiv).

⁴¹ (Du Bois, 1965: 9)

⁴² My emphasis

3.2.1.2 Historicising race: Du Bois's overturning of the enlightenment canon

At a time⁴³ of virtually unquestioned acceptance of the biological ordinance of race, it was Du Bois's early empirical and political works, and, later, at the dawn of the twentieth century, his radical theory of race, which disrupted the status quo of the post-enlightenment canon. Du Bois essentially overturned liberalism's universalist notion of the autonomous agent⁴⁴, which had characterised post-enlightenment Western political philosophy and moral discourses (Goldberg, 1996). He contested modernity's construction of the "human subject... which often ignored how individuals were constructed within complex, multilayered and contradictory social formations" (Giroux, 1993: 63). He exposed how race, finely woven into the social, political and economic fabric of society, had been exploited as a tool for domination and subjugation (Roos, 2005; Winant, 2000). Fundamentally, this meant that his work piqued international scholarly interest in the reappraisal and critical interrogation of race and racial identity (Goldberg, 1996; Roediger, 1999).

However, critics have pointed out that Du Bois did not go as far as denying "essentialist notions of biological race, but used these to celebrate a sense of African communal solidarity" (Appiah as cited in Dubow, 1995: 290). Nevertheless, read in context of his times, Du Bois's thesis on race was ground-breaking. It was only during the post-Civil Rights 'diversification' of the academy that Du Bois's sociological works instigated a reappraisal of widely accepted racial discourses. This ultimately resulted in a small cohort of leftist and black nationalist scholars critically scrutinising, and ultimately debunking, the prevalent biological and essentialised understandings of race that had previously dominated academic circles. Roediger (2003) highlights the significance of Du Bois' work when he explains, furthermore, that although Du Bois's thesis was somewhat constrained by his essentialising discourse of race, he crucially linked race to class by showing how ideas of race developed within a particular set of class relations. As Roediger (2003) points out, Du Bois's nuanced comprehension of class, privilege and

⁴³ W.E.B. Du Bois lived from 1868 to 1963.

⁴⁴ Liberalism implied that racisms are inscribed by individual prejudices.

power as conferred by race accentuated the structural nature of racism. Crucially, this postulation of how class is fundamentally racialised evokes the concept of ‘whiteness’, the notion of power and privilege inscribed by race, or, as Roediger (2001) contends, “the fiction that whiteness is normal, natural and does not cry out for examination” (77). As a result, Roediger’s argument serves to elucidate how “whiteness can be framed within the Marxist tradition” (Roos, 2005: 4), whilst concurrently highlighting a fundamental flaw in Marxism: the disassociation of race from class in discourses of modes of production (Goldberg, 1996; Roos, 2005). Thus, central to this study, whiteness underscores how race has been expediently constructed and deployed to maintain and sustain power and privilege, as well as normativity.

3.2.1.3 Race as a construct: post-structural repositionings of race

Expanding on and refining Du Bois’s work, leading contemporary theorists on race such as Gilroy (2004), Goldberg (1996), Hall (1996), Roediger (2003) and West (2001), have leaned on post-structural and critical theories of identity that highlight race as a discourse and practice of power and, by extension, domination. Read through the lens of post-structuralism, race, as a wholly socio-cultural and economic construct, is constantly being repositioned and reconstructed within the prevailing social establishment (Hall, 1996; Roediger, 2003), thereby enforcing and, in effect, actualising the prevalent order of the social establishment (Goldberg, 1996). Roediger’s (1999, 2001, 2003) works have played a central role in explicating how whiteness, as an ideological construct of privilege, power and supremacy, has attained a status of normativity or, in the Gramscian sense, hegemonic ascendancy. As such, whiteness has become, uncritically, infused into what Apple (2004) refers to as “socially legitimate knowledge” (6). However, as Roediger (1999) attests, whiteness is an unfixed, dependent variable which is constantly changing within and beyond the social, spatial and temporal landscape. Yet, in order to contain (or, in other words, subjugate) ‘the other’- that which is the antithesis of whiteness - essentialist theories and knowledges have posited whiteness as a supposed unchanging, innate and primordial ‘truth’ (Goldberg, 1996). The one fixed aspect of this received ‘truth’ is the association of whiteness with privilege and power (Roos, 2005), and (central

to my dissertation) the influence that this has had on the kinds of knowledge(s) which are produced and reproduced and hold pre-eminence in society.

3.2.1.4 Racist culture: modernity and the centrality of race

David Theo Goldberg (1996), in his analytic on whiteness, subscribes not just to non-essentialism, but to anti-essentialism. He further synthesises a theory of race by showing that modernity is fundamentally racialised. Goldberg (1996) asserts that racism is irreducible to individual prejudices and irrationalities. He elaborates on how liberalism has sought to reduce racism to individual prejudices through maintaining “the dominance of presumed sameness [and] the universally imposed similarity in identity” (1996: 7). He elucidates not only how race, and by extension racism, is rather “central to modernity” (3) but also how society’s primary means of perceiving the “social subject” (1) is in racialised terms. Goldberg (1996) explains:

[w]e have come to conceive social subjects foremost in racial terms... identity is fashioned in terms of the historically prevailing conceptual order. How we comprehend others and conceive our social relations and how we come thus dialectically to some sort of self-understanding are moulded by concepts central to the dominant socio-discursive scheme (1-2).

Goldberg’s (1996) thesis diverges from Roediger’s by underscoring a more omnipotent and pervasive structuring and influence of race, and racism, in society. Goldberg (1996) positions racism as “both a signifying system and a system of material production” (8). This can be seen in his postulation that “[r]acial thinking and racist articulation have become increasingly normalized and naturalized throughout modernity, but in ways *not simply* determined (as dependent variables) by social conditions at specific times” (1). Rather, placing whiteness at the centre of hegemony, Goldberg terms the dominant culture in society “*racist culture*⁴⁵... in contrast to the prevailing picture of a singular passing racism” (1996: 8). In terms of his thesis of racist culture, racism is an inescapable reality, explicitly and implicitly all-pervasive, and is deeply inscribed in “discourse, cultural practice and meaning” (Roos, 2005: 7).

⁴⁵ My emphasis

Goldberg's thesis of racist culture has particular bearings for this study. It elucidates how, in the normalisation of whiteness, and indeed race, modernity and liberalism have subdued, or purposefully silenced (Coetzee, 1991), critical debates on racialised identity. In addition, Goldberg's position on race highlights the centrality of racialised thinking and racist discourses in all societal structures including, of particular interest for my dissertation, educational institutions. This helps reveal how epistemological discourses and understandings are premised on, as well as framed by, prevailing normative beliefs (in other words, whiteness). It has also subsequently influenced normative understandings of racial identity by presenting identities as, ultimately, unquestioned essentialised 'truths'. Further, underscoring the structural nature of racism, Goldberg's thesis draws attention to how racisms exist on a myriad of levels, in all sorts of institutions⁴⁶, discourses and practices. Thus, by extrapolation from Goldberg's analysis of racist culture, education, and by extension the curriculum, is fundamentally and inescapably racialised.

3.2.2 The South African experience

3.2.2.1 Colonial constructions of race

As the literature indicates (Comaroff, 2001; Gilroy, 2004; Goldberg, 1996; Stoler, 1995), race has come to be normatively perceived so that "the darker to the lighter races of men" (Du Bois, 1965, 9) suggest essentialised and biological readings, and their associative discourses of exclusion. These stem from a modernist era of colonial conquest, imperial expansion and capitalist development. Similarly, Stoler (1995) contends that racial identities were methodically structured and imposed to support the social and material supremacy of the colonising power. Gilroy (2004) concurs, and asserts that the repression of the colonised was condoned through the acquiescence of racial hierarchies, which were imputed as truth, and obtained credence "from the chaos and unruliness of colonial contact zones" (3).

⁴⁶ Institutions of particular interest for this study are higher educational institutions.

As Thivendren Reddy (1995) explains the South African colonial experience epitomises this fundamental tenet of modernity, with the dominant ‘white’ coloniser directly correlating to the construction of the “non-White inhabitant” as the “generalised Other” (1). However, the cessation of *external*⁴⁷ colonial rule in South Africa in 1910 (under the Act of the Union) did not herald the deconstruction of these politicised identities. Rather, as Harold Wolpe (1974) contends, colonial applications of race continued through twentieth century South Africa. Mamdani (1997) and Wolpe (1974) maintain that the concept of apartheid in South Africa should not obfuscate the fact that society remained ordered along a structure of *internal* colonialism from 1910 to 1994. In what was in essence a colonial state, ‘whites’ (implying whiteness) were the colonisers and ‘blacks’⁴⁸ (the generalised other) the colonised (Mamdani, 1997; Wolpe, 1974). Mamdani explains how external and internal colonialism constructed racial and ethnic categories to fortify whiteness (and, indeed, also manipulated cultural understandings and discourses): “I include apartheid as part of the colonial experiences in Africa... [where the aim was] to reproduce a racial identity amongst its beneficiaries and an ethnic [and cultural] identity amongst its victims” (1997: 152).

3.2.2.2 The myth of South African exceptionalism⁴⁹

In effect, the theory of internal colonialism serves to link apartheid in twentieth century South Africa to a broader global project of capitalism, colonialism, imperial power and race. This coheres with Neil Lazarus (2004) and Mamdani’s (1997) debunking of the “myth of [South African] exceptionalism” (Lazarus, 2004), which engendered:

the widely shared prejudice that South Africa may be part of Africa geographically, but not culturally and politically and certainly not economically... the contention that the South African experience is so totally and irrevocably shaped by the initiative of the settler, that South Africa is no longer, in any meaningful sense, a part of Africa, native Africa (Mamdani, 1997: 152).

⁴⁷ This review draws a distinction between external and internal colonial rule. External colonial rule refers to the colonial state as a polis of the external colonising power. However, internal colonial rule implies a form of continued domination, even after seeming independence has been attained, such as that of the apartheid state.

⁴⁸ In the tradition of Black Consciousness, I use ‘black’ here to imply an experiential identity of oppression. In addition I evoke the Black Consciousness Movement’s definition of ‘black’: “those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society” (Biko, 2004: 52).

⁴⁹ (Lazarus, 2004).

Instead of this prejudice, as Lazarus (2004) and Mamdani (1997, 1998b) contend, it is imperative that South Africa “learns from its own experience of decolonization” (Lazarus, 2004: 610) and acknowledges its place in broader African socio-political historiography (Lazarus, 2004; Mamdani, 1997, 1998b).

Although Lazarus (2004) and Mamdani (1997) caution against distilling the South African experience from broader colonial experiences, they do recognise characteristics of distinction. However, even though they advise that these distinctions should be acknowledged, they strongly warn against over-positing them, particularly in academic discourses (and epistemologies), as, according to Mamdani, “South African exceptionalism ha[s] stained the South African intelligentsia with a prejudice more than skin-deep” (Mamdani, 1998b: online).

The deconstruction of the myth of South African exceptionalism has particular implications for this thesis. Indeed, my study asserts that it is imperative for South African scholarship to critically engage with how constructed, normalised identities stem from, and were framed by, the colonial project. This helps clarify how, as an ideological discourse of power, and having attained normative acceptance via the curriculum (Apple, 2004), racial identities have come to occupy central positions in knowledges of self and other (inclusion and exclusion). Further, with the basic underpinning of this thesis being that racial, cultural and ethnic identities are anything but neutral and apolitical identities, of particular relevance to this study is Mamdani’s (1998b) call for critical scholarship and debate on Africa and its racial identities: “an intellectual return to Africa,⁵⁰ [in order to] shed the notion of South African exceptionalism”. In other words, it is essential for the academy to take cognisance of and critically engage with myths that have been propagated both historically and in our own time. As Mamdani (1997) explains, a critical understanding of the epistemological readings of identity formation, and indeed the role that South African exceptionalism has played in reifying identity, is contingent on

⁵⁰ Mamdani’s call coheres with the call of this study, which suggests that institutions critically engage with readings of race through a reading and understanding of how power discourses exist and operate.

understanding the ontological foundations which have formed them, particularly as they have been framed within the broader colonial experience:

Ontologically, we need to ask: What is Africa? ... We know that apartheid in South Africa, as colonialism in the rest of the continent, constructed the 'African' as a racial being... what is the historical process that makes us, Africans? The ontological question is tied to that of epistemology... I am not arguing that South Africa is the same as the other African countries. Far from that. But I am arguing that if we are to arrive at an understanding of self that does not reify it, then we need to begin by relocating South Africa in the African experience, by a process that underlines both commonalities and differences (152).

3.2.2.3 Separate and unequal⁵¹

As the above quote by Mamdani suggests although race and racisms are an integral part of the broader colonial project, the ideology of apartheid dominated discourses and practices of internal colonialism in South Africa. Indeed, whilst the world was emerging from the horrors of World War II and international scholarship started moving towards an interrogation of race (Winant, 2000), South Africa was following an opposing trajectory and was embarking on its history of legislated racial essentialism and associated institutionalised discrimination (Dubow, 1995). Under the ideological mask of what was called separate development (apartheid), identities were further embedded from the top down to ensure the "sectional interests" of the white populace (Zegeye, 2001a: 1). Zegeye (2001b) explains that it was particularly during the Verwoedien⁵² era that race and ethnicity (implying also culture) were "mobilised to serve the ideological and political interests of the white minority government" (149). As Robert Ross (1999) points out, the construction and, arguably, imposition of ethnicity and cultural groups - "tribes" (Ross, 1999: 17) - was not exclusive to colonialism (external and internal), but dates to a pre-colonial political means of territorial and populace domination. Yet, as critical theorists and post-colonial scholars attest (Comaroff, 2001; Gilroy, 2004; MacDonald, 2006; Mamdani, 1997, 2004; Zegeye, 2001a) the purposive politicisation, fortification and reification of identities, and the division of 'Africans' into race and ethnicity, culture

⁵¹ Apartheid's ideological rhetoric purported to propound a 'separate but equal' ideology of development.

⁵² H.F. Verwoed, Prime Minister of South Africa from 1958 to 1966, is considered to be the "architect of apartheid" (MacDonald, 2006: 190).

or tribes⁵³, attained particular resonance, and notoriety, during colonial rule (external and, particularly, internal). Mamdani (2004) refers to this as “the *technology of colonial rule*⁵⁴ ... with political identities defined through the force of law” (4)⁵⁵. This assists in uncovering how whiteness as normativity has been infused into structures of state and civil society (including universities).

3.2.2.4 Culturation of race and racialisation of culture: racism’s last word⁵⁶?

Comaroff (2001) elucidates how the technology of colonial rule sought to reify identities. He explains how hegemonic underpinnings can be ascertained in orthodox historiographies and knowledges of colonialism. According to Comaroff (2001), these aimed to engender and reify peoples into distinct and distinctive ethnic, cultural and racial groups:

[Colonial projects are] implicated in the genesis of modern ethnic identities and difference here. But the *official* inscription of such identities and difference increasingly became the business of colonial governance. In legitimising labels and authorising images of otherness- the state tried hard to ensure both the consent and the collaboration of the colonised. ... these peoples were encouraged to see themselves as faceless Zulu or Tswana or Sotho or Xhosa or whatever, with no consideration of their class or gender or generation or personal circumstances... the distinctive experience of colonialism is being made to feel, and then to recognise one’s self, as a native (50-51).

As the literature further illustrates (Erasmus, 2001; MacDonald, 2006; Mamdani, 2004; Zegeye, 2001a), in South Africa, from the onset of the colonial enterprise, and gaining particular salience and fervour during apartheid, there was an orchestrated culturation of race, and racialisation of culture and ethnicity. Zimitri Erasmus (2001) asserts that this saw “Africans as tribalized subjects locked into ‘pure’ cultural traditions” (18). Michael MacDonald (2006) explains that culture (with ethnicity) was inherently politicised, and points out that the role of the apartheid state in the normalisation and institutionalisation

⁵³ As Mamdani (2004) explains, “tribes - called ethnic groups in the postcolonial period - were all those defined as indigenous in origin” (4).

⁵⁴ My italics.

⁵⁵ Mamdani writes: “indirect colonial rule in the first half of the twentieth century[saw in] most African colonies, the census classif[ying] the population into two broad, overall groups. One group was called *racess*, and the other *tribes* [ethnicity and culture]. This single distinction illuminates the technology of colonial rule” (2004: 4).

⁵⁶ (Goldberg, 1996).

of such identities remains evident in post-apartheid discourses, despite - or perhaps because of - official calls for non-racialism. As MacDonald (2006) explains the essentialisation of racial identities (or the conflation of race and culture) served to develop power discourses of race (and culture) into pervasive structural reality, thereby ensuring that race, as normativity, constituted⁵⁷ a fundamental element of the South African social fabric. Reddy (1995) agrees, and maintains that it was this institutionalisation of race that prompted the success of apartheid's mass social engineering: "[w]hile Apartheid was dependent on politically constructed identities of [the Other], it actually organized the social relation of the civil society so that the identities within these constructs assumed an everyday material reality" (8). Zegeye (2001a) further highlights the apartheid state's (structural) manipulations, and normalisation, of culture and ethnicity. He explains that the political, social and material consequences of the reification of racial identity in South Africa were accomplished through the state's orchestrated "suppress[ion of] all constituents of identity except race and ethnicity" (3) with racial segregation presented as "logical and natural" (Maylam, 1998: 7). South Africa thus saw a structured conflation, and confusion, of race and culture.

3.2.2.5 Counter discourses: defying the logic of apartheid identities

Despite the apartheid state's racial discourse, racial identities were not accepted and assimilated uncritically. As scholars and activists have pointed out, there is a tradition of counter discourses (Biko, 2004; Erasmus, 2001; Zegeye, 2001a, 2001b) that have defied the logic of the naturalisation of racial discourses. However, as this review attempts to underscore, and as is reflected in the construction of these counter discourses, even as we try to escape the moral and intellectual bonds of race, race continues to intervene in the categories of language we use to describe the world.

Zegeye (2001b) cautions (scholars) against presenting racial identities as being over-determined by the state. Zimitri Erasmus (2001) concurs and maintains that this could be interpreted as further disempowering and removing agency and voice from communities

⁵⁷ Race arguably still does constitute a fundamental element of the South African social fabric.

and individual actors in identity formation and identification. Indeed, in her analysis of coloured identity, Erasmus (2001) makes a compelling argument that although apartheid may have played a pivotal role in appropriating autonomy of identity, and, by extension, a central role in the subjugation of black⁵⁸ South Africans, the very identities imposed by apartheid have ultimately become central in the framing of how people understand their lives:

[a]lthough it is true that apartheid has played a key role in the formation of these (and other) identities, coloured [and other] identities are not simply [a]partheid labels imposed by whites. They are made and re-made by coloured people themselves in their attempts to give meaning to their everyday lives (16).

I would argue that this acknowledgement of the reality of the centrality, and indeed significance, of racialised identities in the lives of many South Africans could point to a possible limitation in Goldberg's thesis of racist culture (as underscored by Erasmus, particularly, from within the South African context). Although in no way underplaying the insidious motivations and the role of apartheid in the normalisation and naturalisation of racial identities, as Erasmus (2001) suggests, it is also imperative not to simply frame racialised identities as being wholly racist, and by inference detrimental identity constituents. In addition, as Appiah (2006) points out, such a positioning could be construed as patronising. He argues that it may imply that individuals and communities are passive and unresponsive victims, duped into a type of racial and cultural imperialism.

Illustrative of agency of identity and a rebuttal of a passive notion of identity construction is the formation of counter-identities. As the literature shows (Biko, 2004; MacDonald, 2006; Zegeye, 2001a) apartheid's construction of racialised identities catalysed oppositional counter-identity formations and discourses. Zegeye (2001a) explains:

The struggle against apartheid... served to facilitate identity formation by unifying opponents of apartheid in a common assertion of non-racialism and anti-racism... To a certain extent it also unified South Africans in anti-colonialism and perhaps a common 'Africanness'. The varied social and political movements that participated in the anti-apartheid struggle created a new identity by jointly and

⁵⁸ Again, here I invoke the definition of 'black' as understood by Black Consciousness (cf 3.2.2.6)

actively undermining apartheid notions of whiteness as representing political superiority and non-whiteness as representing political inferiority (3-4).

As can be inferred from the above quotation although these identities were created not of and in themselves, but rather in response to apartheid's categorisation and imposition of racialised identities, what these counter-constructs achieved was to accentuate how apartheid's identities were fundamentally constructed and politicised, and not biological, truths. They further defied apartheid's quest to obfuscate race through its utilisation of a fossilised and exalted sense of cultural divisions (meaning differences), so as to "divide and rule" (Comaroff, 2001: 59). This can be seen in the emergence of the unifying, transracial and acultural identity 'black'.

3.2.2.6 Black Consciousness: race as experience

Arguably, one of the main and most influential ideologies opposing apartheid was that of Black Consciousness, which, as Reddy (2004) implies, played a central role in establishing "vibrant oppositional student movement[s]" (5). Importantly, in challenging apartheid's biologised postulations of race, and the associated binary opposition of inferiority/superiority (Biko, 2004), the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM)⁵⁹, particularly influential under the helm of Steve Bantu Biko⁶⁰, re-appropriated agency of identity (Zegeye, 2001). Attempting to deflate apartheid's stronghold on identity, and by extension person, the BCM postulated 'black/blackness' as being an experiential identity, and "not a matter of pigmentation - [but rather]... a reflection of mental attitude" (52). Biko (2004) further articulates the definition of black consciousness when he explains that being black is premised on an attitude of dissent against normative hegemonic ideologies of whiteness: "Non-whites do exist ... if one's aspiration is whiteness but his pigmentation makes attainment of this impossible, then that person is a non-white" (52). The BCM further rejected the ideology of non-racialism that underscored the white liberal tradition in South Africa⁶¹ (Biko, 2004). Disparaging white liberals, and pre-

⁵⁹ The Black Consciousness Movement (the BCM) was an anti-apartheid movement founded in the mid-1960s. The movement's aim was to combat racism and the South African apartheid government (Biko, 2004).

⁶⁰ Biko was an anti-apartheid activist and leader of the BCM. He was murdered by the apartheid government whilst in detention in 1977.

⁶¹ Non-racialism is also the ideological policy of the ANC.

empting Goldberg's postulation of the inherent power discourses imbued in liberalism's postulation of non-racialism, Biko (2004) asserts that: "in adopting the line of a non-racial approach, the liberals are playing their old game. They are claiming a 'monopoly on intelligence and moral judgement' and setting the pattern and pace for the realisation of the black man's aspirations" (22-23). However, as can be read in the following quotation, like Du Bois, Biko seems unable to escape a supposedly unifying, but ultimately essentialist, discourse in his thesis of blackness:

Briefly defined therefore, Black Consciousness is in essence the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation - the blackness of their skin... by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the white man, blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black. Black Consciousness therefore, takes cognisance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people black (53).

3.3 Racialised and racist education

3.3.1 A legitimising discourse

As Zegeye (2001a) infers, counter and oppositional identities may have attempted to challenge essentialised identities, yet such discourses were (and arguably remain) essentially peripheral (Appiah, 2006). As Comaroff (2001), Dubow (1995) and Mamdani (1997, 2004) intimate, to challenge apartheid's inscribed identities meant to challenge a deliberate and highly orchestrated 'technology of rule'. Saul Dubow (1995) explains that during the apartheid era, in accordance with the prevailing mentalité, racial identities were presented as rigid and fixed, with scientific racism extensively commissioned by the apartheid regime to buttress such ideas. Paul Maylam (1998) concurs, and describes how racism and segregation rested on the deliberate thesis that races were distinct biological categories, and on "the primordialist assumption that a strong sense of racial identity was an ingrained human instinct" (7). For this premise to filter through to all levels of society it was necessary for the apartheid state to inure its subjects in its ideology. Consequently, the systemic application of apartheid, and its ideological discourse and practice of racial identities, were not only upheld, but were actualised, by the underpinnings of state-sanctioned education (Comaroff, 2001).

As Comaroff (2001) explains, the scope of education extends well beyond formal sites, “which is to say that [state control] stretches, autonomically and unseen, into the very construction of its subjects” (45). However, Comaroff (2001) goes on to emphasise the pivotal role that formalised education has played in the colonial enterprise (external and internal). He explicates how capillaries of power extended into educative structures of colony (thereby further underlining the myth of South African exceptionalism), and asserts the centrality of schooling institutions in the normalisation of discourses and practices of race, culture and ethnicity:

Most potently of all, perhaps, they pervaded schooling at all levels, infused alike in formal syllabi and ‘hidden’ curricula.... There is no need to explain why European pedagogy, with its invasive technologies of mind and body, was a crucial vector in the effort to insinuate new signs and practices among colonised peoples. For all their disagreement over the means and ends of education, liberal apologists and Marxist critics appear to agree on one thing: its efficacy in colonising the consciousness of imperial subjects (50).

As scholars have underscored, through these didactics of race, racial identities attained commonplace normality and acceptance (Comaroff, 2001; Deacon, 2005; Reddy, 1995, 2004; Stoler, 1995). Adam Ashforth (1990) concurs, and explains that the South African process was marked by the fixing, essentialising and biologising of racial categories through schemes of official legitimisation (educational institutions).

3.3.2 Apartheid’s academics

In his article on the work of Geoffrey Cronjé, “a seminal contributor to the theory of apartheid” (1), John Maxwell Coetzee (1991) critically reflects on the role that academics played in the propagation, fortification and reification of apartheid ideologies. Coetzee (1991) censures “[w]hite liberals who diagnosed apartheid as a form of hubris or madness... [who were] doing little more than distracting attention from their continuing material complicity in the exploitation of black labour” (1). In accordance with Goldberg’s (1996) thesis of racist culture, Coetzee (1991) lays bare liberalism’s supposition that racism (or apartheid) is borne of singular, idiosyncratic prejudices. Like Goldberg, he underlines instead the centrality of state supported academic scholarship,

which systematically and deliberately produced, reproduced and reinforced apartheid and its ideologies.

3.3.3 Mind forg'd manacles⁶²

Coetzee (1991) makes the important point that racist legislation may have been terminated with the official cessation of apartheid, but mindsets and belief systems, particularly as influenced and moulded by educational structures, remain far more resilient to change and disbanding. Deacon (2005) expands on this point of how education has impinged on belief systems, and elucidates on the role of formal educational sites in identity construction, and, indeed, framings of understandings and beliefs of 'self' and 'other'. In his explanation of the inherent link between schooling and identity formation, Deacon (2005) underscores the role of schooling institutions as central technologies of governance (and discipline). In so doing, he identifies the intrinsic role institutions have played in the normalisation of identity constituents:

An experiential phenomenon in which individuals participate in their own subjection by actively constituting and transforming themselves, schooling is at the heart of those technologies whereby processes of disciplining or governing others are closely connected to the procedures of identity-constitution (77).

Deacon (2005) further explains that Foucault links how not only do disciplines (or, knowledges⁶³), which are produced and reproduced in schooling institutions, reflect the thinking of broader society, but how knowledge produced in institutions is then rather reflected, and indeed propagated, in macro discourses: “[a] little known fact is that Foucault considered the development of the school, which is equally comfortable as a traditional mechanism of conservation or as a radical weapon for change as a model for the spread of discipline to other modern institutions, including political institutions” (75). Apple (2004) concurs, and posits educational institutions as “agents of cultural hegemony” (5). Indeed, as the literature shows (Badat, 1999, 2004; Bunting, 2002; McCarthy, 1990; Reddy, 2004), the role of higher educational institutions - agents of

⁶² Here I lean on William Blake's imagery as I feel it evokes a powerful sense of the control of hegemonic epistemologies.

⁶³ Deacon explains: “‘Discipline’ is probably the concept for which Foucault is best known. It refers to ways in which human beings govern themselves and others, through technologies, invariably intertwined with forms of knowledge” (2005: 75).

cultural hegemony - in South Africa was to create and engender certain knowledges (including, of particular relevance to this thesis, knowledges of racialised identity) that would then find resonance in broader society (Deacon, 2005).

3.4 A historical backdrop

3.4.1 The role of universities during apartheid: higher education as a technology of rule

The role of universities as locales where ideologies are cultivated and catalysed is particularly voiced in the South African literature by Saleem Badat (1999, 2004), Ian Bunting (2002) and Reddy (2004). They explain that, during apartheid, universities were postulated by the state as fundamental structures in the propagation and validation of national ideologies (racial/racist ideologies). Yet, reflecting Apple's (2004) reading of the contradiction inherent in and amongst educational institutions, Bunting (2002) and Reddy (2004) point out that universities' division along racial, ethnic and linguistic lines under apartheid increasingly reflected divergent political and ideological stances, although they essentially mirrored the separatist ideology of apartheid. As Badat (2004) and Bunting (2002) suggest, it was these contrived, social divisions reflecting apartheid's 'logic' of separate development, which betrayed universities' politically instrumental⁶⁴ roles and histories. And, as the literature puts forward (Bunting, 2002; Reddy, 1996; WISER, 2006), perhaps somewhat paradoxically, it was this positioning which in effect served to open the ideological boundaries of universities up to resistance, contestation and collusion. This often countered the intended role of these micro-sites of governance (Bunting, 2002; Reddy, 2004), where the grand narrative's innate racial hierarchy was commissioned to attain intellectual and academic credence (Badat, 1999; Reddy, 2004).

Bunting (2002) explains that the establishment of historically black institutions was "overtly political and instrumental... having been set up to train black people who would be useful in the apartheid state, and political in the sense that their existence played a role

⁶⁴ As Bunting (2002) explains: "an instrumentalist higher education institution can be defined, for these purposes, as one which takes its core business to be the dissemination and generation of knowledge for a purpose defined or determined by a socio-political agenda" (66-67).

in the maintenance of the overall apartheid socio-political agenda” (74). Reddy underscores the contradictory consequences of this: “[the apartheid state] established black universities to produce passive elites to administer ethnic, political institutions but created instead terrains that established a vibrant oppositional student movement and other forms of resistance within and related to the higher education sector” (2004: 5). Reflective of and reflected in the political turmoil which erupted in the 1970s, historically black institutions became sites of resistance and struggle, subverting the intellectual agenda defined by their apartheid origins (Bunting, 2002; Reddy, 2004). Reddy (2004) succinctly describes this as “the unintended consequences of National Party policy” (5). Badat (1999) underscores the irony of these institutions as sites of subversion: “it was surprising that the challenge came from where it did. The black racial and ethnic higher educational institutions were not designed to produce dissidents” (77). Indeed, Reddy (2004) suggests that the role of dissenting black students was central to the demise of apartheid: “... its is arguable whether South Africa’s democratic regime change, following the crisis of Apartheid rule in the 1980s, would have occurred at all without the contribution of black students from the 1970s onwards” (6).

As the literature suggests, the approach by historically white institutions was inconsistent both across (Bunting, 2002) and within (Mamdani, 1998a) institutions. English universities advocated themselves as “liberal institutions” in their refusal to become agents of the social reproduction characteristic of the apartheid state (Bunting, 2002: 70). However, as Mamdani (1998a) contends, the role of these universities in apartheid South Africa maintained a certain ambiguity, as even though these institutions may have “opposed apartheid politically” they were “deeply affected by it epistemologically” (69)⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ Certainly the social history of these universities suggest the idea of a singular ‘university’, or a set of ‘taken-for-granted’ beliefs about the world. However, in understanding the complexity of the uneven social historical epistemologies of these institutions one should consider, for instance the University of Witwatersrand’s Marxist social historians and the role of the History Workshop, which was a site of opposition that went beyond the formalities of multi-racialism, and touched upon the very epistemologies that dominated such institutions. For further readings see Bonner, P. (1994). *New Nation, New History: The History Workshop in South Africa, 1977-1994. The Journal of American History*, 81(3), 977-985.

Afrikaans institutions were less equivocal in their support of the apartheid state (Bunting, 2002). They were avowed intellectual and ideological bastions of white Afrikaner nationalism (Jansen, 2005), and not only did research and teaching at these institutions reflect (and encourage) the prevailing socio-political ethos and practices of the state (Badat, 2004), but their means of governance reflected and were coherent with those of the apartheid state (Bunting, 2002). Bunting (2002) explains that it was the support which these universities offered the apartheid government which “had a major impact on their academic and governance cultures: by the 1990s they could be described as instrumentalist institutions which were governed in strong authoritarian ways” (66).

Jansen (2005) elucidates this point particularly in his personal account of his experience as a black Dean at a historically white Afrikaans institution. Although describing his tenure as dean in post-apartheid South Africa, Jansen exposes the evident remnants of the apartheid institution, where, he says, “I was not expected to discuss things; I was expected to pronounce on things” (309). Jansen renders an understanding of the how the past has mediated the present in his description of the existing institutional culture⁶⁶, still in many instances dominated by a complementary dualism of authoritarianism and acquiescence. Using a Foucaultian analysis, Deacon (2005) describes the underlying rationale of this means of governance (here as reflective of the bureaucratic ordinance of apartheid thinking on the conceived role of education): “educational institutions are places where some manage others to manage themselves (and where one’s management of oneself is intended to facilitate one’s management of others)” (75). In agreement with Jansen and Deacon’s representations of the ‘logic’ of authoritarian control, Bunting (2002) and Sharp (1981) explicate how authoritarianism became an overarching influence on institutional culture at Afrikaans institutions, and consequently had an enormous impact on knowledge production (research) and reproduction (curriculum).

⁶⁶ For the purposes of this thesis I borrow Jansen’s (2007) definition of institutional culture. As he explains “this hard-to-define phenomenon called ‘institutional culture’... might be simply defined as how an institution describes ‘the way we do things around here’” (30).

3.4.2 *Volkekunde*: the curriculum as a site of racist culture

It was within micro-sites of state control, such as universities, that the grand narrative's innate racial hierarchies attained supposed intellectual and academic credence⁶⁷. The apartheid government utilised the curriculum as 'a technology of rule', or, as Apple (2004) positions the curriculum, as: "a mechanism through which power [could be] maintained" (vii). Through the orchestrated use of the curriculum to produce and reproduce apartheid's racist ideology, one such significant field of study emerged in the form of a subject known as *Volkekunde* (Sharp, 1981). *Volkekunde*, "an ideological formation" (Gordon, 1991: 88), was chiefly prevalent at white Afrikaans universities, with "academics in *Volkekunde* work[ing] from departments with a variety of names: Bantu Studies, African Life and Languages" (Sharp, 1981: 17). Fetishising ethnicity, *Volkekunde* "stulf[ied] the concept of ethnos"⁶⁸ ... and focused on 'bounded cultures'" (Sharp, 1981: 19). Quite simply, the study of ethnicity and culture became a euphemism for dichotomising society into black and white (or according to *Volkekunde* - the various shades of these polarities). Ultimately, *Volkekunde* aimed to obfuscate race through the anthropological and academic study of culture. In essence, it attempted to justify white supremacy and segregation on an intellectual front, and sought to generate a set of cultural logics (Goldberg, 1996; Gordon, 1991; Sharp, 1981). Arguably, what *volkekunde* ultimately represented was a tactic for the avoidance referring directly to race, by rather using cultural applications and construals to moralise and validate segregation. In essence, in fragmenting conceptions of race (into ethnos) this circuitous discourse of race in fact intended to imply that race is ubiquitous in nature and primordial in existence. Presumed as incontrovertible, race is reinforced in the logic of the ethnos of *Volkekunde*.

John Sharp (1981) elucidates the role that education and the curriculum (via *Volkekunde*) has played in regulating race into gaining intellectual and social credibility: "*Volkekunde* departments have long functioned to provide undergraduates with a packaged formula

⁶⁷ Reflecting the role of education in fortifying apartheid, P.J. Schoeman, an apartheid anthropologist, commented: "I want to strongly emphasize that legislation alone will not create this situation of apartheid. Only the correct education ... of the youth of both races will make the racial purity ... possible in this country" (Schoeman as cited in Gordon, 1991: 86).

⁶⁸ "Ethnos theory starts with the proposition that mankind is divided into *volke* (nations) and each *volk* has its own particular culture which may change but always remains authentic to the group in question" (Sharp, 1981: 19).

which would fit many of them for the service in the bureaucracy of apartheid” (31). Significantly, *Volkekunde* is but one, particularly crude, example of how apartheid wove its ideologies into the curriculum in an attempt to legitimise racial identities.

3.5 The curriculum and power: the production of racial knowledges (‘truths’) and ideologies

As the example of *Volkekunde* reveals, the links between knowledge, power and ideology are evident. Indeed, critical theorists and educationists (Apple, 2004; Asad, 1993; Foucault as cited in Ball, 1990 and Deacon, 2005; Goldberg, 1996; Jansen, 1998; Mamdani, 1997; Said, 2003) have made trenchant linkages between the inherent interconnections of knowledge, power and discourses of ideology. In seeking to understand the networks of power that operate within knowledge production and reproduction, Talal Asad (1993) poses a crucial question that highlights the seemingly symbiotic relationship between knowledge, power and ideology. Asad asks: “[in the] extent to which such power seeks to normalize other people’s motivations whose history [knowledge] is being made?” (12). As can be inferred from Asad’s question, power seeks to normalise not only people’s understanding of self and other, but also (hegemonic) knowledge(s), which once formalised, (here via the curriculum), attains an almost canonical truth (Morrow, 2003) – that is, history made (Asad, 1993).

Apple’s (1993, 2001, 2004) studies, in particular, have made explicit the relationship between knowledge, power and the reproduction of hegemonic ideologies through the curriculum. Carlos Torre (2001) underscores the significance of Apple’s contribution to critical educational studies. Torre (2001) explains that Apple’s works explore and elucidate on the, often (deliberately) overlooked, “relation between culture and power in education, underscoring the perils and liabilities of the business/corporate-driven nature of the curriculum” (264). However, this fundamentally economic-driven approach of Apple’s to the relationships between knowledge, ideology and power may be seen as a limitation in readings of the contemporary South African experience. This is because Apple’s analysis of the sociology of the curriculum (Torre, 2001) presupposes the socio-economic and political contextual milieu of countries characterised by what can be

described as even development, which is generally synonymous with readings of hegemonic power relations in ‘developed countries’. I would argue that this idea of even development does not adequately capture the dynamics of the current South African situation. Rather, I would suggest that the South African situation is better defined by what scholars of subaltern studies postulate as “the uneven development of social contradictions” (Chatterjee, 1997: 9). Partha Chatterjee (1997) explains this approach:

Uneven development occurs when the processes of social reproduction do not move at the same pace or rhythm in every part of the social formation. Thus, for example, the dominance of a class in the economy may not be reflected simultaneously in its dominance in state power or in the cultural formations. Similarly, the development of the struggle between classes may take different forms in different geographic regions (9).

However, Apple (2004) recognises this possible drawback in his works: “Of course it needs to be said that my arguments ... are based on an understanding of a particular set of countries. Thus, they cannot be automatically transferred to countries with different histories” (viii). Yet, as Apple (2004) underscores, even though his analytics cannot be uncritically transferred, “arguments provided... have resonated with the experiences of many dissidents and critical educators in a considerable number of nations” (viii). Indeed, central to this study is Apple’s (2004) understanding of the implicit and explicit power dynamics involved in epistemological reproduction, particularly as manifest in the form of official knowledge via the curriculum⁶⁹:

any analysis of the ways in which unequal power is reproduced and contested in society must deal with education... there is a very real set of relationships among those who have economic, political, and cultural power in society on the one hand and the ways in which education is thought about, organized and evaluated (vii).

As Apple (2004) asserts, the curriculum is not merely an arbitrary collection of knowledge, but is a purposive means of social reproduction that helps to ensure the continuance of the status quo. Smith and Lovat (2003) concur, and elaborate on how the curriculum is used to sustain and cultivate hegemonic ideologies:

generally, it is the knowledge and the messages associated with the views of the dominant group(s) in any society that form the basis of the curriculum... The selection of knowledge and experience included in any curriculum creates a particular reality ... a reality that serves the interests of those who have the power

⁶⁹ Importantly, the focus is also on how knowledge is produced and reproduced via the hidden curriculum.

to be able to enforce the selection decisions. In this sense, *curriculum is a reality creating agency and serving the interest of those in power in any society* (33-34).

However, Apple (2004) is careful not to present the curriculum (and education) as a site impervious to change, but rather underlies the dynamism imbued in the curriculum. This can be read in his assertion that schooling “is also a site of conflict about the kind of knowledge that is and should be taught [in other words, curriculum], about whose knowledge is ‘official’ and about who has the right to decide what is to be taught” (Apple, 2004: vii). However, in accordance with Foucault (as cited in Deacon, 2005), Apple (2004) positions educational institutions, and particularly the role of curriculum, as central in organising and controlling how and what people think:

the basic ways in which prevalent ... structural arrangements ... are organised and controlled, dominate cultural life. This includes such day-to-day practices as schools [universities] and the teaching and curricula found within them.... [T]he structuring of knowledge and symbol in our educational institutions is intimately related to the principles of social and cultural control in society (Apple, 2004: 1-2).

As this suggests, how certain knowledges become universal and normatively accepted is intrinsically connected with capillaries of power absorbed within knowledge production and reproduction. Educational critical theorists such as Apple (2004) and Henry Giroux (1994) attest to the ways in which education, and in particular the curriculum, not only reflects dominant social discourses, but is often the site of unequal power and, by extension, social, cultural and economic reproduction. Thus, in accordance with Goldberg’s (1996) thesis of racist culture, which would posit the curriculum as a social, political and cultural site or tool that is inherently racialised, readings of curriculum content, as well as curriculum transformation - particularly at the juncture of national transformation from an apartheid to a democratic state - are central to understanding dominant socio-economic and political discourses. However, Apple (2004) stresses the complexity of the positioning of educational institutions in social-power discourses in his claim that “educational institutions provide one of the major mechanisms through which power is maintained and challenged” (vii). Thus, although he acknowledges the complicity of the curriculum in maintaining hegemonic ideologies, he also posits the curriculum as a critical site for the challenging of received ‘truths’.

3.6 Post-apartheid discourses

3.6.1 The problem of non-racialism

When apartheid formally ended, it was seen as an imperative that received ‘truths’, particularly as had been inscribed by racist ideologies and legislation, be put to rest (Coetzee, 1991). Therefore, as Crain Soudien and Yusuf Sayed (2004) explain, “when the new state came into existence, its most important task was that of positioning itself as the antithesis of its past” (103). The rhetoric of ideological commitments to non-racialism and democracy defined post-apartheid South Africa (MacDonald, 2006; Soudien & Sayed, 2004). However, as Coetzee (1991) points out, it is necessary to differentiate between legislature, which “can indeed be dismantled” and legacy, which is “likely to resist coercion” (1). Indeed, Goldberg (1996, 2002) and MacDonald (2006) point out that non-racialism, the exhortation of ideologues in a democratic and post-apartheid South Africa, is in itself a highly problematic term. MacDonald (2006) explains that “the concept is deeply ambiguous.... The most radical form of non-racialism begins by challenging the existence of race altogether. ... [it] argues races are pure fictions” (92). As Biko (2004), Goldberg (1996, 2002), MacDonald (2006) and Morrison (1993) attest, non-racialism is not a purveyor of equity and equality, but rather a liberalist discourse of obfuscation. Rather, in attempting to discredit or deny the existence of race (MacDonald, 2006), in what is a fundamentally racialised society (Goldberg, 1996; Morrison, 1993), non-racialism, in effect, silences and disables emancipatory discourses. Goldberg (1996) sets out his opposition to non-racialism:

[Non-racialism] is idealized in the sense that it refuses to acknowledge, let alone confront, the exclusionary practices and concerns that in a variety of fashions will continue to be racialised by social subjects.... [I]t presupposes that racism assumes a single form that may be constitutionally legislated out of existence... and, it fails, finally, to entertain the transformative, the liberatory possibilities that may nevertheless emerge from and in terms of thoroughly, or a thoroughly reformulated though still racialized, social formation” (216-217).

Zoe Wicomb (2001), sardonically, concurs that non-racialism is in itself a stifling discourse. She suggests that non-racialism does not indicate a move towards respect and equity, but rather – dangerously- can camouflage prevalent and continued racist thinking:

One of the more refreshing qualities of Apartheid was the abandon with which we all talked about and identified ourselves in terms of race, a situation that compares rather favourably with European cultures where official ‘anti-racism’, notwithstanding avowed awareness of the constructedness of race, stifles its own discourse with a fastidious reluctance to speak of white or black. It is, I fear, in such advanced societies where whiteness as a category is masked, that Apartheid will be sorely missed as ready-made Other whose aggressive naming of white and black has come to define racism (159).

As Wicomb (2001) suggests, the avoidance of open discourses on race, as promulgated by non-racialism, masks a deeper-rooted type of neo-racism, which Goldberg (2002) calls a “post-racist-racism” (201). In addition, as discussed earlier, Erasmus (2001) infers that non-racialism also denies South Africans choice and agency in identification with racialised selves, albeit politically manipulated and constructed ones.

3.6.2 The official voice: the rhetoric of transformation

Thus, as also understood through a Foucaultian analysis, it is reasonable that post-apartheid educational policies and discourses both reflect and are reflective of broader social ideologies of change (Deacon, 2005). As a result non-racialism is inherently inscribed in the rhetoric of higher educational transformation. However, I would suggest that in readings of higher education transformation in post-apartheid South Africa, it is perhaps useful to frame transformation through what can be seen as a type of dialectic of conservatism and change. Indeed, Apple’s (2004) work underscores that education and educational institutions are a site of both conservatism and change. As Apple (2004), and Chatterjee (1997), attest, and as is underlined by my thesis, change and conservatism are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Although higher education was a site of resistance and collusion (Reddy, 2004), as the literature suggests (Cloete & Bunting, 1999; Cloete & Moja, 2005), the dominant conceptual picture of South African higher education was that of a mechanism and extension of apartheid and its ideological discourses and practices. Nico Cloete and Teboho Moja (2005) point out that, as a historically complicit agent of ideological reproduction, higher education was one of the key targets in the transformation enterprise: “there was a consensus in the government of national unity that higher education needed transformation” (693). Thus, it is unsurprising that when legal

apartheid was officially terminated, national and educational policies seeking redress and social transformation were instituted.

With the aim of repudiating higher education's segregationist and racist history, these policies can be interpreted as aiming to break, amongst other evils of apartheid, its attempted monopoly on identities (Cloete & Bunting, 1999; McKinney, 2004). Cloete and Bunting (1999) explain: "the vision contained [in the policies] is that of a transformed, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education" (1). Carolyn Mckinney (2004) affirms that universities were re-positioned as purveyors of democracy through policies that tasked them with undertakings of social transformation. As Mckinney (2004) notes, these can be read specifically in the White Paper on Higher Education's call for "the uprooting of deep-seated racism" and "developing a campus environment ... sensitive to racial and cultural diversity" (Department of Education, 2.32 & 3.42 as cited in Mckinney, 2004: 37).

3.6.3 Transformation and the convergence of globalisation and redress

Aslam Fataar (1997) points out: "the context of transition in South Africa and its implications for educational change should be located within an international context" (71). Indeed, the transition from apartheid to a democratic state roughly coincided with the emergence of a sweeping international ideology and practice: neo-liberal globalisation⁷⁰. Reddy (2004) explains that this had an unequivocal effect on how social transformation has been thought about and enacted in South Africa:

in the post 1994 period the position of the state towards the role of universities and social transformation is derived from a policy inevitably open to reading in two opposing ways. The state demands that universities contribute towards economic and socio-political transformation, yet the nature of the transition from Apartheid to a democratic regime, its macro-economic state policies, and the constraints of globalisation have led to two opposing tendencies. In the first, universities are expected to perform as viable "corporate enterprises" producing graduates to help steer South Africa into a competitive global economy. In the second, universities are expected to serve the public good and produce critical citizens for a vibrant democratic society (5).

⁷⁰ Joseph Stiglitz (2003) suggests that the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of cold war heralded the commencement of neo-liberal globalisation.

As Reddy (2004) suggests, social transformation in higher educational institutions has had to contend with the convergence of two often, although not necessarily, opposing ideologies and concerns: globalisation and redress. Indeed, this is affirmed by Pam Christie (1997), who explains that “South African integration policies are underpinned by two sets of concerns: the need for human resource development strategies which include education and training; and the drive for equity” (111).

3.6.4 Globalisation’s influence: a myopic focus

However, as Jansen (1998, 2007) and Mamdani (1998b) contend, the tensions and contradictions inherent in this dualistic approach to transformation have resulted in government’s having a myopic focus and taking a myopic direction in social transformation. The same myopic focus and direction which have subsequently been adopted and implemented by higher education institutions. Jansen (1999) suggests that the ideology, and indeed language and symbols, of globalisation, “an over-investment in the symbolism of policy” (45), dominates discourses of social transformation in post-apartheid educational policies and institutions. He explains: “Educational reforms since the end of legal apartheid in 1994 have been lodged clearly and consistently within powerful economic rationales as the overriding motivation for “transforming” apartheid education” (42).

Jansen (1998, 1999) asserts that there has been a one-sided focus to transformation, with an ensuing result that numerical indices underpin governmental as well as institutions’ social transformation discourses and practices, an underpinning that he describes as “th[e] narrow interpretation of transformation in terms of racial accounting” (1998: 109). He goes on to suggest that, true to the ideology of globalisation (1999), the transformation enterprise has been shaped by a governmental focus on performance indicators, or tangible measurement gauges and that “such a strategy examine[s] demonstrable achievements in a university against pre-specified performance indicators such as may be required under the new system of institutional quality audits flowing from the White Paper on Higher Education” (1998: 106). Jansen (1998) maintains that, by the very nature

of performance indicators, more nuanced, qualitative readings of transformation, such as critical readings of curriculum content, have been sidelined⁷¹.

In readings of governmental policy, Mckinney (2004), however, offers a different interpretation to that of Jansen. She suggests that the role government desires for curriculum transformation can be interpreted in the White Paper on Higher Education with: “the emphasis [being] on changes in institutional culture as well as in curriculum which will work against racism and ...help students develop a strong sense of social responsibility”(37). However, as Jansen (1998, 1999) contends, these calls have, primarily, been rhetorical, particularly as can be inferred from the responses adopted by institutions (Jansen, 1998; Mamdani, 1998b). Indeed, in his call for a critical reading of transformation, Jansen (1998) describes the areas of transformation that are problematically disregarded as the “Achilles heel of white institutions” (109). These he describes as being: “[the] underlying and untouched concerns in higher education transformation; issues of curriculum knowledge and institutional power” (Jansen, 1998: 108).

3.6.5 Curriculum transformation: the response of universities

As Jansen (1998, 2007) infers, government’s positioning with regard to transformation is reflected in higher education discourses and practices. In a study, conducted by Cross (2004), looking at how South African higher education has met the challenges of the social transformation process, particularly in terms of “diversity issues” (387), Cross’s findings underlie Jansen’s (1998) and Mamdani’s (1998b) critiques on the role of universities in the social transformation process. In his study, Cross (2004) particularly scrutinises the position and status of diversity initiatives in South African academic scholarship and the higher education curricula, in an attempt to highlight levels of social transformation. Cross (2004) argues that, in addressing the needs and implications of transformation in a newly democratised South Africa, the generic term ‘diversity’, connoting race, gender and culture, has become the linguistic signifier to infer broad

⁷¹ For further reading on the goals towards transformation set out by government, see Cloete, C., & Bunting, I. (2004). *Developing performance indicators for higher education: a South African case study*. Cape Town: CHET.

social change: “ ‘diversity’, ‘diversity issues’ and ‘diversification’... have become part of the higher education debate and policy” (387). However, as Cross (2004) maintains, diversity is a problematic and semantically loaded concept, and ‘poses new challenges to South African tertiary institutions’ (391). Cross (2004) goes on to suggest that due to the diverse interpretations of diversity, these concepts lack the necessary weight for suitably tackling the transformation process: “there can be no single universalising model or conception of diversity that can work effectively in all contexts.... This has made diversity a highly contested issue in the South African context” (390-391).

However, central to my thesis is Cross’s (2004) underscoring of the lack of action and response from institutions in undertakings of critical engagement with social transformation, particularly in areas of research and curriculum content. Indeed, Cross (2004) intimates that inadequate thought has been given to what is taught and researched. Particularly importantly for my thesis, his study underlines the problematic oversight in the area of curriculum transformation; he attests: “there has been no systematic attempt to develop a campus wide approach to curriculum transformation or diversity related research” (Cross, 2004: 397). This coheres with Jansen (1998, 1999, 2007) and Mamdani’s contentions (1998b) that the current governmental and institutional focus on social transformation has essentially overlooked the dynamics and inherent linkages between knowledge, power and ideology, particularly as imbibed in curriculum content.

3.6.6 Curriculum transformation: oversight in the literature

Although there is an important and growing body of literature on curriculum transformation in post-apartheid South Africa (Breier, 2001; Christie, 1997; Dowling & Seepe, 2003; Ensor, 2002; Naudé, 2003; Pretorius, 2003), the primary focus has been on transforming and restructuring the curriculum as responsive to the needs of a global economy. This underpins the prominence of neo-liberalist discourses in the dualistic approach to education transformation. The literature, in the main, explores the socially responsive nature of the curriculum in a globalised economy (Pretorius, 2003), the need for academic restructuring and the pressures placed on departments to be financially viable whilst also meeting the demands for skills and knowledge production required for

economic growth (Naudé, 2003). The literature further looks at how mergers of universities have influenced the nature of curriculum content, particularly in light of a move towards an integrated approach to education that implies a view of learning that “rejects the established organisation of curriculum and its attendant inequalities of occupation and social class” (Christie, 1997: 111). In short, the literature primarily looks at the implications and effects of globalisation (particularly in light of skills development and equitable redress) on education, and the consequences of this on the nature of curriculum content. This can be inferred in the following quotation from Christie (1997):

One of the primary approaches taken to curriculum development [in other words, transformation] in South Africa, has been to overhaul the idea of a curriculum which over-emphasises the humanities and social sciences, but underemphasises mathematics and science... global policy trends are certainly evident, but in interaction with local needs and interests in the production of specific policy positions (117).

However, the focus of the literature on curriculum reform has essentially skimmed over the seemingly obvious links between the inherent dynamics of knowledge and power – particularly as inscribed by whiteness (Jansen, 1998; Mamdani, 1998b). Jansen (1998) refers to the body of knowledge overlooked as “the nature of the curriculum experience... the kind of knowledge (and therefore authority) which is passed on ... as unquestionable truth and inscrutable value” (109). This is particularly underscored by Mamdani’s (1998b) acerbic critique of formerly white universities. Mamdani derisively challenges universities to move beyond demographic reform and start critically engaging with the much-ignored but salient vestige of knowledge and power, the curriculum. Mamdani (1998b) asserts: “either you [universities] continue to act as a well-endowed home of intellectual orthodoxy, or you open your doors to a great debate which will go beyond transforming the complexion of your student body to transforming what you actually teach these students” (online).

3.6.7 The struggle over curriculum reform: “the great curriculum debate”⁷²

One substantial body of critical literature has emerged in the area of the intersection of knowledge and power at the site of curriculum transformation at post-apartheid higher

⁷² (Muller, 1998: i).

education institutions. This body has been limited to response to the debate surrounding Mamdani's attempt to revise the Africa Studies curriculum at the University of Cape Town, or what has become known as the "the great curriculum debate" (Muller, 1998: i) or "the Mamdani affair" (Jansen, 1998: 107)⁷³. As Johan Muller (1998) correctly points out, the debate may "ostensibly [be] about how 'Africa' should be taught in a foundation core course to first year social science students... [yet it] throws up a tangled skein of issues that have ramifications far beyond the parochialism of an in-house debate at a university at the Southern tip of Africa" (i)⁷⁴. Essentially, Mamdani attempted to institute a revised curriculum for an Introductory Africa Course, which challenged the canons of knowledge and epistemological framings of the university (Jansen, 1998). As the ensuing controversy revealed, proposing a change to curriculum content was met with: "a defence of the curriculum status quo by Mamdani's critics" (Jansen, 1998: 109).

Jansen (1998) points out that what this debate essentially exposed was the fragile veneer of transformation. Of particular importance to my study is the fact that although this controversy was primarily a struggle over whose knowledge holds pre-eminence, 'whose Africa' should be taught, the respondents, aside from Jansen, all side-stepped this issue. Jansen (1998) remarks on this: "The problem is that not only are all of the respondents raising somewhat different issues against Mamdani; all of them appear, remarkably, to have missed the critical questions that Mamdani raises" (107). Indeed, in scratching below the surface of demographic reforms, both Mamdani and the Mamdani affair highlighted the continued epistemological influence of apartheid: "the issues [Mamdani] raises challenge at its very roots a knowledge/power regime at UCT which is intimately connected to the history and politics of a white institution in the shadow of apartheid" (Jansen, 1998:108).

⁷³ The University of Cape Town is a historically white, English university. For a detailed reading of this debate see: *Social Dynamics* (1998) 24(2).

⁷⁴ "Mahmood Mamdani was tasked with designing a foundation course in African Studies at UCT. As Chair of the AC Jordan Centre for African Studies, he presented a syllabus with a strongly Afrocentric perspective, historical grounding and scholarly sources. He was summarily suspended as Chair. The widely publicised debate that followed marked a moment of engagement with the intellectual (as opposed to structural) challenges of transformation" (Vokwana, n.d.: online).

3.6.8 Opening the coffin of apartheid

The controversy surrounding the Mamdani affair showed that a revision of knowledge in the canons of the academy is a highly sensitive, and provocative, undertaking.

Fundamentally, the broader implications of this debate highlight what Wally Morrow (2003) aptly points out: that curriculum transformation is a highly contentious and sensitive area, and attempts to revise or change curriculum content can be viewed as tantamount to infringing on that which is viewed as being sacrosanct. Morrow draws the interesting analogy that “trying to change a curriculum is like trying to remove a cemetery” (2). Morrow (2003) explains:

[C]emeteries ... are sacred, not merely places where people deposit the physical remains of the dead, and humility and reverence are the proper attitudes to adopt when we enter them... they are repositories of precious traditions and memories... the desecration of graves or gravestones is a most serious violation (2).

Drawing on this analogy may help to explain both the dearth of research in the area of curriculum reform, particularly as read through the lens of another area of contention, racial identities. Indeed, as Morrow (2003) asserts, any attempts to change or revise the curriculum will be met with emotional resistance. However, as Coetzee (1991) intimates, the real legacy of apartheid is the extent to which identities have been naturalised and normalised as a result of not questioning received knowledges. In other words, the legacy is a resistance to the removal of the cemetery. However, Coetzee (1991) writes that “thinking breeds action. There is thus reason to re-open the coffin and remind ourselves of what apartheid looks like in the flesh” (1).

3.7 Final words

As this review has shown, discourses on the interplay and interconnections between curriculum knowledge and institutional power are often seemingly avoided (particularly when read through the lens of apartheid histories and identities). Yet, as the Mamdani affair clearly showed, it is an evocative area. In addition, in post-apartheid South Africa, with official discourses of race further characterised by non-racialism, read in terms of Goldberg’s thesis of racist culture and the normativity of whiteness, this has resulted in the continued racialisation of the curriculum, higher education and South Africa (and

indeed can be seen in global society). My study will thus occupy this terrain in the exploration and critical interrogation of a racialised curriculum. It will thereby follow recent trends in global historiographies, mainly subaltern studies, and explore ways in which networks of power operate, particularly within knowledge production and reproduction. In doing so, my study will attempt to crack open and extend on the field of higher education studies.

Chapter 4: Analysis and findings

4.1 General introduction

The aim of this study is to critically reflect on the struggles surrounding curriculum transformation as reflective of broader institutional contests surrounding the re-imagining of apartheid histories and identities⁷⁵. Race, with its attendant connotations of hegemonic power relations, oppression and injustice (cf. 3.2.1.4; 3.2.2), is thus central to the analysis of my study. Indeed, what emerged as the central themes in my case study are the contested interpretations of race, how these⁷⁶ in turn shape discussions of culture, and how they are subsequently reproduced and challenged in the curriculum at a post-apartheid higher education institution. Consequently, a key point of departure was to ascertain some of the diverse and multiple nuances and understandings which race garners in South African higher education discourses and practices. The primary focus is thus particularly on the intersections of race and culture in discourses and practices of the social transformation⁷⁷ enterprise at a previously whites-only Afrikaans university.

This chapter starts off by exploring current racial understandings at the university. It then looks at how governmental directives on race and transformation are impacting on how change is officially thought about at the university. Importantly, here I look at directives for both explicit and oblique points of racial reference. The chapter then explores how the official voice of the institution coheres with its discourses and practices of transformation. The chapter then delves into how the struggle over curriculum transformation in one module, the Ubuntu Module, may be seen as reflective of broader institutional struggles surrounding the re-imagining of racialised identities. In so doing, it also questions whether the challenging or reproduction of apartheid identities, as part of canonical knowledges, can be seen to represent a battle for the soul of the university.

⁷⁵ Statement of purpose (cf. 1.4)

⁷⁶ As was manifest from my study: racial essentialisms

⁷⁷ The specific focus is on the treatment of racialised identity in curriculum transformation.

However, it is imperative in the reading of this chapter to understand that there are no clear and distinct boundaries between the sections: race (and culture),⁷⁸ the broader institutional setting, and the Ubuntu Module. Rather, they not only inform each other and are interreliant for meaning and understanding, but constantly overlap. I have therefore avoided dividing my analysis into rigid themes, as this could restrict and limit my readings.

4.2 Race: discourses of evasion

4.2.1 “Culture: a smokescreen for racism”⁷⁹

What was manifest from my study is that the deconstruction and destruction of apartheid’s contrived and prescriptive racial categories have in many instances been stifled or sidestepped by what Wicomb (2001) describes as “the contrastive system” (159), where class and culture have become a proxy for race (Haupt, 2007). During my interview with Prof. A, he expressed how culture is being exploited to obfuscate racist discourses. He commented that one of the areas where the university is experiencing significant resistance to transformation is from students staying in residences. He went on to express the difficulties that the university’s management faces with students who, in his experience, substitute culture for race to maintain segregation. As he explained: “culture has, in many instances, become a smokescreen for racism” (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

The point was further elucidated by Prof. B, who issued an ominous warning on the dangers of cultural essentialisation, particularly in a climate of its resurrected segregationist mobilization (Appiah, 2006). Disturbed by the current manipulations of culture, which “ensure that not everyone wishes to abandon racial naming” (Wicomb, 2001: 159), he voiced concerns about how using culture as a surrogate for race not only echoes apartheid’s attempt to blur the boundaries between race and culture (cf. 3.2.2.4), but dangerously attempts to re-segregate South Africans:

⁷⁸ Discussions of race and culture reflect how, in the world of the everyday, they interpenetrate. These discussions are also suggestive of how any such discourse of race is slippery, contingent and contextual.

⁷⁹ (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

The real thing that I'm angry with apartheid for is its essentialisation and politicisation of culture. And now, because culture has also become one of those code-words for race, for me is the greatest threat to the future of our democracy; the notion that people, when the chips are down, begin to mobilise around these categories (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

The evasion of race can be interpreted from different perspectives. Firstly, as both these senior staff members suggested, the 'culturation' of race is a purposive means exploited in post-apartheid discourses and practices not only to justify segregation on the basis of claimed 'cultural difference'⁸⁰, but is a façade for bigoted behaviour and attitudes. This is merely thinly-veiled racism masquerading as culture, or what Goldberg (2002) terms "neo-racism" (201).

An alternative explanation could be, as intimated by Morrison (1993), that "ignoring race is understood to be a graceful, even generous, liberal gesture. To notice is to recognize an already discredited difference" (10). Although this explanation coheres with my findings, a more composite reading in the South African context needs to take cognisance of the fact that the avoidance of direct referrals to race can be attributed to an awkwardness and acute sensitivity, particularly amongst white South Africans, at being reminded that their whiteness was, and indeed arguably still is implicit in their own status of privilege and power as conferred by apartheid. Perhaps by the same token, a sense of the fragility of privilege, and a fear of the belief of its temporality (Carrim, 2000), may be tied into what my study refers to as discourses of evasion. This was evident during my interview with Mrs E. I noticed that, throughout our interview, whenever any issue or topic with any inferences to race arose, she would evoke either culture or class as an alternative explanation to that of race. Her commentary on the controversy surrounding the Ubuntu Module reveals this:

The main issue in the Ubuntu Module that actually caused people to feel uneasy about it was, as I've been informed, a situation whereby the students were told that say for instance, you go to a restaurant and there is a finger-bowl on the table with water in, if a white person does not tell the blacks not to drink it, they might drink it. It was addressed the wrong way round. What was probably meant was to

⁸⁰ As culture is protected constitutionally (Republic of South Africa, 1996: Act 9.3 & Acts 30 & 31) the problem lies in the fact that the concept of culture is often appropriated by those who wish to use it as a proxy category to allow racist ideologies to fester.

explain a situation that you are unfamiliar with. And this again has nothing to do with race, but more to do with class (formal interview with Mrs E, 2006).

A further point to be considered here is that with the continued salience of race in post-apartheid discourses and practices (Wicomb, 2001; Carrim, 2000), in using class (or culture) as a proxy category, Mrs E, in effect, assumes the normativity of race. This can be read in her interchangeable use of race and class, which thereby positions white (or whiteness) as the normative class. This assumption serves to sustain superiority, privilege and hierarchy by presenting the assumed behaviour of one category as a type of universal truth.

4.2.2 Contested readings of race

Although there was no direct question included in my semi-structured interviews that asked my participants to define race, explicitly or implicitly they did speak about race. Gleaning connotative undertones from indirect commentaries on identity, as well as more pointed statements on race, it was apparent that my participants displayed varied and graduated interpretations and understandings of race. Prof. B⁸¹, in particular, evoked a nuanced and multifaceted insight on racialised identity. He not only articulated a historicised reading of race as a consequence of colonialism, emerging as a socio-political and economic construct, but highlighted how continued political manipulations of race have ensured the continuity of race categories today. During a discussion on understandings of race in broader South African society⁸², he underscored the problem facing South Africa, as well as the institution, with the continued, orchestrated, use of race:

The way in which South Africans view experiences, especially in a country that was for three centuries locked up in a particular view of the world, is the way they process those experiences as racially or ethnically differentiated. What they're really talking about is a biological phenomenon. There are real power differentials locked up in the persistent use of those categories, there are vested interests that would prefer us to continue way into the future to talk about the world the way it is given to us. And I have just come to the conclusion that what counts as

⁸¹ Prof. B was the person who was primarily responsible for the discontinuation of the Ubuntu Module in the Faculty of Education

⁸² As my study underscores, educational institutions should not be seen as independent of broader society, but rather as an integral aspect of society.

experience is often an artefact of political manoeuvre (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

This articulation of race, which underlines the disparate power relations locked into the terms that surround it, differs substantively from that of Mrs D. Indeed, central to the contestations surrounding the Ubuntu Module was Prof. B's contention that the module's "conception of African culture [and race...] is primitive, inferior, monolithic, stable, and essential in its assumptions about black people" (Head of the Faculty of Education, n.d.). During our informal discussions, as well as our interview, Mrs D was receptive to and willing to accept critique on her course. However, it became apparent that she had misconstrued the central arguments behind Prof. B's written response to the module. This is illustrated in her misunderstanding of Prof. B's criticism of the module's unproblematised use of the term 'ubuntu' (cf. 2.2.3) and his anthropological positioning of 'primitive':

So the misconception that I'm promoting Zulu is totally wrong because the Ubuntu term is just the popular one around the country. But pertaining to promoting Zulu, just because of the term Ubuntu, that's incorrect.

[I don't] understand what they meant when they said "that it is primitive". When they say it's primitive, it's inferior. I didn't understand, because I felt even if they say that it is inferior let them say what is inferior so that I can improve [...] So I found myself frustrated and not knowing what to do. You see so it's really disheartening if somebody criticises you, but they don't say that this is how you should do it. Criticism is good, because that is how one grows. But there is no answer to the criticism (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

4.2.3 "Nobody gives me an answer"⁸³: institutional evasions of re-imaging race

Before I go on to discuss Mrs D's articulations of race, I would like to digress slightly to a not unrelated area which I feel offers insight into the way of thinking of both the department offering the Ubuntu Module, and the broader institution, in their stance on race and transformation. Here I wish to explore the responsibility assumed for knowledge production and reproduction.

⁸³ (Formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

Much of the heat in the controversy surrounding the module had fallen onto Mrs D, and I began under the impression that she had been left to flounder alone. This can be read in her comment that “there is no answer to the criticism” (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007), and in the following additional comment, in which she expresses her disquiet over the seemingly inadequate feedback given to her since the controversy arose: “So far there is only one lecturer who came and told me: don’t say “all” don’t say “should”. That’s all. ... I found that I have been criticised, and then nobody gave me an answer. You get what I mean?”(formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

I was thus under the impression that although her department certainly did not appear to intentionally make a scapegoat of Mrs D, responsibility for the module had been deflected onto her. During my interview with Prof. C, I construed the following comment to show that the department imputed accountability to Mrs D:

The course was written for the students at the Faculty of Education, with perhaps a wider intended audience to convey the essences of [Mrs D’s] perception of Ubuntu. Importantly, we did not as a department participate in the planning of the module, but left it up to [Mrs D] since we believe that she is an expert or at least has sufficient knowledge It was therefore not a matter of the department defining the module; it was entirely her own creation in line with her own ideas. The department does not hold an official viewpoint on the module; one was never formulated with a view to the Ubuntu Module (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

However, when I asked Mrs D if she had been solely responsible for the conceptualisation of the module, she responded:

No. When we started with the idea of Ubuntu, we came together with my other colleagues and then we brainstormed on the topics that we could teach. But in the end I was the one teaching it, but I didn’t decide on the topics. We brainstormed the content and we even argued about some ideas, some things like where somebody said that witchcraft is black culture and we said no way; witchcraft is in all the cultures. You have the three witches in Shakespeare. Is it a white culture or a black culture? So those were the things that we were arguing about. But in the end I did not decide on the content alone (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

I was concerned at the seeming disparity revealed in Prof. C and Mrs D’s comments, and asked Prof. B, as the head of a faculty, to comment on the responsibility of a department and faculty for the curriculum designed and taught under its auspices:

I think, you know, in a university context it is often accepted that every academic designs their own curriculum, teaches it and that then you just have to make sure that it meets certain ‘architectural requirements’, like: was it in the right format, the right credits. So there is very often only administrative oversight rather than curriculum oversight. That’s typical in big universities in the rest of the world. However, when you have something of this nature, and especially when you have it in the context of what must have been interdepartmental and, indeed, inter-faculty work, then there has to be an oversight, especially when you are dealing with a junior lecturer - remember she is not a professor. And so in a departmental context you can’t just say that everybody is going to do their own thing, you have got to engage the substance of what that person does, especially if it is not a senior professor, and you have to engage it in the context of the other work that you do.

Now where the Faculty of Education failed is that there was not at the time a curriculum oversight from our side, and somebody seriously dropped the ball. I only found out about Ubuntu much later, a long time after its introduction - and I don’t know how it escaped me. I would typically have made that the responsibility of the Head of Department, because I don’t go through every module at the faculty. But then you must also say, let’s assume that there was a Head of Department who saw it, because you have got to sign off for it. How did it get through? And the only way that it can get through, if there is no sense of the problem. Are you with me? (He chuckles.) If calling black people backward for washing their hands in the ribs bowl and you see that as normative, then I assume that nobody is going to pick up that there is a problem. That is why I think that to this day the Humanities people don’t understand the problem (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

From Prof. B’s explanation, I would extrapolate that the apparent evasion of responsibility of Mrs D’s department implies an institution failing its own staff, and, by extenuation, students. Not only does it suggest that there are inadequate institutional re-imaginings and critical debates on race, but also that there are insubstantial directives on intellectual and curricular transformation. It appears that even when contentions do arise, no support structures are in place to arbitrate and work towards common understandings of race and transformation (here as read through curriculum dealings with racial identity). I would contend that this institutional inaction is suggestive of a university grappling with its own past history, which is being played out in its current muddled understandings of both race and transformation.

4.2.4 “Let them give definitions of race in the constitution”⁸⁴

Although navigating an antithetical understanding of transformation (mediated through knowledges on race), as envisioned by Prof. B, I would argue that Mrs D cannot be accused of being uncommitted to (her understanding of) transformation. Indeed, I found her to be accommodating, transparent and dedicated in using her module as a catalyst to:

try and make people learn about other people and understand why people do things Addressing misconceptions and misunderstandings caused by say, us Blacks when we are with Whites, and when Whites are with us. So there are some things that are seen as negative and yet when you get to know them better and you can understand that they are not so negative, but how we see things culturally (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

However, as her explanation illustrates, her understandings of racial identity not only present race as a homogenous, polarised (we/us/them/they) and static concept, but are mono-dimensional, cauterised and de-historicised. The following examples from the Ubuntu Module study material (Department of ____, 2005) further attest to this narrow reading of race:

In the African culture “first course”, “second course” etc. are foreign terms. When having a buffet meal, an African person would, for instance heap a plate with everything available on the buffet table, i.e. salad, bread, vegetables, meat, rice and/or pasta. This is because Black people are not familiar with Western ways of eating. They should be taught (31).

If you find some people in a lift when entering it, you should greet first. Some White people will stare at you like you are crazy because you do not know them (29).

In the previous regime, Blacks were relegated to working as servants and garden boys. You would not find a coloured person working as a domestic servant. Most of the coloured people worked in factories and in stores as tellers or sales ladies. Most of the labourers on the farms are Black people (36-37).

As these examples suggest, not only have culture and race been conflated and confused, but as Prof. B points out in his written response, the module:

reinvents white people around full or qualified concepts of “Euro-ness”. By sharply juxtaposing African and European culture, all the worst excesses of apartheid’s construction of racial identity are not only resurrected, it is reinforced

⁸⁴ (Formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

in the minds of unsuspecting students (South Africa has “cultural groups”) (Head of the Faculty of Education, n.d.).

Indeed, in her interview, Mrs D expressed her confusion at the controversy surrounding her module’s presentation of racial and cultural identity. This can be observed in her appeal to government to clarify and take responsibility for the use of racial terminology:

This [the discontinuing of the Ubuntu Module at the Faculty of Education] came out as very negative as far as I am concerned. And then again, I still don’t understand why I have an article with the Coloured saying that they don’t want to be Coloured again, they want to be called Brown. Now where do I stand as a lecturer of such a module? When people feel that they don’t like these terms they want to change it, how will I know that officially? Let them put that in the constitution so that I know what to say. Then I’m within my right (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

As the above examples show, not only are personal understandings of race fundamentally politicised, but, in many sectors of South African society, the politicisation of identity has become so ingrained and naturalised that normative, biologised understandings of race have seemingly attained an existence beyond the realms of critical discourses. The corollary is that this has created a belief, understanding and reading of racial identity which is neutralised and ahistorical. This could arguably illustrate the success of the long-armed influence of apartheid in normalising racial identity through the educational structures of both state and civil society (cf. 3.3). This, I would argue, serves to heighten the immediacy of the problem of current curriculum deficiencies.

4.2.5 Institutional readings of race: the influence of governmental and normative discourses

It was during my interview with Prof. A that it was underscored that readings of race are anything but an act of individual interpretation and understanding. Rather, our interview accentuated the fact that how race is understood and articulated is strategically and deeply influenced by prevailing governmental, institutional and normative framings of race. Indeed, the interconnected, almost symbiotic, relationship of this triad in interpretations and understandings of racial identity was alluded to by Prof. A. Although this can be perceived in Mrs D’s call on government to take responsibility for, and to steer and guide understandings of racial identity within the institution, it was Prof. A who

indicated that current governmental and normative understandings of race are curtailing more “sophisticated” (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007) readings within the university. This became apparent during our interview when, questioning my position on race, he indicated what I had initially interpreted as an essentialised reading of race: “But how do you see race then? You know, we have different races in this country, that’s a reality” (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

His explanation appeared to echo liberalism’s postulation (cf. 3.2.1.4) that racism is more a consequence of individual prejudices and how ideas of superiority and inferiority are associated with these identities:

But how you see the superiority of one race over the other, or defining the one in terms of the other, of having an approach at the university that what is happening here is actually from a specific paradigm, the rest of you will just have to fit in, or, we are prepared to accommodate you. If that is sort of the attitude, I don’t think that we have made the head-shift that is required, the paradigm shift that is required (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

I would argue that the primary flaw in this approach is that such an understanding of race ignores the very reason for its construction, or what Prof. B described as the “artefact of political manoeuvre” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007): that is, the fabrication of race to ensure the supremacy of one group (white/whiteness) and the subjugation of another (black/ blackness/other). I suggested this to Prof. A, and went on to explain my own positioning on race:

It depends on definitions and understandings. I come from a particular point of view where race is a construct, where race has been reified because of political, economic and social expedience - it is not a biological phenomenon. The race groups in South Africa were a construct of a particular paradigm and a particular way of thinking, and if you are coming from that point of view, race is wholly constructed (Esakov in formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

Although, admittedly, I had initially perceived Prof. A’s comment as being a reductionist conceptualisation of race, it became apparent that his understanding of race is more a recognition of the historical burden of races in South Africa, and is indicative of the present political burden it exerts. Indeed, his response to my postulation of race forced

me to acknowledge that my own positioning to my study had often ignored the realities of the influence of prevalent normative thinking and the historical legacies that inspire it.

That I agree with you, but the moment you come from that perspective you also have to acknowledge the implications of what is the reality of the day. So whatever you do you have to acknowledge that sort of face because you cannot ignore that, particularly when you are trying to work with the reality, and there is nothing in that saying that the one is superior and the other one is inferior, it is just that you have to cater for the fact that people were set up by political dispensations (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

His explanation, which points to a politics of redress rather than one of emancipation⁸⁵, hints at an inherited encumbrance faced by the university in the transformation process. The deconstruction of apartheid histories and identities is being hampered by what I would describe as the conflict between (critical) theory and reality. Indeed, Prof. A's 'pragmatic' reading of race brought home Said's (2003) stance that:

one ought never assume that the structure of Orientalism [in other words, race] is nothing more than a structure of myths, which were the truth told would simply blow away. ... [A]fter all, any system of ideas that can remain unchanged as teachable wisdom... must be something more formidable than a mere collection of lies (6).

It is this 'teachable wisdom', the moulding and manipulation of knowledge, parading as unadulterated truth that has played an intrinsic role in constructing that which is not real (race) into an irrefutable reality (Hall, 1997). This is suggestive of an epistemological calcification, made real by real histories of racism, with the boundaries of knowledge thus exhibiting resistance to ideologies of change. However, this should in no way imply that understandings of race are not being critically deconstructed, and naturalised conceptions of race debunked, in all spheres and sectors of the university.

4.2.6 Institutional transformation: complex and uneven

Rather, this study recognises that transformation is a complex and uneven enterprise, with its own pathos and ironies. This can be read in the following comment by Prof. B:

And by the way it is also true that if I talk to several people in Humanities about Ubuntu, they were horrified. So if you showed this to the Head of Anthropology,

⁸⁵ As my study suggests, this approach has been acutely influenced by pressures exerted on institutions to meet certain legislative transformation indices.

or the Head of Sociology, or the Head of Political Science, I can assure you, in fact I did tell them about it, they are horrified. So in both the faculties we are sitting with this problem that there are people for whom this is completely scientific and real and incontestable, but there are in both these faculties other voices for whom this is deeply objectionable (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

However, what this study has affirmed is that the prevailing understandings of race that continue to dominate the university's discourses are primarily essentialised. This study acknowledges that these understandings therefore cannot be ignored and they are particularly important in any attempt to deconstruct them. This was corroborated by Prof. B, who intimated that histories of racism which continue to taint the academy need to be recognised and understood as integral components in any transformation enterprise. In discussing approaches to academically broaching such reified identities, which appear impervious to change, he cautioned:

But you mustn't fight with the devil; you need to just acknowledge that South Africa's cultururation cannot be complete without such really primitive ideas of culture and race. I mean this is what people were taught all their lives in church, in school. So it's unreasonable to expect those views to disappear - it's totally unreasonable. What I think one should do is obviously put the intellectual spotlight on it and say, what does this do for people, and what does this do against people? (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

4.2.7 Taken-for-granted understandings of race

The kinds of biologised and naturalised assumptions that Prof. B discusses underscore many diverse readings of race by my participants. However, I would be loathe to suggest that any of these understandings are inspired by insidious political motivations. Instead I would suggest that they stem from my participants' own taken-for-granted hegemonic understandings. I left each interview with the impression that all the participants genuinely found racism to be reprehensible, and were doing what they felt was the best thing to attain equity and transformation at the university from within their own epistemology of race and their personal content-construction of what they understood transformation to mean. This is encapsulated in the following comments by Prof. C and Mrs D:

We are genuinely serious about transformation and that is why we are very unhappy about this whole issue. If we make mistakes, basic and individual, no

one should accuse us on our philosophy; particularly in terms of transformation (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

But then later I also heard information about ‘putting people in little boxes, you know white, black’ - but the intention was never to put people in boxes, to try and divide them again like in the apartheid era (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

I would suggest that readings of racial identity, as they are being played out in the curriculum, still appear to be deeply encumbered by apartheid’s implicit educational ideologies. These readings have taken on a new twist in post-apartheid discourses on race, particularly where silencing-discourses of non-racialism proliferate (cf. 3.6.1). For the most part, these understandings of race remain unchallenged within the institutional setting. This is a setting that, under apartheid, played a definitive role in the production and naturalisation of racialised identities (cf. 3.4), and, as this study points, within certain spheres at the university plays a role in their current reproduction. However, what is patent is that governmental, institutional and normative discourses are continuing to render raw identity issues. This can be discerned in Prof. B’s incisive commentary on how ideas of old are finding their way into current discourses, in effect, serving to further normalise and naturalise apartheid’s constructs:

And so when a group of black people meet to talk about themselves as Natives⁸⁶ which necessitates talking about white people as settlers, you can imagine our Africa, because I don’t even think they know what they are doing. What is this language? Where does it come from? (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

4.3 The institutional setting: transformation in higher education

4.3.1 The rhetoric of transformation

As has already been intimated in this chapter, governmental policies have had both a direct and an indirect influence on institutional positionings on race and attendant transformation initiatives. With a focus on redress, post-apartheid South Africa heralded a plethora of official policies seeking and legislating attempts at social transformation (cf. 3.6.2). From the South African constitution to policies written specifically for higher education (Department of Education, 1997; Republic of South Africa; 1996), institutions

⁸⁶ Here Prof. B is referring to the Native Club. For further reading on the Native Club see: Retrieved 16 February, 2008, from <http://ruactivate.wordpress.com/2006/08/28/the-native-club-controversy/>

have been officially tasked with operationalising the social transformation policies set out (cf. 3.6.2). As a further check, measures⁸⁷ have been implemented by government to ensure that higher education institutions are legislatively obliged to meet certain requirements.

From its mission and vision statements to policies and strategic plans, the university has responded to these commissions on an official, institutional level, asserting a commitment to “[the] promotion of equity, access, equal opportunities, redress, transformation and diversity” (University of ____, 2007a: online). However, although this study acknowledges the centrality and importance of these policies, plans and statements in the transformation process, what it seeks to do is to go beyond the semantics, and explore how these initiatives are being operationalised. Further, this study also seeks to explore the extent to which they reproduce, whilst at the same time legitimise and morally revitalise, essentialist and biological imaginings of race. This study asserts that unless there is significant and meaningful implementation, particularly in terms of curriculum content, plans and policies are but hollow rhetoric, and “at best political symbols” (Jansen, 1998: 106).

4.3.2 Transformation? Institutional ideologies and individual interpretations

This thesis subscribes to the positing of the curriculum as a reflector of broader social histories and contradictions, a reflector of change or conservatism. It also underscores that connotations of power inequities remain an integral part of understandings and discourses of racial identity. Therefore, of particular focus in this study is exploring how transformation is playing out in terms of the extent to which “the reproduction [and challenging] of particular identities ... is grounded in” (Mamdani, 1997: 153) not only institutional ideologies, but also curriculum content. Further, how policies, plans and statements filter down from governmental to institutional policy, and then to the role-players who ultimately enact them, is central to reading the trajectory and pace of transformation at an institution. As a corollary, I would assert that personal understandings of race will, and do, impinge on how transformation is thought about and

⁸⁷ For example: The Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998).

implemented, as ultimately, personal understandings are deeply entwined with institutional readings and articulations on race.

The university under study has a history as a bastion of Afrikanerdom and white privilege, and in many quarters, understandings of race as a homogenised essential truth continue to prevail in it. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is significant resistance to transformation from many staff members, particularly in view of the perception that transformation is associated with the dismantling of white privilege. Reflecting on prevalent attitudes which inform personal readings, and thus the implementations of transformation, Prof. B commented: “there are a whole lot of people here who still believe that black people are somehow less capable than white people. Trust me on that one” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007). This seemingly stubborn residual of a longitudinal structuring of race on the basis of perceived ability, or what Prof. A described as the superiority/inferiority binary, was corroborated by Prof. A as a significant challenge to transformation:

There is much room for the university community to move away from stereotyping and what was associated with the construction of race within the previous dispensation. And I think that is slowly developing, we have pockets at the university where I think that people have crossed those sort of obstacles. There are other pockets at the university where we are not near that (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

As Prof. A suggests, it is necessary to acknowledge that “at the level of people”⁸⁸ (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007), attitudinal beliefs and actions belie, and resist, the rhetoric of redress. Consequently, there are significant obstacles to institutional attempts to implement directives of transformation. This will (and does) impede the transformation process, regardless of what is enacted in plans and policies. Of significance to this study, this has a direct impact on what is written and taught in the curriculum. This problem was particularly underscored by Prof. B, who shed a historicised light on this resistance to change:

Let me tell you why transformation at the level of people won’t work. You are asking one of the most marginalised groups in the new political dispensation, the Afrikaners, to work against their own interests. What the hell! Do you think that

⁸⁸Prof. B speaks of “transformation at the level of people”.

was a reasonable thing to ask? You literally asking people to give up their own jobs, and to give up the jobs they would naturally and instinctively want to preserve for what they see as their own kind. You ask for them to give that up for people that for years they thought and were told were the threat. Who the hell are we fooling? It's counter-intuitive (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

From Prof. B's commentary it can further be construed that at a previously white Afrikaans institution it is therefore fundamental for leadership not only to frame transformation, but also to play a decisive role in the implementation and guidance of transformation. However, according to Prof. B, as the conflict around the Ubuntu Module has suggested, the reason that struggles surrounding transformation abound should actually be understood in terms of a lack of political will at the level of leadership:

Well it's always much deeper, I mean what drags down the ship, if you want, is the fact that in the university as a whole there is - I mean I raised this issue with several members of the senior management at this university. Not a single one of them, as far as I know, have raised hell about this. So there are institutional forces which pull down much more powerfully this consensus around what knowledge is. So I know what we are up against. However, I am also convinced about the fact that these things only change at a faculty level where there is leadership that is determined to change (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

4.3.3 Is the institution “dischargeng [its] social responsibilities”?⁸⁹

As this study attests, curricula are not written in a void, but are the product of conditions of struggle and consensus in the prevailing hegemonic order (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992). Thus, with race and power relations intrinsically interwoven (cf. 3.2.1.4), readings of treatment of racial identity in the curriculum can be seen as a potent determinant in the analysis of both the power differentials and the dynamics informing the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of an institution. This is of particular relevance at a university which has its historical roots in the promulgation and propagation of racist thinking. Thus, fundamental to my analysis is a critical reading of how official directives are framed by the institution and subsequently implemented via the curriculum; that is, how is “the university [as] a symbol of national aspiration and hope, reconciliation and pride... discharging its social responsibilities”? (University of ____, 2007a: online).

⁸⁹ (University of ____, 2007a: online).

Examining documentation through the lens of a post-colonial hermeneutic: post-colonial archiving (cf. 2.12), and leaning on the Foucaultian analytic of discourse theory, I sought to analyse the ‘official voice’ of the institution as presented in these documents. The purpose was to explore these directives as epistemologies in themselves, and ask how “meaning arises not from language but from institutional practices, from power relations” (Ball, 1990: 2). In accordance with these critical analytics, it is necessary to explore not only what is said, but also that which is not said: the gaps, silences and the truncations. Thus, in looking at institutional frameworks, it was necessary to ask “why out of all possible things that could be said, only certain things were said: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another” (Foucault as cited in Ball, 1990: 3).

4.3.4 Policy hindrances or institutional inertia?

As a point of departure, a critical examination of all official documentation with references to transformation was necessary in understanding how the university officially frames transformation. The focus would then be narrowed down to analyse how the university formally broaches, and subsequently implements, curriculum transformation. It transpired that although the university has a language policy, an employment equity plan, and a strategic plan with a section dedicated to transformation, there is no specific transformation policy.

With the strategic plan asserting that “within universities, academic transformation should always be primary objective” (University of ____, 2007b: online), I was perplexed by this noticeable omission. Why had a transformation policy not been drawn up? I posed the question to Prof. A, who explained the position taken by the university:

You would not find a single document dealing with transformation only. Our approach is that if you talk about transformation, you are actually talking about all the dimensions of the activities of the university What we also intended doing was to make sure that we extract from the strategic plan specifically the transformational issues, and put up a transformational agenda for the university, with accompanied strategies and timelines and so on. Now we haven’t done that yet. We haven’t interpreted our strategic plan to get to that point. But it is an absolutely necessary exercise for the university, and we hope to produce a document that would really be aligned with the strategic plan and strategies of the university (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

4.3.5 Laissez-faire

I would like to focus on two seemingly paradoxical points mentioned here. The first is the institution's approach to transformation. Prof. A suggests that the university recognises that transformation encompasses all aspects of university life, and that this is why there is no specific transformation policy. Secondly, he goes on to concede that the university intends to establish a transformation agenda interpreted from the strategic plan. However, he says, "it is being decided upon, but we haven't done it so far" (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007). I would argue that with the magnitude of transformation acknowledged, this position does not cohere with the university's seemingly laissez-faire response to transformation across the board. Surely, with transformation affecting "all dimensions of the activities of the university" (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007) this should either impel the university to expedite the transformation agenda, or necessitate the drawing up of a transformation policy?

In addition, the university's strategic plan claims that: "the true meaning of transformation is much deeper and richer than the correction of demographic imbalances" (University of ____, 2007b: online). This suggests that although quantitative or numerical transformation is of significance in the transformation process, real, meaningful transformation must be gauged on a more qualitative level. In turn, this is premised on a trenchant, critical and ethical argument against essentialised and naturalised ideas of race. This then raises the question: with the official voice articulating a multifaceted and, indeed, substantive reading of transformation which would go beyond mere head-counts, what aspects of operationalised transformation take pre-eminence at the university?

4.3.6 The focus of transformation: "they pay lip service to transformation"⁹⁰

During our discussion, Prof. A spoke of the more dominant areas in which the university had focused on transformation:

We addressed the language issue for instance, the whole issue of student governance, of participation and inclusivity that you need to have for successful student governance. We focused on transforming our residences, and residence life. We have an employment equity plan, which is on the website of the

⁹⁰ (African National Congress Youth League & South African Students' Congress, 2007: 2 & 8).

university, spelling out targets, strategies and responsibilities and so forth. And we would also have institutional governance structures that would deal with that in a very specific way, like the employment equity forum. We have to report to the Department of Labour annually on the progress we are making against our targets. So the different dimensions which you would find within the university would dictate how pertinent you have a separate plan or not when it comes to transformation (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

I will comment upon various aspects touched upon here. Before I do so, however, it is significant to mention, here, the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) and the South African Students' Congress's (SASCO)⁹¹ contention that "the university managers are not honest and committed to transformation. They pay lip service to transformation ... Our conclusion is that there is no transformation at [the institution]" (African National Congress Youth League & the South African Students Congress, 2007: 2 & 8). Although this study does not endorse the ANCYL and SASCO's blanket criticism, and acknowledges that the university has made positive steps in the transformation process, at times under challenging circumstances, it is important not to discount their opinion as an unsubstantiated diatribe. What this comment is indicative of is a deep-seated student discontent with the university's implementation of transformation. It suggests that transformation initiatives undertaken thus far have fallen far short of expectations.

Significantly, what it is also indicative of is that in itself, transformation is an empty meaningless term that can be filled with just about any content. Indeed, this study questions the extent to which there has been any meaningful focus on and debate around 'social transformation'- particularly in the re-imagining of apartheid histories and identities, beyond the realms of demographics. Rather, it could be suggested, as reflected in the above explanation by Prof. A, that the areas of focus that take pre-eminence in transformation are those in which the university has been under governmental scrutiny and has had to respond on a legislative level. Put crassly, quotas have become not only the yardstick by which to measure levels of transformation, but a primary focus of

⁹¹ For further reading on the South African Students Congress (SASCO) see: Retrieved 16 February, 2008, from <http://www.sasco.org.za/index.php>
For further reading on the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) see: Retrieved 23 March, 2008, from <http://www.e-tools.co.za/anc/youth/index.php>

transformation. As this indicates, it appears that the reality of transformation belies the rhetoric of a university committed to meaningful, qualitative change.

4.3.7 “We can only deconstruct race as far as we are afforded the space do that”⁹²

Although not appearing to deflect responsibility from the institution Prof. A implied that official governmental initiatives, with the directive for universities to use race categories, are doing more to hamper qualitative transformation than promote to it. Prof. A discussed the difficulty that this has subsequently posed for the university: “You know, we can only deconstruct race as far as we are afforded the space to do that. I think that the space is limited when it comes to the legal frameworks imposed on the university from the paradigm of deconstructing race” (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007). As this study has discovered, the confusion caused by the race categories, or racial classifications reflecting and echoing apartheid’s categories, that the university is legislatively obliged to use, arguably serves to not only limit transformation, but avert the focus of power relations and dynamics embedded within these racial categories. Indeed, even in presenting races as fundamentals in discourses of redress, in ignoring the inherent and complex dynamism and power differentials infused in these categories, they are but re-inscribed as normative.

Further, it emerged that this type of quantitative, unproblematic focus on race is having a direct impact on how race is being articulated in the curriculum. This can be read in the following comment from Mrs D: “Only to hear that I shouldn’t say black or white [in the Ubuntu Module]. Now how do I go about it? Then you get to the university itself, go and look at their admission. It still has Black, Asian and Coloured and so on” (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007). As this suggests, it can indeed be retrogressive to focus the implementation of transformation on demographic reform. Firstly, in essentially adhering to a governmental focus on performance indicators, it not only serves to over-determine racial identities and re-reify identities of old, but also overlooks crucial areas, such as the “process by which power has shaped how knowledge is organised and defined” (Mamdani, 1997: 153). Indeed, as Jansen (1998) concurs, a myopic focus on indices “signals little of the depth, quality and sustainability of transformation given the fixation

⁹² (Formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

of this approach with numerical indices of performance such as the ‘number of African students enrolled’ without inquiring, for example, about the nature of the curriculum experience” (106).

Although the need for racial redress is unarguably an imperative in the state-driven transformation process, in focusing redress primarily on race as structured by internal colonial ideologies (cf. 3.2.2.1), apartheid categories are being not only revisited, but also revitalised. At an institution that has historical links to the academic validation of apartheid identities, this is acutely problematic. Indeed, not only are perverted notions of racial identity being reproduced in the university, but areas of critical importance, such as the curriculum, that can be seen as reflectors of meaningful transformation, also remain, intentionally or unintentionally, undiagnosed. This concern was voiced by Prof. B, who gave his view of this obstacle to transformation:

There is an inertia, there is a knowledge, an epistemological inertia, definitely that is used to slow down the transformation, once you get beyond the black faces and the female faces and so on, which are important issues. Getting down to the curriculum foundations, you know, it’s not that easy to change over to what people tell you; it’s not easy (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

The above commentary suggests that, if left up to the individual actors, transformation will be decelerated (further underscoring the imperative of institutional leadership in transformation). Thus it is particularly problematic that curriculum transformation is merely alluded to in the strategic plan. However, with pressures from both above (in the governmental focus on quotas), and below (in resistance from both staff and students who are attempting to safeguard power and privilege associated with their whiteness), the university has found itself in a tenuous position which can best be viewed as strategic compromise. This has seen curriculum transformation being perceptibly overlooked.

4.3.8 Curriculum transformation: going below the radar

Indeed, the most substantive reference to curriculum transformation can be read in the dictum “academic transformation should always be primary objective” (University of ____, 2007b: online). This oversight can be seen as a casualty of governmental pressure on the university to meet the indices set out for it. However, a more polemical reading could

be, as suggested by Prof. B, that the oversight is based on a sense of self-preservation and, thus, an intentional sidestepping of curriculum transformation:

Think of the curriculum as the institution and you begin to understand why it doesn't change by dictate or by pronouncement, because it is interwoven with the barriers and belief systems of the institution. The institutional curriculum, as is the place everywhere, serves preservation - it preserves rather than transforms. The fact that there is a particularly innovative curriculum under some professors obviously is important as part of what I call the chipping away of certainty in the belief system. But the institutional curriculum is so large, so powerful, that it overshadows (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

As Prof. A conceded, the university is afforded space to manoeuvre in the transformation enterprise. Yet, with the university seeming to focus its transformation primarily on areas where it is under official scrutiny, this has allowed for more nuanced transformation responsibilities, such as transformation of curriculum content, to fall below the radar. Indeed, Prof. A candidly acknowledged that the university has fallen short with regard to curriculum transformation:

It only came later, the view of transforming curriculum, and I'm not so sure that we have made the progress with regard to that, or that we have created the sensitivity with regard to that you would expect of an institution of this kind. So, I think that there is room to deconstruct race within the core business of the university, but we are talking about a very sophisticated conceptual framework that you have to understand to be able to isolate yourself from the statutory frameworks imposed on the university, and what is left for the university community with regard to the core function of the university, and I think that in little space that we have, which should be dominant space at the university, there is much room for the university community to move away from stereotyping and what was associated with the construction of race within the previous dispensation (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

However, it must be kept in mind that when speaking of curriculum transformation it is important to differentiate between routine change and more nuanced, qualitative revisions and updates in the curriculum that strike at the foundation of the epistemological edifice. The curriculum is never a static entity, and is constantly open to change. Prof. A explained that although curriculum revision is routine at the institution, for the most part, change of curriculum content has overlooked the crucial area of the re-imagining of racial identities in post-apartheid South Africa:

If you talk about curriculum transformation within the context of the obvious context which is given to transformation in this country, changing the curriculum, adding to it, revising it, you know, that is standard procedure at the university. And if you unpack the agenda of the senate at the university, which has got the obvious mandate to look at the academic enterprise of the university, you would find in each and every agenda of senate quite a lot of proposals pertaining to the change of curriculum. But, those changes were not exclusively, or in a very important way, focused on the changing context in South Africa with a specific focus on transformation, against the backdrop of the changes which took place in South Africa as part of the political changes and so forth (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

In a country with a history in which education has played a fundamental role in the structuring of racialised selves (cf. 3.4.1), and at a university with a history of academically reifying (or producing) and reproducing these identities, this can be viewed as a blatant oversight. Indeed, reflecting on the importance and even the responsibility that education and a university have - through the agency of their curricula - in broader social transformation and redress, Prof. B commented:

Well I think in the context of South Africa the role of education is to give people a new language through which they can envisage themselves. I think at the moment we are caught in a linguistic trap, in that the only way we can speak to each other is through boxes: through boxes of African, Coloured, Indian, White. Those boxed identities are reinforced daily through bureaucratic forms to fill out; census, the employment equity, they become so real to how people see the world that those categories do enormous damage. The question I pose is what kind of pedagogy can enable us to think differently about ourselves and therefore about others. That for me is the single most important challenge (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

As Prof. B suggests, in uncritically following governmental policies, universities are doing more to re-inscribe and revitalise racist categories and knowledges than they are to promote and “[encourage] critical questioning” (University of ____, 2007b: online). The contentions and struggles surrounding revisionism and transformation became acutely apparent during my interview with Prof. B. His disillusion with the levels of transformation at the university was palpable in his pejorative commentary on what he saw as the university’s unchanged epistemological foundations:

This place, which is tied up in a medieval epistemology and politics that is so scary that you wonder whether this university can serve any kind of totalitarian regime, reflexively, because of its inability to question, its inability to take a

moral stance, on anything except as a reflexive kind, a servile kind of response to authority - any authority (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

As Prof. B implies, if the dynamics of power in knowledge production are not critically analysed and deconstructed, and curriculum content continues to reflect ideologies of old, not only is the university's role as a voice critical of society undermined, but the university can be seen as the antithesis of the defender of democratic values, and rather as a lackey to authority - "any authority" (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007). What is of significance in this observation is Prof. B's allusion to an institution governed by an ontology steeped in a conservatism that continues to reproduce an epistemology still reflecting a fundamentally essentialised view on race.

4.4 The Ubuntu Module: case study

4.4.1 A knowledge and epistemological inertia

On the one hand it's intellectually intriguing, on the other hand it's politically very disappointing, that very few people realise that the real struggle for transformation is not the black faces. The real struggle for transformation is the struggle over curriculum transformation, and unless we understand that, we miss completely what it means to transform the institution (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

As Prof. B intimates, it is not just the institutional setting that is floundering in delivering on meaningful curriculum transformation, but also broader transformation that is being hampered and affected as a result of this. Prof. A concedes that the university has not dealt adequately with curriculum transformation. However, he asserts that the institution cannot be seen as unresponsive in this area: "what I'm saying is that I think we had a slow start on that [curriculum transformation]. It's not that I'm implying that we haven't done our bit with regards to curriculum change and curriculum transformation" (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007). The university's admitted sluggish response in the area of curriculum transformation could be construed as a hesitancy in tackling an area - the curriculum - of unquestionably immense magnitude and complexity. An alternative reading, as suggested by Prof. B, is of an intentional institutional apathy in undertakings of critical engagement with the curriculum. Prof. B suggests that the seeming diffidence

which has been displayed in broaching areas of sensitivity, such as race and the politicisation of identity, could be interpreted as a “knowledge [and] epistemological inertia” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007) infused in the attitudes and beliefs of the institution. This, arguably, may then be seen as reflective of a type of institutionalised territorialism regarding what constitutes broader social transformation definitions and, by extension, institutional knowledges and ideologies. Considering the historical backdrop of the institution, it is tenable to translate this as hegemonic discourses and actions seeking to maintain the status quo in knowledge-power dynamics. Indeed, Prof. B intimates that the seeming neglect of curriculum transformation can be interpreted as a sense of self-preservation, which can thus be read as not just non-transformative, but counter-transformative.

4.4.2 Complexities of curriculum change: “think of the curriculum institutionally”⁹³

However, it is imperative to mention, as Prof. A pointed out, that curriculum transformation is neither a simplistic nor a straightforward undertaking. Definitions of curriculum, alone, offer a multiplicity of meanings, with diffuse and disputed ideas abounding about what constitutes curriculum (cf. 3.6.8; Smith & Lovat, 2003). If curriculum is seen primarily as discipline-specific content, it is also inevitable that curricula will vary, not only between but within faculties:

If you talk about curriculum transformation you have to bring that down to the level of a particular discipline, and how you should contextualise the contents of curriculum there, you know, with the view of effecting the transformation or the change that you would like to see happening (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

As Prof. A suggests, it is important not to posit the curriculum within an institution as monolithically uniform. Locating curriculum transformation within a disciplinary context inevitably impacts on the nature of change, as well as on the content of a programme. However, with knowledge so intricately linked to ideological interests (cf. 3.5), Prof. B asserts that any curriculum, regardless of the discipline, should acknowledge the roots of the power dynamics and discourses that have inevitably influenced and shaped that knowledge:

⁹³ (Formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

I think that anybody who wants to teach anything today, whether you are teaching genetics or whether you are teaching South African history, you cannot teach that stuff without acknowledging those cultural roots. And so I would like to see much more taught about culture, but not culture as culture, but culture as common sense, and as political sense, and as historical sense, and as economic sense (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

Not doing this could be perceived as an inadvertent content oversight. However, an alternative, critical, reading, such as Prof. B's, which recognises the historicised socio-political context from which knowledge emerges and is shaped, could construe it as a purposive political silence. As critical theorists like Apple (2004) and Giroux (1994) have postulated, with the curriculum seen as a site of broader ideologies, and by extension a reflector of prevalent belief and value systems, silences and omissions are in themselves epistemological sites which may signify a continued hegemonic conservatism (cf. 2.10). This was implied in Prof. B's explanation that the curriculum is not produced in a void but is rather endemic of the institution: "to understand change, institutional change, curriculum level change we need to understand, in fact it might be useful to think of the curriculum institutionally rather than as a subject matter or a little unit within a programme" (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

Consequently, in acknowledging the heterogeneity imbued in the curriculum, and the unevenness and complexity of curriculum development and change, it may be useful, in readings of transformation, to position the curriculum as a site of broader institutional knowledges and histories (Giroux, 1994; cf. 3.5), that is: "to think of the curriculum institutionally" (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007). This may help elucidate the extent, nature of and institutional commitment to change. However, in readings of transformation, I concur with Prof. A's explanation that transformation should not be reduced to the curriculum alone, but is dependent on the human face, which ultimately impels, or indeed hinders, change:

I think what is important, and I don't want to sort of sidestep the question⁹⁴, is what's in the curriculum and curriculum content is important, and the value

⁹⁴ The question asked was: Why do you think that perhaps at [this university] there hasn't been a more critical take [on curriculum transformation]? I understand that you say that there has been scrutiny on other areas, but moving from a quantitative look at transformation to a more qualitative view, what are they then taking with them? (Esakov in formal interview with Prof A, 2007)

adding importance of that should not be underestimated, but at the end of the day what students take with them when they have to face the multicultural society that we have out there and the challenges associated with that is in many instances what they have learnt from mentors, from role-models, the attitudinal change that you need to affect, you know, within our student body, against the backdrop of the contemporary South African context (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

Yet, as my thesis postulates, the curriculum is not impervious to individual and institutional “attitudinal change” (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007). Rather, as I have asserted, the curriculum is central in attaining a broader reading and understanding of individual and institutional ideologies and commitments to transformation. Thus, of crucial importance in any readings of transformation is a critical examination of curriculum content. Therefore, in order to understand how curriculum content is being affected – that, is how it’s being produced, reproduced and challenged - in and by the transformation enterprise, and indeed whether this content may then be seen as reflective of broader institutional ideologies and commitments to transformation, my study will hone in and focus on a particular case study: that of the Ubuntu Module.

4.4.3 Aims of the Ubuntu Module: “an awareness of cultural differences”⁹⁵

As a starting point, I will excavate and de-layer the aims and objectives of the Ubuntu Module, touching on certain examples from the study material that help inform my analysis. Although this is by no means a detailed analysis of the study material, it does hint at the nature of the knowledge taught in the course. The purpose of this is to attempt to distil the rhetoric of the aims of the module from the ideological precepts and motivations behind its conceptualisation and implementation. This may not just help elucidate the ontologies and epistemologies informing the module, but could also yield insight into the nature of the knowledge given official credence at the institution (via the curriculum) - and by extension the value and belief systems underpinning the university.

The official aim of the module, as espoused in its study material, can be ascertained in the capability statement and specific outcomes:

⁹⁵ (Department of ____, 2005: 11)

This module equips the student with an understanding and tolerance of the different cultural practices and ways in which to promote good interpersonal relationships in the country... to demonstrate knowledge of what Ubuntu is and how application... can benefit a multicultural society.... Demonstrate an awareness of cultural differences... demonstrate the ability to participate sensibly in discussions on ways to promote a just, democratic and equitable society in South Africa... [and] to use information acquired to bring understanding and tolerance amongst people from different cultures (Department of ____, 2005: 11) .

Here, I would like to discuss the module's seeming focus on the accentuation of cultural difference: "tolerance of the different cultural practices... awareness of cultural differences" (Department of ____, 2005: 11). I would argue that this understanding is suggestive of a *Volkekunde*-type evocation of culture, which presents cultures as distinct, homogenous, normalised and unquestioningly assimilated within apartheid's stratifications of race (cf. 3.4.2). Although Prof. C acknowledged the problems surrounding the use of the term 'difference' in discussions of culture, his explanation of the cultural underpinnings in the Ubuntu Module point to a normalised and neutralised conception of culture, untouched by socio-political histories:

our basic understanding is that we are in a new dispensation and we strongly feel that there is no inferiority in terms of culture. In our view there are only differences, yet I use that word with caution as difference often has a negative connotations. We strongly believe that one of the perceptions that we have to change is no culture is inferior to another (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

Mrs D further underscored her aversion to and avoidance of the politicisation of culture in the module; "It's not politics as far as I'm concerned, it's trying to highlight and reveal what the differences between us and maybe Western culture are. So they need to know this, so to me its not politics - it's not about politics" (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007). I would suggest that this avoidance of politics (or context) may suggest a belief by Prof. C and Mrs D that in avoiding politics, they are subscribing to a discourse of redress. My thesis refers to this approach as an epistemology of evasion. In other words, it is an unproblematised, ahistorical and depoliticised account of culture (and race) in knowledge production and reproduction. This account was censured by Prof. B in his contention that the Ubuntu Module "works within an apartheid paradigm of what constitutes culture and

ethnicity” (Head of the Faculty of Education, n.d.). Indeed, Prof. B’s assertion is arguably illustrated in the following extracts from the study material (Department of ____, 2005):

Cliques are normally caused by differences in preferences, cultures or languages. Observe any setting where White people and African people work together or are having a function at work. After being greeted in Afrikaans or English, an African employee might start feeling that he/she is being ignored as White employees, start talking about incidents common to the white communities... There could be different cliques amongst the Black workers themselves, caused by ethnic differences, i.e. the Zulu’s feel that they are superior to the Sotho’s based on their historical background (41).

South Africa is a multicultural society - and this means each cultural group does things they way they are used to. Thus we have the “White African” culture and the “Black African” culture, not to mention the Asiatic culture, the Indian culture and other cultures found here. That is why we are called a “Rainbow Nation” (14-15).

As is indicated in the above excerpts, although the module attempts to create a “tolerance of the different cultural practices” (Department of ____, 2005: 11), what it really underscores is the patrimonial casting of culture and race. In ignoring historicised (or politicised) readings of race and culture, discourses of power and division are in effect re-inscribed in the curriculum.

4.4.4 “Let’s just show you how really different they are from us”⁹⁶: difference as politically manoeuvred

During my interviews, more nuanced, complex and, indeed, revealing aims emerged - and unravelled. Acknowledging the “well meaning” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007) intentions behind the course in his view of why the module was conceptualised, Prof. B did, however, point to the implicit socio-political motivations of whiteness behind the implementation of the course:

Well the instrumental reason for Ubuntu, there was a moment in which white people believed that there is a new South Africa and again in a well meaning way I suppose felt that their children should be adapted into the basics of black culture. At a very instrumental level that is how it got in there. It came with all the trappings of ‘let’s just show you how really different they are from us’. That’s why some differences are so incredibly politically manoeuvred (Formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

⁹⁶ (Formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

What Prof. B said was inadvertently confirmed during my interview with Mrs E. Here she explains the motivations behind the decision to include the course in the Faculty of Education's curriculum:

Well we thought that our students should actually learn more about other cultures, not only Afrikaans or English speaking South African cultures, but also more about the indigenous cultures, coming to understand people better, to understand how people react. For instance if a student comes to you, the way they greet you or the fact that they, say for instance, say not all of them of course, you cannot base it purely on race, it's got nothing to do [with race], but certain groups still have a sort of affection for their older culture. Some, both Afrikaans and people of other cultures in this country, now neglect their original culture in favour of a more globalised culture. So it is not so much a racial thing but more a question of some people do like to keep their own culture intact, which we thought is not a bad thing, it's good. And you need to understand that sometimes people are not trying to be rude, it's just a cultural difference and you need to be sensitive to it. And we thought that seeing that lots of both Afrikaans and English-speaking students, first language speakers, would eventually teach children of other languages and other cultures and that they will need to be sensitive to it (formal interview with Mrs E, 2006).

Mrs E's explanation of the rationale behind the module corroborates Prof. B's assertion that the course was implemented with the primary aim of acclimatising and sensitising white students to what the module uncritically refers to as, "black culture" (Department of ____, 2005: 15). However, her rationalisation in effect serves to elucidate the university's hegemonic underpinnings which, as her explanation suggests, appear to hold whiteness up as normative. Reading this from a critical perspective, the implementation of the module could arguably be both a conscious and an unconscious attempt by the university and its staff members to ensure the maintenance of a status of privilege ascribed by whiteness.

4.4.5 "We are not going to be studied like little monkeys - as if we are in a cage at the zoo"⁹⁷

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, amongst many – white - staff members at the university, meanings which are being attributed to transformation are readings of perceived threats to the privilege and status of whiteness. Consequently, with the

⁹⁷ (Formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

university still seeming to hold up whiteness as normative, the corollary then implies blackness to be something that needs to be controlled and kept at bay, yet, in adherence to post-apartheid directives, accommodated. The controlled – blackness - is now connoted with a sense of loss of power and privilege. However, as Prof. B cautions, this preservation instinct is not necessarily a conscious attempt at maintaining privilege through the oppression of the other, but is also borne of a survival instinct when epistemological foundations have been disrupted and questioned:

I don't think that people get up in the morning and say: well let's go and screw the natives. I think that people operate with a common sense/commonsense about the world - and I use that as two words. And it's that common sense/commonsense that once disturbed really throws people off balance. So first of all there is this common sense/commonsense thing operates. Then there is this version of being off balance, and so sort of saying, oh no, now what? I mean what do you teach the next day? If this were true, what does this mean? Well it means that you have to completely re-orientate yourself and your understanding of the world - at the age of 60, at the age of 40, at the age of 30. That is hard (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

Mrs D confirmed this in her explanation of the aims of the module. As can be inferred from her explanation, it appears that the responsibility has somehow fallen on black students, and indeed lecturers, to make their entrance into the university less daunting for their white fellow students and colleagues:

Then they came up with the Ubuntu Module with the aim of addressing misconceptions and misunderstandings caused by say, us blacks when we are with whites, and when whites are with us. So there are some things that are seen as negative and yet when you get to know them better and you can understand that they are not so negative, but how culturally we see things. The aim of this module was to try and make people learn about other people and understand why people do things. So that was the aim with Ubuntu, it was about the differences that we have. We grow up in the same country but I did not grow up in the same area that you grew up in. We didn't have the same cultural backgrounds. That was the aim of the module - not to try and say we are blacks, Ubuntu is just for black and it is not happening in other cultures. That is not true (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

Arguably, Mrs D's perception of whiteness as normative has been assimilated to the extent to which she has not only normalised her status as 'a black' outsider who must fit in, but to put it polemically, must ascribe to the hegemonic order - here through the agency of the Ubuntu Module. This can be ascertained in the following example from the

module, which also serves to illustrate how “whiteness can be framed within the Marxist tradition” (Roos, 2005: 4) through the assumption that divisions of labour are naturally reflected in hierarchies of race:

People from other races are sometimes offended by the way Africans sing, talk or laugh at work places. Instead of explaining the rules about where they can make a noise or sing, a person from another race may say: “One should not laugh in such a manner”... .[I]n big plants like motor industries, it is difficult to avoid loud singing, talking or laughing - even making jokes. This makes the work load lighter and easier. Give clear rules about where there can be loud noise and where not... (Department of ____, 2005: 53).

What is of significance in both Mrs D and Mrs E’s rationale behind the module, are inscribed acceptances of “us” and “them”. This not only evokes apartheid divisions based on the artifice of presumed, although highly politically orchestrated, difference, but hints at the naturalisation and normalisation of these constructed binaries. However, although not explicitly acknowledging her role as outsider, the following comment from Mrs D most lucidly captures the module’s consensual self-othering and seemingly uncritical acceptance of the normativity of whiteness: “The aim was to come and learn about our culture while at the same time making sure that we are not going to be studied like little monkeys - as if we are in a cage at the zoo” (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007). Indeed, Mrs D’s sense of consensual self-othering can be understood in Said’s (2003) rendering of hegemony:

Gramsci has made the useful analytic distinction between civil and political society in which the former is made up of voluntary (or at least rational and noncoercive) affiliations like schools... whose role in the polity is direct domination. Culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent (7).

4.4.6 Is Ubuntu studies representative of broader institutional ideologies?

A valid concern that could be raised is that of whether, when focusing on one module alone, the content of the module can be seen as representative and reflective of broader institutional ideologies. I will now discuss why I feel that this module, in particular, may be positioned as such.

The Ubuntu Module is but one module in an entire university curriculum, and some participants, such as Mrs E, felt that: “it was never that big a question; it was one seven-week module” (formal interview with Mrs E, 2006). However, an argument can be made for reading and interpreting how the module may be reflective of something bigger than the course itself. As I have mentioned, even though it has been removed from the curriculum at the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Humanities (in which the module was originally conceptualised and outsourced) has taken the decision to continue offering it as a first-year elective module. This decision was taken after Prof. B had approached certain members of senior management at both the institution and the Faculty of Humanities, with an emotive and vociferous critique of the module. As he explained during my interview with him, he found the module to be not only deeply offensive, saying that “it insult[s] black people left, right and centre and upholds white people as normative”, but detrimental to the students taking it: “I was very angry; how can you teach my students this nonsense?” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007). In addition, he inferred that the module could also be a possible indicator of a deep-rooted conservatism, reflected in the type of knowledge validated by the institution:

This place is so bizarre, and it reflects a historical constitution of academic organisation and of knowledge.... The Ubuntu Module is not at odds with [the leadership’s] own underlying beliefs. It’s not at odds, at all. In fact it comports perfectly with their belief and value systems of the leadership (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

Prof. B asserts that the module sustains and continues to validate the type of essentialised knowledge associated with an apartheid-style curriculum. That is, knowledge or a curriculum that seeks to normalise whiteness, as a site of power and privilege, through blurring understandings of race and culture into reified, homogenous, ahistorical and unproblematic concepts. Explaining the socio-political implications of such a curriculum, Prof. B is of the opinion that “the average kid who walks through here after four years gets exactly the same curriculum, in the broader sense of the word, as what their parents had thirty years ago and that is the scary part” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007). Thus, as a step in the process to impel the institution beyond its reactionary history, he attempted to have the module removed from the curriculum not just within his own faculty, but at the Faculty of Humanities as well.

As Prof. C, pointedly confirmed, complaints about the module were lodged with senior management at the university:

I have reason to believe that even top management were informed. It was definitely reported to the [Head of Humanities]. The Head of Humanities was well aware due to [Prof. B's] letter⁹⁸ in which he informed her about his dissatisfaction with the course (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

This is, in itself, a crucial point in gaining insight into the knowledge and power dynamics pervasive at the institution. It indicates that when the controversy and contention arose around the module, even though certain senior staff members of the university were made aware of the contents of the course, no action was taken to discontinue or, it appears, to critically evaluate the module at the Faculty of Humanities. As Prof. B suggests, this may bespeak a knowledge and epistemological inertia representative of a deeper-rooted ideological stance. Indeed, Prof. B's explanation of how such a module can persist in the curriculum at the university underscores how the epistemological underpinnings of the university are directly influenced by its ontological beliefs - thereby further cementing prevalent hegemonic ideologies and reactionary knowledges:

The reason that [the Ubuntu Module] is acceptable is that it accords with the three underlying issues that keep a curriculum going, any curriculum - and that is knowledge, values and beliefs. It does not jar these underlying knowledge, values and beliefs that people have, because if it did you would have thrown out that curriculum immediately - you would have raised hell over it. So the more I raise hell around it, and there was the odd person that would, out of politeness, feign shock, but in the institutional churn it's perfect. So you receive a curriculum like this, it doesn't jar the senses, at all. And that's the only way you can understand why it persists (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

4.4.7 Institutional cover: "It does not jar the senses"⁹⁹

A comment which I would like to focus on from Prof. B's discussion above is his observation that "it [the contents of the module] does not jar the senses [at the university]" (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007). His assertion is that the reason that the module is not seen as problematic is that it accords with the underlying belief systems

⁹⁸ Here he refers to Prof B's letter of response to the Ubuntu Module (Head of the Faculty of Education, n.d.).

⁹⁹ (Formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

governing the ontological, and in consequence epistemological, ideologies at the university. This implies a deeply essentialised, and arguably uncritical, acceptance of apartheid-inscribed identities. This supposition is further reflected in the institutional sanctioning of the course, or what Prof. B refers to as “the institutional cover” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

For any module to find its way into the curriculum it must undergo a stringent senate process. As Prof. B explained: [the module] didn’t drop out of the air - it is part and parcel of the history [of the institution]” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007). This assimilation of historicised ideological discourses as normative could point to the extent to which apartheid identities have been normalised and imbibed within institutional discourses and practices. This is accentuated in Prof. B’s explanation of how the module was officially vetted in the processes of the university:

What is amazing is that nobody in the Senate, when this came to be approved, even saw it as an oddball module. Nobody saw it as an oddball and that’s my point. Can you imagine if that had content in there about normalising homosexuality, how everyone would have suddenly seen it in the Senate, or if it said the courses would all be taught through the medium of English. You can understand why some things persist and others don’t (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

With the Senate having to approve and pass innumerable subjects, it is understandable for a module to slip through, with potentially contentious content going undetected.

However, in my interview with Mrs E it emerged that this was not the case with the Ubuntu Module. I had posed a question to Mrs E, asking her to elaborate on the name of the module: “And with regards to the name ‘Ubuntu’ was that name that was decided upon here [at the Faculty of Education] or was it the pre-existing name for the subject?”(Esakov in formal interview with Mrs E, 2006).

Mrs E’s circuitous response went beyond a mere explanation of the rationale behind the name, but served to elucidate the Senate’s sanctioning of the subject – or, as Prof. B refers to it, “the institutional cover” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007) for the subject. Being outsourced from the Faculty of Humanities, the module had to attain Senate approval via the official channels of the Faculty of Humanities. However, as it was

incorporated into the curriculum of the Faculty of Education at a time when a new curriculum was being drawn up¹⁰⁰, it had to undergo Faculty Board as well as further Senate approval to be incorporated into the BEd programme. Thus, it emerged, the Ubuntu Module had been approved by the Senate, not once but twice¹⁰¹:

At that stage we had no knowledge of [the process of incorporation into a university programme as we were] still the old college. We had to terminate programmes and start new ones and everything had to be presented to the Senate at that stage, Faculty Board first, then Senate. We didn't know anything about that. So the very rigorous path that it needs to travel, we didn't know much about it. So the authorities simply then presented the course on our behalf. So at that stage it would have had to be presented in front of the Faculty Board and they would have picked up something and said well you need to rephrase it or you need to address this or come back with another proposal or whatever. So yes, we could only act in good faith. And, yes, that is what happened (formal interview with Mrs E, 2006).

4.4.8 Innovation certificate for teaching

With reference to institutional sanctioning of the module, Prof. B explained “what I mean by institutional cover [sanctioning]... [is that] nobody until I read this stuff, and until some of my students saw it, gave this a second look” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007). A further institutional sanctioning of the module can be seen in Mrs D's being awarded an innovation certificate by the Department for Innovative Teaching and Learning, for her presentation of the Ubuntu Module¹⁰². Although the innovation certificate was not awarded for the contents of the module, but rather for Mrs D's teaching style, what is of significance is that during the assessment process for the certificate, the content of the module was made explicit in a video recording for the adjudicators: “in the video we try to do that ... and then I did the practical part to show, because those things I was doing in class” (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007). Mrs D's explanation of the motivations behind her being given the award serves to highlight how content deemed by Prof. B to “exaggerate difference to the point of absurdity” (Head of

¹⁰⁰ The revised curriculum was a result of higher education mergers, where the “old college”, as Mrs E refers to it, was incorporated into the university. For further reading on mergers see: Jansen, J (Ed.). (2002). *Mergers in higher education: lessons learned in transitional contexts*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

¹⁰¹ As the module is outsourced from the Faculty of Humanities it would have first been approved by the Senate to be incorporated in that faculty.

¹⁰² These awards are presented for innovative approaches to teaching. The Ubuntu Module received an award for: “The creation of a vibrant and authentic learning environment” (Department referred to herein as the Department for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2006: online).

the Faculty of Education, n.d.) was viewed not just as unproblematical by the adjudicators, but indeed as favourable:

If I can recall properly, at that time they were looking at this thing about the left brain and right brain and how people think, and sometimes there is a tendency to be so rigid in your teaching that it is not practical. And they heard about my Ubuntu course and how practical it is, because sometimes I even dance or demonstrate greetings, three dimensional handshakes and sometimes [I demonstrate] how you clap hands and go on your knees if you are going to give your husband or your father-in-law food; and I demonstrate them practically in class. So they were interested to show that that can be done also in class (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

4.4.9 “Even when it was detected it could be defended - that is astounding”¹⁰³

Thus, the Senate approval of the module and the awarding of the teaching innovation certificate may be interpreted as being indicative of the institutional ethos with regard to transformation, or of how the university has chosen to position its understandings of transformation (and race). Such a reading may explain why head counts, and not the nature of curriculum content, dominate social transformation discourses. As Prof. B asserted, not only did what he viewed as demeaning and racist content manage to find its way into the curriculum and go undetected, but indeed even when his concerns were raised and lodged on an official level they went unheeded:

The one is that it can go undetected. But the second thing is that even when it was detected it could be defended. That is **astounding** [speakers emphasis], it is astounding. Even when you said to people, do you realise that this is profoundly racist, they said what’s the fuss? And to this day my colleagues at senior management level, and I’ve called in the relevant actors there, and said do you know? (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

However, it was not just the Faculty of Humanities and certain members of senior management at the institution who either overlooked or defended the module, but also members of Prof. B’s staff in the Faculty of Education. This emerged during informal discussions on the topic with some members of his staff, and during my interview with Mrs E:

Some students really said that they’ve benefited from it, and that they’ve actually learned things. So, I thought, well why do you take something away that actually enriches? I think as a teacher you are more comfortable if you know where a child

¹⁰³ (Formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

comes from, if you know why they are acting or reacting in this way as opposed to another. To some extent I feel that we've actually, instead of resolving the problem, we've just shut it somewhere in the closet and now we are trying to forget about it. I don't think that Ubuntu should have been, or needed to have been, kicked out totally. I think that it could have been just, shaped up (formal interview with Mrs E, 2006).

However, this study suggests that evident in Mrs E's commentary is an unreflective, uncritical and historically-conditioned inability to question the normativity of racial and cultural hierarchies. This is indicated in her defence of a module which not only "hold[s] up 'Europeans' (presumably white South Africans) as the superior culture" (Head of the Faculty of Education, n.d.) but also reproduces fundamentally racialised class inequalities. This reproduction of the privileges inscribed by whiteness can be further read in the following extract from the Ubuntu Module study material:

On the other hand, a woman who is marrying into an Ndebele family might experience the same frustrations, as she will be respected according to the amount of things she could buy for the whole family. The stress and frustration caused by the in-laws might make such people unhappy and unproductive. Any help from the employer will thus be uplifting - for example, give them part time jobs (piece jobs) at home - mowing the lawn, cleaning the swimming pool, etc (Department of ____, 2005: 56).

4.4.10 Ethnic credibility and the institutional cover: "this monster called Ubuntu was created"¹⁰⁴

This vindication and defence of the module, and the differing opinions as to its epistemological value amongst his own faculty members, was acknowledged and commented on by Prof. B during our interview. His explanation of this not only reiterated his postulation of a further type of institutional sanctioning, but served to accent how the race of the module lecturer, Mrs D, has been expediently and uncritically deployed. This further accentuated the uncritical normalisation and neutralisation of race still prevalent at the institution:

The thing about Ubuntu at the university is that you need two kinds of people to come together. You need black people with a deeply essentialised and racialised sense of the world working with white people who have exactly the same understanding of the world. The black person gives the legitimacy to that stereotype; the white person gives the institutional cover for that kind of view. So

¹⁰⁴ (Formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

there is a symbiosis which develops between two kinds of persons who ideologically come from the same backward sense of what it means to be African. But institutionally it's a perfect fit. And that's the sad part of it for me because just like the black person clearly is the wrong person to give access to something as contested as African culture, so the white person is the wrong person to take this through the university structures and approve it. And that is why there is this surprise with my white colleagues - they are genuinely surprised: but wait a minute, this is a black person, surely this is a legitimate, you know, essential truth about African culture, identity and Ubuntu. So you need the sort of ethnic credibility and the institutional cover together; this monster called Ubuntu was created (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

Considering the institutional sanctioning and cover of the module in conjunction with how Prof. B's strident concerns seem to have been brushed aside, this module may indeed be seen as symptomatic of contested understandings of curriculum content as reflective of broader contests around the re-imagining of apartheid histories and identities. This dispute over what knowledge does and should hold sway at the institution can be ascertained in the following comment from Prof. C:

The [Head of Humanities] also got his [Prof. B's] letter and asked us for an official response. However I had already emailed [the Head] and told them that I had already responded to that request. The response from the [Head's] office was that there was room for improvement with respect to the written component. My perception of their response on various levels was that it was primarily aimed at the quality of the use of English; refinement in formulation, general updating and improvement of aspects of the course. Questions regarding academic quality of the contents of our courses have to be answered to the [Head of Humanities]. That it's certainly not outdated. Aspects addressed in the course are indeed relevant (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

4.4.11 Nature of knowledge: “profoundly racist”¹⁰⁵ vs “certainly not outdated and relevant”¹⁰⁶

With Prof. B viewing the content as “profoundly racist” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007), and senior members from the Faculty of Humanites viewing it as “certainly not outdated and relevant” (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007), I was forced to ask: whose knowledge takes pre-eminence at the institution? To properly answer this question it is

¹⁰⁵ (Formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

¹⁰⁶ (Formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

necessary to ask not just whose knowledge takes pre-eminence, but indeed what knowledge is institutionally sanctioned.

This brings to mind a discussion that took place between myself and Prof. C, in which he and two of his colleagues put forward their department's concerns pertaining to my study. During this informal discussion, he had passed an off-the-cuff comment that he was under the impression that my study would be of a 'more scientific nature' (meaning quantitative or hard sciences). He intimated that he found my study problematic as it was seeking to qualitatively reflect on the module. I explained that, as my methodological approach suggests (Roos, n.d.), I had never intended on conducting a positivistic study, and that in framing my study through the lens of critical theory, interpretivism would play an intrinsic and central role in the study. Later, during the analysis of my data, I realised that Prof. B had commented, albeit indirectly, on the positivistic stance expressed by Prof. C. I had asked Prof. B to respond to Prof. C's contention that the two faculties have the same goal of transformation, yet different means of attaining change, or, as Prof. C had suggested:

One crucial aspect is that there are two conflicting perceptions of how transformation should be. We are of the opinion that maybe the Faculty of Education and our department are pursuing exactly the same goal but disagree in the way that we are doing it. As a starting point, [Mrs D] and I, and our department, do not want to dig up apartheid every time – particularly resurrect apartheid in a lecture situation (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

Prof. B's response to this not only supported this study's postulation that cohesive understandings of transformation are at best tenuous, but also underlined the nature of Prof. C's concern about my study. This further afforded insight into the kind of knowledge which is given both prominence and credence at the university (which may also explain the university's primarily quantitative approach towards transformation):

He is coming at this whole issue of knowledge and knowledge production and dissemination from a scientific view of the world. In other words you can reduce all knowledge to a model of the natural sciences where there is one truth and the rest of the stuff is noise. And so it is very difficult to engage that, where you can argue that you are looking at the same phenomenon using different kinds of knowledges (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

4.4.12 “We do not want to dig up apartheid every time”¹⁰⁷

Prof. B’s explanation underscored how positivistic knowledge continues to dominate the curriculum, and, as a corollary, modes of thinking, particularly at previously whites-only Afrikaans universities. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that, when applied to understandings of racial identity, such perceptions of knowledge would ultimately position race as politically and ideologically neutral, and as such would present race as a naturalised, biological truth. This tenet of a positivistic-favoured postulation of knowledge could explain Prof. C and Mrs D’s position that “as a starting point, [Mrs D] and I and our department do not want to dig up apartheid every time – particularly resurrect apartheid in a lecture situation” (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

Ostensibly this epistemology of evasion may appear to be a blatant denialism of the very structure and ideology, apartheid, which has sculpted racial and cultural identity in South Africa, or what Goldberg (2002) refers to as “post-racial racism” (201). However, as can be construed from Mrs D’s explanation, this evasion of a fundamental influence on understanding of race and culture in South Africa could also be compounded by a racial avoidance based on a sense of fear (Carrim, 2000) of broaching an area which remains highly emotive and inflammatory:

A political person will maybe react violently to it To me it’s not about politics. To me it’s about building a nation, trying to live together with each other, trying to know and understand each other. Politics is totally out of my view on Ubuntu But I’m not going to exaggerate and say “Jy oupa het dit en dat gedoen”[your grandfather did this and that]. Then that’s not building (formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

What can be read as a contrived evasion of apartheid could stem from a very real cognisance of the social and contextual milieu from which students come - backgrounds where racialised thinking, and indeed racism, remain rife. This coheres with Prof. A’s articulation of the intractable pressures faced by the institution in having to contend with a further residue of the historical burden of apartheid, the racialised and often racist attitudes and beliefs that many students come to the university encumbered with:

¹⁰⁷ (Formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

You know, if a young student, a first-year student, comes to this institution, about five thousand of those per year, where do they come from, what sort of discussions took place within their homes about race? Apart from what could have happened in the schools and so forth, you know the intimate discussions that they had at dinner around the table about race. If you have a misalignment of what's happening there with what you expect from a university student community, there will be tension and of course there will be a situation where a number of people arriving at this institution will still live within the paradigm of what you would find within the extreme apartheid era, and what you would find on the other end of the spectrum as well, you know views about white people. So one should be realistic, when you bring all those worlds together at university, what sort of intervention is required by the university to make something of this sort of soup that you have cooked [W]hat is happening at this institution currently, if you just look at the various factions of student life within the student environment is symptomatic of what is happening out there (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007).

As Prof. A explained, the university needs to remain sensitive to the social environment from which many of the students come. This awareness of the reality of “what is happening out there” (formal interview with Prof. A, 2007) could then filter through to how departments deal with and treat race. Indeed, acknowledging the volatility and sensitivity of racial discourses, Prof. C mentioned that members of his own department had been intimidated by right wing elements: “there were incidents where white members of this department were threatened by right wingers - for anti-white attitudes - which of course is absolute nonsense” (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

However, the prevalence of approaches to race as neutral is reminiscent of the multicultural approach, which Appiah (2006) derisively condemns: “Not ‘Multiculturalism’, another shape shifter which so often designates the disease it purports to cure” (xiii). In discussing this approach to racialised identity, taken in the Ubuntu Module, Prof. B cautioned that even acknowledging the realities of the social environment should not condone the neutralising of the politically and ideologically loaded nature of race and culture:

They are not actually talking about apartheid, they are talking about; ‘why do you have to remind us of the past’. Because I hear that all the time, it’s: can’t we just leave the past behind us? In other words it’s a cry really, for saying let’s just stop everything and let’s just assume, like it always was, all these things are neutral.

Now it wasn't neutral when apartheid existed ... suddenly you are just supposed to forget the past (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

4.4.13 Understanding conservatism

Prof. B went onto describe how knowledge at previously white Afrikaans institutions has been deeply influenced by aspects of governance, governance which was anything but politically neutral, which “flamboyantly slung [apartheid and race] around” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007). This explanation hinted at a further possible reason which may shed light on why the Faculty of Humanities has seemingly uncritically continued offering the Ubuntu Module. As can be ascertained in the following commentary by Prof. B, with authoritarian-inspired institutional governance characterising white Afrikaans universities during apartheid (cf. 3.4.1), a possible residual effect, within certain spheres, is an acquiescence to authority. As this thesis suggests, many staff members, particularly those employed under the previous dispensation (apartheid), have retained this attitude to authority. This may explain an institutional reticence in challenging competing, unorthodox knowledge structures that question the foundations of normative, hegemonic beliefs:

The Afrikaans university notion of knowledge is first of all risk averse, but it's also conflict averse. So it doesn't like conflict. It works with this notion of consensus. So it is a knowledge that assumes one knowledge, and everything else is regarded as invalid. Now you can imagine how destructive such a view of knowledge is for a university in the twenty-first century, and that explains to me why, in the Afrikaans universities in particular, the humanities are the poorest faculties, because of that very backward notion of what is knowledge because it then immediately cancels out other knowledges of the world (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

4.5 Final words

Thus, with contested viewpoints abounding on not only the Ubuntu Module, but indeed the type of knowledge which is, and should, be accorded prominence at the university, this module can arguably offer a potential and crucial lens into an institutional stand towards the re-imagining of post-apartheid identities and knowledge which coheres around ‘truths’. A reading of this conflict may also have the potential to comment on why certain faces of knowledge and transformation take pre-eminence over others. Indeed, with the Faculty of Humanities continuing to offer a module deemed by Prof. B to be

expounding a dangerously essentialised understanding of identity, it is tenable to suggest that the module may be reflective and representative of the ontological and epistemological ideologies of the university. By extension, this module may then be seen as reflective of broader transformation struggles at the university, and indeed as a barometer for transformation:

The issue is not Ubuntu, the issue is an Ubuntu simply offering a window on a deeply conservative understanding of race and identity and culture and change and that really what this is about. So you can scrap Ubuntu tomorrow, but there are a lot of other Ubuntu's at this institution that frame the way that people understand themselves and the other. And that's my fear. My fear is not Ubuntu, because at least we put our finger on it (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I draw my study together, and briefly discuss and reflect on my findings as they emerged from my analysis. I then conclude with suggested areas for possible further studies.

5.2 Personal observations

When I embarked on my study, I began with a set of presuppositions of what I expected I would unearth. However, as my study progressed I realised that, as a researcher, I could frame my research through a specific lens, but ultimately the directions of my excavations, as well as my findings, would emerge regardless of my assumptions. In recognising this, I have not only had to discard many of my own personal preconceptions, but also had to acknowledge that theory and reality do not always co-exist harmoniously. Notwithstanding, my subjective interpretations have played a pivotal role in the casting of this study, as a wholly qualitative study. It is important to acknowledge that my own positioning, which has been deeply influenced by critical theory, has been central in casting my study.

5.3 The continued burden of readings of race

Prior to embarking on my empirical research, I supposed that although advances in scholarly theories have debunked naturalised conceptions of race, within many quarters at the university readings of race would still be influenced by essentialist and biological discourses¹⁰⁸. I had further posited that readings of racial identity would also be shaped by the cultural characteristics argument: that is, the conflation of race and culture.

As my findings confirm, the dominant and prevalent understandings of race at the university still appear to be deeply influenced by such essentialist framings, albeit that these meanings are now often deployed behind proxy categories and discourses like

¹⁰⁸ This seemed particularly likely because my study was conducted at a previously white Afrikaans university with a history of compliance with and support of the apartheid government

‘culture’, ‘class’, ‘respect’, ‘redress’ and ‘equality’. In themselves, these categories are certainly worthy of further analysis, but the problem arises when they are used to obfuscate discourses on race. As my study attests, such representations of race disregard not only progressive advances in international and local academia, but also the inherent power differentials and dynamics lodged within the praxis of such concepts. Considering the structuring and highly orchestrated role of race, what the employment (and deployment) of these proxy categories suggests is that, far from being deconstructed and discarded, race remains a silenced, but salient issue. Also, I came to realise that current understandings of racial identity, as well as academic discourses on race, are deeply influenced by, not only the historical burden of race but also the current political burden that race continues to exert.

5.4 Higher education discourses: the silenced salient

Extrapolating from my findings, it appears as if race-consciousness, verging on race-fetishisation, remains an embedded part of the South African psyche, and an inescapable reality of South African higher education institutions. In accord with my findings, I would describe issues regarding racialised identity at the university I studied as subliminally omnipresent. It appears as if there is fear and discomfort about overtly discussing and teaching about the ontological and epistemological origins and beliefs that have shaped discourses and practices of race. This has resulted in what my thesis refers to as epistemologies of evasion. This epistemological avoidance, seemingly condoned under the banner of reconciliation - or not wanting to resurrect the apartheid past - is perhaps born of a fear of shattering a fragile consensus. Moreover, as my study found, discourses of evasion are employed as a means of circumventing direct references to race. This sustains whiteness as a site of power and privilege, or at least avoids having to acknowledge that whiteness inscribes privilege, which is a difficult - and dangerous - political and moral terrain for white South Africans ¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁹ As Roediger (1999) underscores, the problems surrounding whiteness are certainly not exclusive to South Africa.

I would suggest that a further supposition that may help elucidate the de-historicised and apolitical epistemological framings of racialised identity is that they are a consequence of many of the university's staff members having been educated (or, disciplined) under the apartheid system. As a result they were themselves subjected to the effects of the educational structures that sought to normalise scientific and biological understandings of racialised identities. In effect, race was not only naturalised but neutralised. As is suggested by my findings, this appears to have resulted in an epistemic dispossession of the origins, histories and power discourses embedded in racialised identity.

5.5 Race and the nature of knowledge: the curriculum as a site of conservatism

The findings of my study suggest that the prevailing understandings and discourses of race continue to reflect, as well as have an unequivocal influence on, the nature of the knowledge that holds pre-eminence at the university. This, in turn, impinges on how knowledge is produced, reproduced and, indeed, challenged. The fact that quantitative, scientific knowledge is favoured by the institution may help explicate why essentialised, biological and neutralised knowledges of racialised identity continue to be found and, as this study shows, defended, within the curriculum. In addition, my findings propose that these naturalised understandings of racialised identity not only have an overt and covert influence on the nature of curriculum content, but also are reflective of how broader social transformation is thought about and implemented. That is, with the focus on positivistic-leaning demographic redress (numerical indices or quotas), and not on a more nuanced and critical view of what knowledges students walk away with.

5.6 Relics of *Volkekunde*

Indeed, when it comes to the knowledges that are being imparted to students, my study found that relics of *Volkekunde* and reservoirs of apartheid's educational ideologies remain embedded within the curriculum. With curricula positioned as an ideological site (cf. 3.5), these epistemologies can be read as a continued signifier of the university's ethos. This is perhaps unsurprising considering the historically instrumentalist role of the university in the academic validation of racialised identities.

Moreover, such an epistemological position is well-suited to the intellectual and political purpose of a state that *needs* nations. This resonates with the current institutional sidestepping of a critical engagement with curriculum transformation, and an epistemological inertia in both the institution and government with regard to the deconstruction of racialised identities. Although the overtly racist discourses of difference as inscribed in *Volkekunde* have been amended to those of an Ubuntu-styled nationbuilding, the tools of division – the neutralisation, naturalisation and conflation of race and culture in curriculum content - remain intact.

Ultimately, crucial aspects that appear to be lacking in the identity/transformation quagmire at the university are critical debates on race: the exploration, probing and challenging of its ontological and epistemological foundations and assumptions, particularly as found in curriculum content. My study suggests that the avoidance of apartheid in curriculum content is not only deeply contrived, but also detrimental to the social transformation enterprise. In a subject area like that of the Ubuntu Module, with its overt teachings of race and culture, presenting these as apolitical and dehistoricised is not only academically unsound, but also morally problematic.

5.7 Marginalisation of struggle

As my study reaffirmed, the curriculum is indeed a site of broader social histories, and is characterised by uneven contradictions in social development. From a more polemical stance, the avoidance of apartheid could be seen as politically motivated. Read from this angle, it may be construed that this form of cultural conservatism is an attempt to ensure the maintenance of white privilege or, at the very least, an avoidance of having to acknowledge and confront it. However, as I intimated in my previous chapter, I do not believe that the Ubuntu Module was conceptualised and framed with any ill intent, but rather as a result of ‘taken-for-granted’ normative understandings. However, as the continuation of the Ubuntu Module in the Faculty of Humanities reveals, counter-readings and discourses on race and racialised identity - which do exist at the university - remain peripheral. As Prof. B conceded, in conceptualising his oppositional stance to the

Ubuntu Module as ‘a struggle’ over curriculum transformation, the concept ‘struggle’ tempers the marginalization of his challenge to the university’s epistemological edifices:

I think the word ‘struggle’ is the wrong word. It doesn’t describe what I’m talking about, because struggle suggests that there are two forces that agree to meet in the middle and slug it out. And it’s not like that - it’s not like that, and that’s where critical theory got it wrong (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

5.8 Institutional apathy or pressure placed on institutions?

My study suggests that with curriculum transformation being an integral part of readings of broader transformation, the conflict surrounding the Ubuntu Module are indicative of an institution struggling to emerge from its own politically instrumentalist past. Indeed, it appears that the inadequacy of the directives on transformation and re-imaginings of racial identity can be interpreted as an institution failing both its staff and its students in attaining the ideologies of equity and equality that the institution is, at least rhetorically, committed to. However, in an attempt to attain a comprehensive and balanced understanding of why the university has framed transformation primarily through state directives such as performance indices, and put curriculum transformation and critical deconstructions of racial identity on the back burner, various reasonings may be put forward.

As Prof. B argues, institutional transformation, and by extension curriculum transformation, are ultimately steered by leadership. However, as he intimated, and this study found, this does not adequately explain the institution’s lack of response in more nuanced and meaningful areas of the social transformation process. Rather, I would suggest that any understandings of the university’s approach to transformation must be read in terms of sociohistorical context of the university. Firstly, this requires a cognisance of an institutional ethos which has been mired by apartheid discourses and knowledges - knowledges which were presented as indisputable canonical truths. This helps render an understanding of why attitudes, beliefs and, by extension, epistemologies “do not change by dictate” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007) (or policies, plans and broader pronouncements). Secondly, it must be kept in mind that, as a previously whites-only Afrikaans university, this institution has a history of authoritarian-style governance.

As Prof. B attested, this is reflected in the university's "servile" (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007) response to authority. Although this "servile" response may seem to imply that the university can change (or, transform) by dictate, I would suggest that it should be read in light of what Jansen (2005) refers to as "beleefdheid" (312). He explains this concept in a reflection of his personal experiences as a black dean at a historically white Afrikaans university:

With both Afrikaner men and women, there was another serious impediment to faculty transformation, something called beleefdheid. It is a strange Afrikaans word that probably means politeness, but carries with it a sense of hypocrisy - polite to the extent of being dishonest. The institutional culture, I observed, was averse to public conflict (312).

Transformation read and understood in terms of beeldefheid would help elucidate the conciliatory surface gloss of transformation that allows deeper and more reflective institutional attitudes and actions to remain unchanged. However, I would suggest that it is highly unlikely that a university with a history of collusion with the apartheid government will deviate from the path of transformation as set out by current state directives, and embark on areas of transformation where it is not under official scrutiny.

5.9 Pressures exerted on the university

Although my study does not attempt to exonerate the university with regard to its responsibilities, my findings intimate that institutions are facing enormous pressures in the transformation process. Indeed, as my findings indicate, these pressures are impacting on how the social transformation process is being thought about and implemented. Grouping my findings into not necessarily unrelated cohesive blocs, my study shows that pressures are being exerted on the university from both above and below, above meaning governmental directives, including marketization pressures and below meaning the attitudes, beliefs and grassroots reactions of students and staff. I will now briefly elaborate on these.

5.9.1 Pressures from above

5.9.1.1 Governmental directives

As this study has already pointed out, in subscribing to a practice of social transformation which primarily focuses on numerical indices¹¹⁰, and in consequence (put bluntly) demanding the racial profiling of university staff members and students, governmental policies and directives are curtailing the terrain through which institutions can focus on more nuanced aspects of transformation. As Prof. A pointed out, this has also encroached on the space afforded to institutions in the critical deconstruction of racial identities. Further, official directives that evoke the ideology of non-racialism serve instead to subdue and silence vital debates needed to expose the power differentials locked into race and racialised identities. The corollary of this is that racial thinking is allowed to continue to fester below the surface.

However, as my study found, the area where race is given official credibility - as well as a certain liberty of overt discourse - is that of official forms¹¹¹ that are used to ensure that racial indices are met. My study found that reinstatement of apartheid categories, albeit in terms of redress, combined with the ostensibly paradoxical official calls for non-racialism, is having a calamitous effect on the social transformation enterprise at higher education institutions. Instead of critically deconstructing race, universities are revisiting and revitalising ideas of old and then discretely avoiding them. This myopic outlook has not only given credence to naturalised understandings of race, allowing them space to continue, but has also allowed the focus to be diverted from areas where qualitative and deeper readings of transformation can be gauged, and where apartheid understandings of racialised identity could possibly be deconstructed - areas like curriculum content. This has, if anything, resulted in a maintenance of the status quo in the arena of knowledge production and reproduction.

¹¹⁰ Importantly, my study does not suggest that such areas are not of consequence - on the contrary, they are. However, my study attempts to point out that it is indeed retrogressive to focus on these areas if areas of meaningful transformation, such as an uncritical examination of the racialisation of curriculum content, are overlooked.

¹¹¹ These include the likes of admission forms.

5.9.1.2 Marketization pressures

Although it is not a central theme in this study, it became evident in my findings that the impact of neo-liberal globalisation (cf. 3.6.3) on universities cannot be overlooked in any readings on transformation. Indeed, as my study found, a further external pressure exerted on universities in the post-apartheid climate is the demand placed on universities to respond to external market pressures. Read from two critical perspectives this could mean, firstly, that education is a profitable elitist prerogative and, countering the rhetoric of redress, not an automatic human right (Hanley, 2003; Stiglitz, 2003). Secondly, and as is directly relevant to my study, it could mean the impact of neo-liberal globalisation on the nature of knowledge production and reproduction. As a result of this impact, not only has knowledge become a commodity, but neo-liberalist influences have further seen a neutralisation of epistemic discourses. During my interview with Prof. C, I was able to observe how the language and ideology of markets are filtering through to and shaping discourses of transformation:

The final major important thing: we were extremely disappointed by the unprofessional **client**¹¹² reaction that we got from the Faculty - simply dismissed and told we were incapable of presenting the module. Our proposal to update and resubmit the contents for **client approval** was rejected The important aspects of teaching our **clients** are how to adapt and behave into a new society, with that building of a new society, building a new nation (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

As can be read from this commentary, Prof. C has positioned both the Faculty of Education, as well as students taking the Ubuntu Module, as clients. This could hint at a deeper concern for financial accrual, and keeping a department financially aloft, than for a critical view of the nature of the knowledge that is being produced and reproduced in his department. Yet, Prof. C's response is perhaps understandable with departments, particularly within the humanities, under threat of downsizing, or even closure if they are not found to be financially viable (Naudé, 2003). His "proposal to update" (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007) speaks of a lack of cognisance of the hegemonic underpinnings of curriculum content - particularly the Ubuntu Module's content, which is fundamentally racialised. Nevertheless, what I interpreted as his department's evasion of

¹¹² My emphasis

responsibility for the contents of the Ubuntu Module could very well be born of a fear of the consequences of the loss of a financially vital module: “However at that time the department had serious shortages of students and we were overstaffed, and the sudden loss of 400 students would put the department in even a worse situation. One of the reasons we supported the module initially anyway was such financial reasons” (formal interview with Prof. C, 2007).

Although I have only touched on this theme, it is of relevance to the findings of my study in that it is illustrative of a further complexity in and external pressure exerted on universities, and in turn faculties and departments, in the social transformation enterprise. It is also suggestive of a further step in the neutralisation of knowledge.

5.9.2 Pressures from below

As my study found, transformation is not a mechanistic process, but is deeply entwined with the attitudes, beliefs and reactions to change of the protagonists involved in the pedagogical encounter. Admittedly, I had not considered this aspect of transformation before embarking on my empirical research, and the literature I studied had not adequately invoked it. However, as my study found, discourses and practices of transformation evoke a myriad of deep-seated emotions. As this study found, resistance to attempts at transformation can be observed in both the actions and the attitudes of staff and students. Indeed, emotions play a significant role in decelerating the social transformation enterprise at the university. As I suggested in my previous chapter, I would attest that this is primarily a consequence of varied understandings and interpretations of transformation - particularly considering that many white staff members and students interpret transformation as being a threat to the privileges of whiteness.

Another significant factor impacting on transformation is the deep emotions evoked in attempts to change not just the nature of curriculum content, but the knowledge that those who ultimately have to carry out transformation directives have come to believe as unquestioned truths. Indeed, this study observed the emotional turbulence evoked when individuals have had to confront the possible overhauling of personal ontological and

epistemological foundations. As Prof. B commented: “Well it means that you have to completely re-orientate yourself and your understanding of the world - at the age of 60, at the age of 40, at the age of 30. That is **hard** [speaker’s stress]” (formal interview with Prof. B, 2007).

Indeed, as my findings suggest, from fears, frustration and doubt to anger, and whether voiced as such or not, emotions influence how the institution thinks about and carries out transformation. Importantly, this has also had an unequivocal impact on the nature of curriculum content. Mrs D’s articulation of the underlying, unofficial aim behind the implementation of the Ubuntu Module revealed the degree to which emotions had influenced the conceptualisation of the module, and indeed the production and reproduction of knowledge: “[to show] that there is nothing scary about each other” (from formal interview with Mrs D, 2007).

5.10 Final thoughts

I hazard to state, that when I first embarked on my study, I commenced with fairly lofty ideals. Indeed, in my introduction to part of my rationale for conducting this study, I idealistically stated that I subscribed to Toni Morrison’s vision of a university “as a guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator of more and more complex ethical problems, as servant and preserver of deeper democratic practices”(Morrison as cited in Giroux, n.d.: online). In truth, the idealistic side of me still does.

However, as my study progressed and I observed the complexity of transformation, I came to realise that although this is an ideal that should not be discarded, perhaps it is an unrealistic expectation to place on institutions dealing with very real people, with very real histories. Indeed government, academia and (civil) society often refer to institutions in an almost depersonalised manner, implying that they are open to our moulding and changing. However, my study shows that behind an institution there is a complex matrix of sociohistorical contexts, human voices, emotions, fears, ingrained beliefs and prejudices, counter-discourses and personal and collective ideologies. Transformation is indeed a messy business, whatever we may posit the ‘shell’ concept of transformation as

meaning. However, I would suggest that, if anything, my study serves only to accentuate the necessity for the human faces behind both government and universities to self-critically examine their role, or lack thereof, in the decommissioning, deconstructing and critical re-imagining of racial identities as inherited from apartheid, and in how these are being freighted under the banner of academic knowledges. This, I would suggest, is perhaps a more reasonable, and realistic, expectation.

5.11 Areas for further possible study

Critical analysis of curriculum content is a significant component of higher education studies. That is a critical questioning of the knowledge foundations of institutions. The curriculum is a crucial text for reading institutional transformation. As a result, ethnographic and archaeological methods seem to be a useful way to approach these questions.

The emotives of and to transformation at higher education institutions remains an unexplored terrain. However, as my study suggests, transformation goes beyond the mechanistics of change, but is deeply entwined with the attitudes, beliefs and emotions of all protagonists involved. As a result, a phenomenological approach to studying transformation at higher education institutions could yield important insights into and understandings of transformation.

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