# Whose Knowledge is It? Towards Reordering Knowledge Production and Dissemination in the Global South

*Relebohile Moletsane*

*University of KwaZulu-Natal*

## Abstract

This article aims to refocus attention on the long-debated issue of the politics of knowledge production and dissemination, and the power dynamics inherent in what counts as legitimate knowledge, who authors and what resources are available to them, and who decides. With increased resources and spending on research and development efforts on one hand, and seemingly increasing sociopolitical challenges on the other, it is worth asking: What is it about research and publication endeavour that makes it largely unequal and ineffective in addressing the issues it is developed and published to address? What would happen if we interrogated, challenged, and transformed the unequal power dynamics inherent in academic publishing? What strategies might we as social science scholars in the Global South use to perform such an exercise? More importantly, how do we ensure that the voices of the people we research, who are often poor and reside outside the academy and are, therefore, less academically powerful, are taken seriously in our research efforts? The article argues that it is only when knowledge is co-created, co-analysed, and co-communicated with research participants that we can hope to transform the unequal power relations that exist when we approach research contexts as outside experts and the knowers. The article explores paradigmatic approaches and epistemological tools that can enable us to transform and open our research spaces and enable participants to debate, challenge, and ultimately transform social relations in communities.

Keywords: community, knowledge development, power, participatory research, social change

Relebohile Moletsane is Professor and the John Langalibalele Dube Chair in Rural Education in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her areas of research and teaching include rural education and development, gender and education and girlhood studies. Moletsane is Co-PI (with Claudia Mitchell, McGill University) on an IDRC-SSHRC-funded partnership project: *Networks for change and well-being: Girl-led 'from the ground up' policy making to address sexual violence in Canada and South Africa.* She is a co-author, with Mitchell, C., Smith, A., and Chisholm, L. (2008) of *Methodologies for Mapping a Southern African Girlhood in the Age of Aids.* Rotterdam/New York/Taipei: Sense Publishers. She was a 2014 Echidna Global Scholar with the Brookings Institutions'

## Introduction

*An evolution is necessary, one that dismantles our legacy of knowledge and brings our society into alignment with the values of our Constitution. This reordering in the domains of knowledge development would reconnect South Africa with changes afoot in other post-colonial societies. (Leonard Martin, 2012, para. 2)*

International scholarship on the politics of knowledge, its production, and dissemination is abundant (see for example, Apple, 2000; Brown, 2011; Fiske, 1989; Muller, 2000; Weiler, 2011; and others). Similarly, informed largely by the research we produce, a plethora of interventions have been developed and implemented in communities and institutions identified as needing development. With these initiatives, both local and international donors and governments have spent huge amounts of financial and other resources. In spite of this, the development challenges South Africa faces seem to be continuing, with little sign of improvement.

As Weiler (2009) pointed out, explanations for this may lie largely in the fact that available research, which informs such interventions, tends to pay scant attention to the political conditions under which knowledge is often produced and used—and the consequences thereof. According to him, our scholarship continues to pay lip service to the ways in which knowledge is produced (and who produces it), how it is disseminated and used, and its links to the power dynamics in institutions, communities, and society. Thus, as Martin (2012) argued:

*Almost 20 years after the demise of apartheid, South Africa has failed to undertake and complete its own knowledge transition consistent with the constitutional ambition of a democratic, just and peaceful society. The legacy of knowledge that constitutes and shapes our learning institutions is in fundamental need of change. (para. 1)*

While there is no shortage of research addressing the various social issues plaguing our communities and institutions, such research seems to be having very little impact on social change. As this article asks, could the reasons lie in the fact that available research and the knowledge it produces about social issues tends to be created without any substantial participation and contribution from those most affected?

To illustrate, science, as opposed to other forms of knowledge, continues to sit at the top of the pyramid in the hierarchy of knowledge, globally. South Africa is no exception. From our quest to address our societal challenges, including poverty, HIV infections, and others, to our desire to compete equally with other countries (for example, in education, innovation, and the economy), it is to science that we often look for answers. This status of science can be traced back to, among others, Herbert Spencer's 1860 essay, which, in relation to what children should learn or be taught in schools, concluded that "learning the meanings of things, [was] better that learning the meanings of words" (pp. 93–94).

But what is it about science that has propelled it to this status, and why does this view of the hierarchy of knowledge persist? What have been the consequences of this view of knowledge on social change in contemporary societies, including South Africa? In an academic context that privileges science as a form of knowledge, what, if anything, can social science and humanities scholars contribute to knowledge for social change? For Hans Weiler (2009; 2011) the answers lay in an exploration of the nature of contemporary discourses on knowledge. Writing on the nature of scholarship on knowledge in North America and Europe, Weiler's thesis was that to this day,

contemporary discourses include no critical view of what knowledge means and how this has changed over time. Furthermore, such discourses have paid little attention to "the political conditions and consequences of the production and use of knowledge . . . i.e., the politics of knowledge" (Weiler, 2009, p. 485). In particular, the discourses have paid scant attention to potential structural changes in higher education that would emerge from scholarship that acknowledges the "epistemological and political transformation of contemporary knowledge culture" (2009, p. 485).

Addressing the question, what knowledge is of most worth for the millennial citizen in the South African context, more than a decade ago Muller (2000) noted that there were essentially two responses to the question. For him, the first response focused on cultural and political participation (including cultural knowledge and skills, political knowledge, and moral education), while the second addressed economic participation. To this day, in South Africa the dominance of the second category in response to what knowledge is of most worth, is captured in the various national education policies and interventions, particularly in education—see for example, the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013)—as well as in public discourse about the state of education in the country. These focus mainly on what knowledge would be most useful for passing exit examinations (for example, the Grade 12 or matric examination) and subsequently, in employment and the economy. Muller (2000) noted that this education for economic participation "growing increasingly vociferous, provides an answer in terms of skills and knowledge for economic productivity" (p. 54).

This article argues that, concerned with what knowledge would be most useful for employment and the economy, such an "instrumental" approach to knowledge production and dissemination might produce learners and graduates who lack the necessary tools for critical thought. In a context characterised by a variety of complex social, political, and economic issues, what is needed goes beyond just skills and knowledge useful for employment. Rather, what young people and adult learners need are skills, understandings, and values that foster critical thought and action (see also, Moletsane, 2014).

Furthermore, the need to address the pressing challenges in our society such as unemployment and poverty, HIV and AIDS, poor educational attainment, and others, has propelled academic research to focus on similar notions of what knowledge is needed as response. Knowledge that seeks to effect deep social change, including changing unequal social norms in institutions, communities, and the society is seldom the focus. While economic participation is an important concern for our country and the well-being of its citizens, the complex nature of, and interrelationships among these sociopolitical issues seem to warrant the development of knowledge that fosters critical thought among students and scholars in institutions and in communities and society. Such critical thought is essential for debate and critique and for identifying and developing interventions geared for social change (Moletsane, 2014). On one hand, research that focuses on understanding and explaining some of these social issues is abundant and useful in developing interventions. On the other, some scholars have questioned the conceptual and methodological basis of such knowledge, arguing that certain ways of knowing tend to be privileged while others are silenced. Critics, particularly those aligned to the indigenous knowledge systems and social justice frameworks, have often argued that academic research tends to marginalise the ways of knowing dominant among the local communities being studied, and to silence the voices of those most impacted by the social phenomena targeted for change. For example, as Mertens, Cram, and Chilisa (2013), citing the work of Ormond and Carter (2006), contended:

> *Research and the contestation over what counts as knowledge are just as implicated in the marginalisation of Indigenous peoples as are Christianity, disease, warfare, and constitutional manoeuvring. (p. 17)*

Thus, as Muller (2000) noted, clearly both education and research for economic participation and for cultural and political participation are key to social change—and what is needed is a framework that considers them in tandem.

Implicit in the question, what knowledge is of most worth, are issues pertaining to the nature of knowledge and of power and its influence on knowledge production, dissemination, and legitimation.

## What Is Knowledge Anyway?

There exist varied views on the nature of knowledge, internationally. One view is that, linked to the question of what and whose knowledge is of most worth, must be a critical view and understanding of what the concept *knowledge* means and how this has changed over time (Weiler, 2009; 2011). For Weiler, there has been considerable change in the concept over the past century and, unsurprisingly, such changes have tended to be mired in controversies. One such controversy was the paradigm wars of the 1980s (see Gage, 1989) "where the supremacy of quantitative research methods (mostly used to generate knowledge in the natural and health sciences) over qualitative methods (mostly used to generate knowledge in the social sciences and humanities) was debated" (Moletsane, 2014, p. 35). This debate about the rigour of particular kinds of knowledge but not of others (see, for example, Alise & Teddlie, 2010), is essentially concerned not only with "the epistemological foundations of our understanding of knowledge, but also with the way in which we assess different processes and institutional forms of knowledge production" (Weiler, 2011, p. 206). In addressing the question: "Whose knowledge is of most worth and who produces it?" Weiler (2009) implored us to understand that "the linkages between knowledge and power are both very intimate and very consequential, and that arriving at a better understanding of this linkage is crucial to any attempt to formulate a political theory of knowledge and its production" (pp. 1–2).

A second conception of knowledge distinguishes between two types: knowledge as outcome, and knowledge as procedure (Bleiklie & Byrkjeflot, 2002). In terms of knowledge as outcome, Bleiklie and Byrkjeflot quoted Bell's (1973, p. 4) notion of knowledge as "a set of organised statements of fact or ideas." Elaborating on this, these authors referred to practical knowledge, or utility-oriented knowledge, which focuses on getting things done or made. According to them, "'knowledge' has acquired a more all-encompassing meaning today" (p. 519). Logically, this would mean that society has confidence in, and support for, scholarship and the institutions that produce it. The opposite seems to have emerged, where, based on policy and public discourses, institutions of higher learning are increasingly criticised for their failure to contribute to building the economy (by, for example, producing a well-skilled workforce) and therefore, as not useful.

In terms of knowledge as procedure, citing Knorr Cetina's (1999) notion of epistemic cultures, Bleiklie and Byrkjeflot (2002) focused on process, or on how epistemic cultures make knowledge in different ways. Citing Gibbons et al. (1994) in their book, *The New Production of Knowledge,* the authors noted a widening concept of knowledge that entails "a new form of knowledge production [made up of] a distinct set of cognitive and social practices" (Bleiklie & Byrkjeflot, 2002, p. 520). Gibbons et al.'s work distinguished between two modes of knowledge production. For them, Mode 1 focuses on disciplinary science and informs much academic research internationally. In contrast, Mode 2 knowledge production, characterised by both cognitive and social practices, is usually carried out in a context of application (rather than within an academic community), is transdisciplinary (rather than

disciplinary), heterogeneous (as opposed to homogeneous), hetero-hierarchical (rather than hierarchical) and is more socially accountable and reflexive (Bleiklie & Byrkjeflot, 2002, p. 520).

Commenting on this work and its influence on the South African research and academic agenda, Kraak (2000) noted that two global phenomena have influenced the emergence of Mode 2 knowledge production internationally: globalisation and democratisation. According to him, influenced by globalisation imperatives, education policy, and in turn knowledge production, tends to privilege this phenomenon and the knowledge economy—hence the emphasis on disciplinary knowledge (science) and innovation. Influenced by democratisation, education policy and related research have focused on the expansion of access to learning in higher education institutions (HEIs). Taking the cue from Scott (1995) and Gibbons et al. (1994), Kraak (2000) identified two ways in which the two phenomena have influenced education and research: first, a shift in the functioning and structure of HEIs from elite and insular institutions to more open and responsive systems; and, second, the emergence of a new mode of knowledge production (Mode 2) that is different from disciplinary science and research (Mode 1) and instead is, for example, problem solving and interdisciplinary in its approach—and produces knowledge on site to address the problem directly (Muller, 2000).

While the emergence of a problem-solving approach to knowledge production is promising in the context of South Africa's many socioeconomic challenges, Kraak's (2000) warning remains pertinent:

> Even when academics are deeply engaged in Mode 2, the evidence is that they continue to value their standing and participation in professional societies, the values and norms of their academic disciplines, and they continue to extol the virtues of peer review. . . . [and of a Mode 1 intellectual climate] . . . In the most successful higher education units or departments this should not be surprising, since real status and reward attends their positions. (p. 61)

Thus, it might be safe to conclude that disciplinary science and, in particular, what is regarded as education and research for economic participation (Muller, 2000), continues to dominate the content of education and the focus of research in the academy. While education and research for cultural and political participation is increasingly making its mark in knowledge production and dissemination, as Muller (2000) concluded, it is only when the two (education and research for economic participation, and for cultural and political participation) are considered in tandem that our research and education efforts can contribute to the social change we desire and need.

A third conception, as Kumashiro (2002), Jansen (2009), and Zembylas (2013) noted, sees contemporary knowledge as, by its very nature, troubled and troubling. To illustrate, from intra- and inter-border conflicts and wars to, among others, disease, poverty, economic recessions, violent conflict, and crime, the world seems to be experiencing a traumatic and post-traumatic cultural moment (Worsham, 2006, as cited in Zembylas, 2013). Within this context, pain and suffering dominate the lives of individuals and groups in many places and spaces globally.

This conception also views knowledge as contested. As John Fiske (1989) asserted, "knowledge is never neutral, it never exists in an empiricist, objective relationship to the real. Knowledge is power, and the circulation of knowledge is part of the social distribution of power" (pp. 149–50). Influenced by this notion of the contested nature of knowledge and the power dynamics involved in such contestations based on class, race, gender, and religious inequalities, knowledge is seen as socially constructed. For Apple (2000) this meant that what counts as legitimate knowledge privileges the

views of the powerful in communities, institutions, and societies. The more powerful tend to determine the nature and content of knowledge and the strategies used to communicate it, and reject alternative or opposing views as illegitimate. Often the views of the less powerful are rejected as wrong and not to be regarded as knowledge. This, according to Bourdieu (1986), imposes "symbolic violence" on already marginalised groups. Symbolic violence is similar to the Marxist idea of "false consciousness," and refers to a situation where, without any overt force or coercion, an individual or group accepts, internalises, and plays a role in its own subordination. As Connolly and Healy (2004) contended, such symbolic violence bolsters the position of the powerful and makes questioning the dominant worldview seem unacceptable and difficult.

Similarly, for Spivak (1988), the dominance of certain knowledges (of the powerful) and the marginalisation of others (of the less powerful) produces and is produced by epistemic violence. Taking up this notion of epistemic violence, Teo (2010) argued that it:

> *is produced when empirical data are interpreted as showing the inferiority of or problematises the Other, even when data allow for equally viable alternative interpretations. . . . Because the interpretations of data emerge from an academic context and thus are presented as knowledge, they are defined as epistemologically violent actions. (p. 295)*

So, epistemic violence is related to who produces what is regarded as knowledge, or how power appropriates and conditions its production (Khatun, 1999). In the context of postcolonial and postapartheid South Africa, Spivak (1988) would argue, epistemic violence results when in (post)colonial discourse, the subaltern is silenced by both the colonial and indigenous patriarchal power. Such epistemic violence legitimates particular forms of knowledge and marginalises those who express alternative understandings. As such, symbolic and epistemic violence often positions the researched (individuals and communities outside the academy, including women, young people, and others) as the other (see also Moletsane, 2014).

Arguably, by privileging particular kinds of knowledge and marginalising others, symbolic and epistemic violence produces what Nigerian feminist author, Chimamanda Adichie (2009), referred to as *a single story*. To illustrate what she referred to as "The danger of a single story" she used her experience as a student in the USA and her first encounter with her American roommate:

> *What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning, pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa. A single story of catastrophe. In this single story there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her, in any way. No possibility of feelings more complex than pity. No possibility of a connection as human equals. (2009, p. 2).*

How do such single stories manifest in our research and teaching? How do they facilitate or prevent the desired social change in our institutions and the communities we research? Linked to the notion of what knowledge is of most worth is the equally important question, whose knowledge is of most worth, and who decides?

## Whose Knowledge Is of Most Worth?

*Whose knowledge is it anyway?* asked Leornard Martin in an opinion piece published in the *Mail & Guardian* (2012). In his response, the author noted that global change and the emerging world order have implications for the kinds of knowledge needed for effecting social change. This new world order, he concluded, demands "a fundamental shift in intellectual engagement with knowledge" (2012, para. 4), one that would problematise the thinking that produces social problems such as violence against women, xenophobia, and other forms of violent conflict. For Martin:

> *"critical questions need to be posed to those who maintain, defend and produce the system of knowledge production. The values reproduced through the current system work simply to socialise people into limited expectations. [For example], whiteness and white privilege were "normalised" pedagogically and mediated with all the resources available to sustain an exploitative and unequal society. (2012, para. 5)*

On the global academic platform, such assumptions of "whiteness," some have argued, have allowed the North to define accepted norms and standards for knowledge production and dissemination while marginalising perspectives (usually those from the South) and "outside" world views and the knowledge they represent. As Moletsane (2014) argued, from this perspective these other at best need to be educated in and about the dominant knowledge and worldview, and to be persuaded or coerced, for example, through funding structures, to accept it or to face exclusion. In Bourdieu's (1986) terms, with their cultural capital, researchers from the North are able to dictate how research should be conducted, who should do this, and what they need to demonstrate.

Using complex gatekeeping strategies, for example, the peer review process in academic journal publishing, particularly those regarded as "high impact," and through funding structures, alternative voices are marginalised and excluded (see Fallabela Luco, Missana, Marilef, & Maurizi, 2009). Also, with national and institutional policy emphasis on quality in academic publications as encapsulated, for example, in the recently released *Research Outputs Policy* (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015) and various institutional policies following from it, academics are expected to publish in peer-reviewed journals with a high impact factor. As Moletsane, Haysom, and Reddy (in press) noted, impact is calculated as comprising the average number of citations to articles. The higher the impact factor, the more respected the journal and the more legitimate the articles published in it. In this context, peer review (or refereeing) functions as a tool for quality control. As such, through peer review, manuscripts are assessed, critiqued, and either accepted or rejected (see also Thomson & Kamler, 2013) and the professional standing of the individual academic and his or her institution is determined. The peer review process produces and is produced by the power relations existing in the knowledge production arena with concomitant struggles and contestations among different groups, institutions, and geographic locations (Moletsane, Haysom, & Reddy, in press). For example, in her book, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking From Women's Lives*, using feminist theories, Sandra Harding (1991) analysed the nature of knowledge and ways of knowing. Her work suggests that that the production of knowledge is linked to its canonisation, for example, through organisation into systems of information and publications. Such canonisation enables the gatekeepers (peer reviewers and journal editors) to determine what knowledge and which knowers should be included or excluded. Macey (2000, p. 56), for example, concluded that "a canon is necessarily exclusive, [and] demands for its revision often take the form of a demand that it should be expanded to include works by authors from minority or marginalized groups." Arguably, some scholars (for example, those in the global North) more than others (those in the South), with their attendant cultural capital and material resources, are better placed to master the requirements for such publication and to therefore access the journals, legitimising their knowledge and ways of knowing.

Within this context, various critiques of peer review in knowledge production and publishing have emerged (see for example, Falabella Luco et al., 2009). Their study found that such gatekeeping functions to sideline scholars from the South from knowledge production and dissemination in key platforms (particularly high impact peer-reviewed journals). With lower levels of cultural capital, characterised by language barriers (with English being the dominant language of research and publication worldwide), and the general marginalisation of knowledge produced by local Southern communities (Fallabela Luco et al., 2009). The study also found that even when issues in Southern countries such as sexuality and gender are studied, the authorship in high impact peer-reviewed journals tends to be skewed in favour of the North. Furthermore, the study found that in terms of who writes about who, who has the resources for knowledge production and dissemination, and who decides what knowledge gets accepted and legitimised (through publication), English-speaking countries—the United States of America, followed by the United Kingdom and Australia—dominate (Adams, King, & Hook, 2010; Falabella Luco et al., 2009). In contrast, Southern voices remain on the margins.

In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid with its racial, gender, and social class inequalities have meant that black scholars and researchers, and black African women in particular, remain on the margins of knowledge production and dissemination (Moletsane et al., in press). Even more insidious, is the tendency for local (South African) scholars across racial lines to disregard the relative cultural capital and power they hold due to their academic, racial, gender, and social class positions, and its impact on the participation of local communities and extent to which local voices are then heard and taken seriously in research and the interventions it informs. Unless these spaces are interrogated, challenged, and transformed, the chances for real learning and social change remain distant.

The next section focuses on the how scholars in the South, and particularly social sciences and humanities researchers, might address the need for social change and the knowledge gap that perpetuates it in their research.

## Towards Research for Social Change

How might sciences and humanities researchers including education scholars and activists, generally, and those in the Global South, in particular, advance the troubled and troubling knowledge they encounter in their work; and how might their work contribute to social change in the institutions and communities they work with? First, this article contends that there are various practices that tend to legitimise particular knowledges, rendering them of most worth—while marginalising others. In reordering the academic knowledge production and dissemination sphere, these need to be understood, explained, and challenged. In this regard, critical theory (and in development contexts, critical pedagogy) is useful. Martin's (2012) opinion piece implored us (through our education and scholarship) to strive to identify, explain, and challenge the factors that produce and make acceptable individual and group behaviours that disregard the lives and welfare of the other, often through violent means. Aligned to this idea is Steinberg and Kincheloe's (2010) conception of the need for critical theory in research. In these authors' view,

> critical theory, if nothing else, is a moral construct designed to reduce human suffering in the world. In the critical theoretical context, every individual is granted dignity regardless of his or her location in the web of reality. Thus, the continuation of human suffering by conscious human decision is a morally unacceptable behaviour that must be analysed, interpreted and changed. (p. 140)

It is only when we understand the immorality of some of our decisions and actions and their negative impacts on others, and act to change them, that we can hope to effect real social change in institutions and communities.

Second, a key feature identified in this article is the unequal power dynamics inherent in knowledge production and dissemination, globally, and the consequent privileging of certain types of knowledge and ways of knowing at the expense of others. For example, unequal power relations between communities and outside researchers tend to limit or entirely discredit alternative local perspectives. Often, members of the communities in which we do research tend to possess lower literacy skills and may lack the confidence if not the ability to challenge, debate, or present alternative views on issues. Because of this, our research tends to disallow their perspectives, and their voices seldom make it to the knowledge we produce from their lives.

To address this, informed by Steinberg and Kinchoele's (2010) reconceptualised critical theory and Schratz and Walker's (1995) view of research as social change, as researchers and educators, our views about the people and contexts we do research on and in, need to shift. Rather than viewing them as needy and helpless subjects of our research gaze, we could ask ourselves: What would happen if we, instead, recognise and acknowledge them as dynamic individuals and groups capable of understanding and articulating their own issues, and as able to identify local solutions to address these? What would happen if we were to understand and develop a different kind of language and a different relation to their world? For example, using the generative theory of place (for example, the South and its people, the rural and its people, etc.) advanced by Balfour, Mitchell, and Moletsane (2008), we might engage in scholarship that views such spaces not only as subjects and contexts for research, but as dynamic and generative spaces and lived experiences. Such an understanding means that we would view the people themselves as capable of understanding and articulating issues affecting their lives as well as possible strategies for addressing them. This would produce the desired knowledge necessary for producing social change.

Available scholarship (e.g., Mitchell, De Lange, & Moletsane, 2014) also suggested that when we create safe spaces in our research and development projects for local people whose lives we are studying in order to enable them to engage in critical dialogue, we stand a better chance of effectively understanding their situation, and identifying and developing strategies for addressing the challenges that face them. However, if the dominant education worldview is about practical knowledge (i.e., developing skills for the workplace), and our research focuses on understanding and developing these, such an agenda might further victimise them and render them unable to engage in critical and contested debates. As stated above, power relations between community members as subjects of our research, as well as the dynamics inherent within these communities related to social inequalities (based on gender, race, social class, religion, and other markers of identity), often silence the less powerful and stifle the debate necessary for social change.

Third, this article has argued that Northern scholars tend to have more social (and cultural) capital than their Southern counterparts. This enables their research to make it through the gatekeeping structures that define what knowledge is, and what is of most worth. Locally, researchers from HEIs and research institutes, who themselves are often outsiders to these communities, also inform what knowledge makes it to the academy and, consequently, what counts as knowledge. For the South and for local communities (the subjects of such research), this means that people's realities are often defined and explained by outsiders and that the interventions that come their way, are likely to be irrelevant to their lives' needs. To address this, what is needed is context-specific knowledge, co-created and co-disseminated with the local people themselves. Such knowledge would help us ponder such question as what knowledge is produced, how and where it is produced, who produces

it, and under what sociocultural conditions it is produced. This would challenge and transform the colonising and marginalising knowledge production and dissemination processes that are often imposed on local communities in many research projects and interventions.

Fourth, a key focus in this article has not only been on what knowledge is of most worth in contemporary South Africa, but also whose knowledge is most valued. The discussion above suggests that the nature of knowledge tends to interact in very significant ways with power relations between the knowers and those whose lives form the content of such knowledge. It is only when we have adequately interrogated such power relations and their impact that we can challenge and transform them. Such transformation would then enable us to really hear the voices of our research participants and understand their experiences from their own perspectives. In this regard, as Maclure (1990) asserted more than two decades ago:

> *For marginal groups to improve their positions in society, the struggle is not restricted to economic and political spheres, but encompasses as well the realm of ideas, [with various implications for the work of] social scientists: that is, if their research is to contribute to [social change for marginalised] people, they must . . . develop new paradigms of inquiry and explanation . . . [informed by the actual] insights . . . of local people. (p. 2)*

Linked to this, recognising the significance of the differential power relations inherent in knowledge production and dissemination, Briggs and Sharp (2004) concluded that:

> *Indigenous knowledges all over the world are malleable, changing in response to Western ideas and practices, but also to an ever changing array of other ways of knowing and doing. . . . Thus we must not underestimate the significance of material conditions which influence the need for different knowledges. Indigenous knowledge cannot ever be understood in isolation of the critical analysis of economic, social, cultural and political conditions. As Agrawal argues, indigenous knowledge is not simply about language and expression, but about these material conditions through which people must survive. (p. 17)*

Thus, indigenous knowledge systems and, in particular, Smith's (1999) notion of "decolonising methodologies" and Chilisa's (2008) indigenous methodologies are pertinent.

## Conclusion

This article has addressed three interrelated questions: What and whose knowledge is of most worth in the South African academic landscape? Linked to this, it has asked: What is the nature of knowledge and how does this interact with the power dynamics inherent within institutions and communities and between Northern scholars and their scholarship? The third question asks scholars in the South to speak back and challenge the hegemony of the North in the question: How might social sciences and humanities researchers including education scholars and activists, generally, and those in the global South, in particular, advance the troubled and troubling knowledge they encounter in their work, and how might their work contribute to social change in the institutions and communities they work with? While the strategies identified and discussed in the above section relate to the paradigmatic and theoretical level, they have several implications for the epistemological and methodological choices needed towards what Moletsane (2014) referred to as "untroubling" of knowledge production and dissemination for social change. This involves

methodologies that would ensure that we really hear the perspectives of all in the institutions and communities we work with, but also that, in recognising the contested nature of local interpretations and knowledge generally, we actively enable participants to confront, critique, and challenge such understandings in order to develop alternative understandings. This means that members of communities must be able to meaningfully participate in all activities meant to achieve this. For Moletsane (2014), this involved thinking outside our taken-for-granted realities and understandings and instead using the actual insights of local community members to radically transform the nature of our research, the methods we use to collect and analyse it, and throughout this process, co-creating and co-analysing our findings with our participants.

For Cornwall and Jewkes (1995), participatory research and practice enables participants and researchers to reflect and act together from research planning through to analysis and dissemination. Informed by the notion, "nothing about us without us," such co-creation and co-dissemination of knowledge ensures control of content and process by both researchers and participants and consequently, mutual learning among them. Examples of participatory methodologies abound in the emerging literature. These include visual methodologies such as photovoice (Wang, Burris, & Xiang, 1996), participatory video (Milne, Mitchell, & De Lange, 2012), cellphilms (Mitchell, de Lange, Moletsane, & Stuart (2013), drawing (Theron, Mitchell, Smith, & Stuart, 2011), and storytelling, including digital storytelling (de Tolly, 2007). It is not enough to use these tools in our research, rather, what is needed is the co-reflection with our participants on the research process itself, the power dynamics inherent therein, and the extent to which these tools enable us to challenge and address these so as to pave way for democratic decision making about the strategies needed for social change.

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