Critical Conversations from Different Worlds Through Decoloniality, Gender Equity and Diversity

Zaira Solomons

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List of Abbreviations

AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
ANS	Adjusted Net Savings
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BRICS+	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa plus Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates
CO_2	Carbon dioxide
EIUG	Energy Intensive Users Group
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FOLU	Forestry and other land use
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
Gg CO_2e	Gigagrams of CO_2 emissions
GNI	Gross national income
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPPU	Industrial Processes and Product Use
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
kWh	Kilowatt hour
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer
MBRRACE-UK	Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK

Mt	Megatons
NALSA	National Legal Services Authority
NDS	National Development Strategy
NHS	National Health Strategy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
POA	Programme of Action
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SES	Socio-economic status
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UK-SPEC	United Kingdom Standard for Professional Engineering Competence and Commitment
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
US$	United States dollar
USA	United States of America

Notes on the Editor

Dr Zaira Solomons

Zaira holds a PhD in gender and education from Coventry University. She received the prestigious Leverhulme Trust Study Abroad award during her PhD and was appointed as a research associate whilst tenuring her studentship at the University of Johannesburg. Currently, she is a senior research associate with the Department of Sociology at the same institution. Her areas of interest include decolonial feminism, critical theory, African storytelling, as well as race, gender, and geospatial work in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

Notes on the Contributors

Dr Tosha Nembhard

Tosha Nembhard holds a PhD from Loughborough University in Heat Transfer and Aerospace Heat Exchanges. She is an Associate Professor and has previously worked at University of Leicester, Coventry University and HS Marston Aerospace. Tosha is a strong advocate for Women in Engineering and Decolonising of the STEM curriculum.

Mayookh Barua

Mayookh is an Indian writer who is presently a doctoral researcher in the Creative Writing department at the University of Southern California. They hold a qualification in fiction from North Carolina State University. Their areas of interest include sexuality, art, education, and South Asian queer family dynamics.

 

Dr Faith Zengeni and Tasara Makombe

Faith holds a PhD from Rhodes University in Sociology. She is currently a lecturer at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe. Her areas of interest include gender equity, organisational change, workplace restructuring, and disability inclusiveness. Tasara is a senior lecturer at the United College of Education. He is a PhD Candidate at the University of Zimbabwe. Research interests include curriculum issues in disability, gender and disability, as well as indigenous knowledge systems.

Professor Patrick Bond

Patrick is a distinguished professor and the Director of the Centre for Social Change at the University of Johannesburg. His areas of interest include political economy, social mobilisation, inequality, and neoliberalism.

Foreword

This special issue responds to decades of calls to recentre decoloniality, gender equity, and diversity as pivotal areas of social justice that have shaped people's lived experiences. With significant contributions, this special issue offers a multifaceted exploration of how decoloniality, gender equity, and diversity, as intersecting and diverse themes, inform scholarship and practices in the Global South.

Decoloniality, in particular, challenges us to critically examine and dismantle the enduring legacies of colonialism that persist in our knowledge production and everyday lives. In a similar tone, this special issue calls for a re-evaluation of power dynamics, knowledge production, and cultural representations, with the aim to centre marginalised voices and perspectives that have historically been silenced, most notably in the Global South. Simultaneously, gender equity remains a fundamental area of social justice, advocating for the equitable treatment and representation of all genders. This special issue investigates the complexities of gender identity by highlighting its intersections with race, class, and sexuality; among other axes of identity. Much has been said and written about diversity by the Global North. In its broader sense, diversity encompasses not only demographic variety but also a diversity of perspectives and epistemologies, including those emerging from the Global South. With a specific focus on the southernmost region of Africa, this special issue embraces the richness of diversity across disciplines, cultures, and, most importantly, people's lived experiences. In so doing, it recognises and demonstrates that true intellectual and social progress can only emerge by engaging with a plurality of voices.

In my capacity here, I offer a concise perspective on race that integrates and provides further understanding of the key themes from this special issue. Race functions as a tool for managing, creating, and perpetuating human distinctions. As several race historians have observed, the primary objective of race has been to uphold hierarchical classifications of humanity. Essentially, race operates as a mechanism of governance honed through European dominance over non-Europeans. This overarching project has historically facilitated the exploitation of the majority of the global population by those asserting racial/ethnic superiority. Understanding race involves examining the processes that shape minoritisation in both the Global South and Global North, where the rights of minority individuals are often deemed less significant. Indeed, race is not merely biological or cultural; rather, it has played a pivotal role in shaping and defining fluctuating conceptions of hierarchisation and classifications of people globally.

Collectively, the themes explored in this special issue are pertinent, as they compel us to critically reflect on our roles as scholars, educators, practitioners, and global citizens committed to fostering inclusive and equitable societies. By interrogating dominant paradigms and amplifying underrepresented perspectives, this collection of papers offers a vital contribution to knowledge on decoloniality, gender equity, and diversity in a region that is often overlooked in global knowledge production.

I extend my gratitude to the contributors whose scholarship and insights enrich this volume, as well as to the editor for bringing these diverse perspectives together, in the interest of ongoing transformation. It is anticipated that this special issue will serve as a catalyst for continued dialogue, scholarship, and activism on decoloniality, gender equity, and diversity.

Dr Bolaji Balogun, Assistant Professor of Race, SOAS, University London

Introduction

Conference Overview and Publication of Proceedings

The Conversations From Different Worlds at the Decoloniality, Gender Equity and Diversity International Conference was hosted on 1 and 2 December 2022 as a hybrid event in collaboration with the University of Johannesburg (UJ) (Faculty of Humanities and Sociology Department), Coventry University, and the Leverhulme Trust. Work on decoloniality and its gender-related facets was first introduced to UJ more than a decade ago, and the university has been at the forefront of leading the conversation around rethinking and reimagining a more equitable and inclusive South African future. The conference was part of an initiative to foster and continue ongoing dialogue around novel ways of theorising pressing issues that affect minority women and non-cis/hetero bodies in the South African context and globally. Moreover, the idea for a conference of this nature emerged from the organiser and editor's research sabbatical in South Africa, as well as an opportunity she received to pursue a Leverhulme Study Abroad fellowship as part of her PhD study. Hence, the conference was funded by the Leverhulme Trust under grant number (SAS-2020-047) to develop and bring together voices from both the South-North in tackling issues of equity and inclusion. Additionally, the conference centred around how various approaches could be utilised to find diverse and unique ways and insights into theorising and reflecting on race and gender inclusion, as well as on all social justice matters. The thematic approach to the conference was divided into two streams: one focused on decoloniality, addressing themes of violence, sexuality, and Africanism, including Womanism, and the other involving critical theory, incorporating themes of race, gender, class, STEM, higher education, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

A call for abstracts was first published on the UJ staff portal and subsequently circulated throughout the Sociology Department, the division's mailing list, and various media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), and LinkedIn, in June 2022. Moreover, calls were also published through Coventry University's Black and Minority Ethnic Staff Network, as well as through the Centre for Global Learning. Forty-five abstracts were received, which aligned with the various themes and contributed to the respective conversations. These abstracts included insights from academics, independent researchers, and gender and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) activists in South Africa and abroad. Thirty-five papers were selected that fit the various themes and were found to contribute to the conference's underlying objective. These were organised into their respective themes, accompanied by panel discussions for each over a period of two days, covering six in total. Furthermore, Ms Dineo Mpati was instrumental in supporting the organising committee with administrative tasks, while Ms Rego Dube provided logistical support related to catering and venue arrangements, and Ms Yolanda Phakela assisted with advertising and graphic design.

Six full papers were submitted for the conference proceedings. One was excluded prior to the peer-review process because it had been submitted in a master's thesis format and required substantial editing to meet standard draft criteria; however, the author was afforded an opportunity to present their work at the conference. The remaining five papers were further developed into chapters and peer-reviewed through a process managed by UJ Press.

Speakers for the Opening Address

The opening welcome address was delivered by Professor Suzy Graham, Senior Director of Academic Development and Support at UJ. Suzy plays a very active role in the Department of Politics at UJ and is currently a senior member of staff. She also serves as the co-president and a scientific committee member of the Regional Integration and Social Cohesion at UJ. Her former role was in the Faculty of Humanities, where she held the position of Vice Dean for Teaching and Learning. She is an ardent academic and scholar and has published extensively in the fields of international relations and foreign policy. Following this, an important reflective message was delivered by Professor Victoria Collis-Buthelezi on the importance of decoloniality as both a philosophical and critical praxis in our daily endeavours to strive for a more inclusive and just society. Victoria is the Director of the Race, Class and Gender Institute at UJ. She is also a senior fellow at the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Studies at UJ and a research associate of the Institute of Research in African American Studies at Columbia University in New York.

Dr Zaira Solomons

Outline and Structure

The first chapter outlines how decolonial and decolonial feminist thought can be intertwined with critical theory in a single paradigm to provide a deeper understanding of Black South African women's experiences throughout the STEM trajectory, such as schooling, higher education, further studies, and employment. This introductory chapter is from the author's PhD thesis and specifically demonstrates unique ways in which equity and social justice can be theorised by creatively fusing together two similar, yet distinct conceptual framings in furthering the transformative agenda. This conceptual framework is from the author's PhD thesis and was developed during her doctoral tenure. She also presented it at the conference she organised

This is followed by the second chapter, in which Tosha provides her perspective on the ongoing colonial tension, specifically within hegemonic engineering courses in higher education in the United Kingdom. She suggests strategies to mitigate the underlying violence embedded within engineering fields because of the coloniality of power and gender, in order to ensure a more equitable and transformative landscape for aspiring **Black and Minority Ethnic** aspiring scientists.

The third chapter interrogates what it means to be trans or "hijra" in both the Indian context and the United States of America, and how race, class, culture, and geographical spaces are often implicated in the shifting of such identities. Mayookh critically untangles the nexus between Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric underpinnings of what the trans identity entails by exploring how this outlying category navigates space between different world contexts, including how such individuals remain poised to rewrite their future for enhanced inclusion opportunities.

In the fourth chapter, an in-depth investigation sheds light on Zimbabwe's Disability Care Framework. Faith and Tasara's findings reveal how key pieces of policy and legislation are intentionally designed to exclude and "other" women who are living with disabilities, based on societal perception, as well as how these ongoing dynamics further entrench the experiences of an already vulnerable group in a country with a failing healthcare system.

In the last chapter, Patrick explores the concepts of "super-exploitation" and imperialism, as signalled by Luxemburg in Samir Amin's writings on South Africa, and in race-class debates historicised by Ben Magubane, highlighting four features of interest. The ways in which capital takes far more from non-capitalist spheres (which the former relies upon for consumption) include (1) depletion of non-renewable natural wealth, (2) pollution, (3) greenhouse gas emissions, and (4) social reproduction subsidies, as capitalism and patriarchy fuse. This demonstrates how the racial character of these four features becomes evident, even though each was actually amplified in the period since the end of formal apartheid, in ways that economists typically ignore on the grounds that none are accounted for in the gross domestic product measure of South Africa's national output.

The Need for a Deeper Theorisation on Race and Gender Equity in South African STEM

Drawing on Fraser's Participatory Parity, Decolonial, and Decolonial Feminist Insights

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Introduction

In this chapter, I bring together key theories and concepts pertaining to social justice and inequality in South African higher education to critically analyse the experiences of access and inclusion for Black female students throughout the entire Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) trajectory; i.e., schooling, higher education, further studies, and employment. This chapter therefore finds itself situated at a juncture between critical theory and a decolonial paradigm, drawing on both strands of thought, specifically Nancy Fraser's (1997a; 1997b; 1998; 2007a; 2008; 2010) participatory parity framework and aspects of the coloniality of power, knowledge, and gender. In doing so, I seek to advance both the theoretical and empirical terrains of these fields. I particularly aim to unpack issues surrounding Black women's entry into contested, male-dominated, white spaces, such as university STEM courses in developing contexts. I argue that the lived experiences of Black women from the Majority World or Global South are particularly significant, including how they are uniquely positioned based on race, gender, geospatial location, and class background in white Eurocentric institutional spaces that primarily cater to the needs and experiences of the dominant white male (Liccardo, 2018; Liccardo et al., 2015; Liccardo & Bradbury, 2017). The terms "Majority World" and "Global South" are used interchangeably throughout this chapter to imply the geographic locations situated outside of the developed world[1] (De Sousa Santos, 2012)

To demonstrate how a dual perspective can give voice to Black South African women's experiences in accessing and participating in masculine hegemonic study and workplace confines, I first draw on decolonial thought and related insights by aligning it with Fraser's (1998; 2007a; 2007b; 2008; 2010) participatory parity framework, which incorporates three interrelated dimensions: distribution (economic), recognition (cultural), and representation (political). I utilise Quijano's (2000; 2007) conception of the coloniality of power, as well as Mignolo's (2007; 2011a) colonial matrix, to illustrate how the structures of coloniality/modernity and capitalism create unequal opportunities for accessing higher education based on the interconnection of race and class dynamics. More importantly, I aim to demonstrate how these structures

1 I use this term to highlight how the Euro-American framework has exploited and benefitted politically and economically from non-dominant bodies and spaces, in the interest of developing and advancing its respective territories through processes of slavery and colonisation both inside and outside the colony, i.e., Africans, Native Americans, and Aborigines (see Quijano, 2000). This plundering of natural resources and human labour from the South to the North created an uneven terrain, as the latter "developed" itself at the expense, misery, and suffering of the former (see Quijano, 2000). Yet, ironically, the developed North currently views its philanthropic endeavours as noble and righteous, while seeking to exclude its underdeveloped counterparts based on race and non-Western democratic values and ideals (see De Sousa Santos, 2012).

financially exclude low socio-economic township and rural aspiring female STEM scholars. As I have observed elsewhere, impoverished contexts still provide debilitating circumstances, particularly for township and rural women's access to university STEM higher education, due to the fusion of geospatiality and cultural patriarchy, which is undergirded by a meritocratic education system that works to perpetuate their exclusion (Solomons, 2024). This aligns with Fraser's (2008) identification of the distribution or economic element of social justice that must be addressed for all students to participate on an equal footing.

Secondly, I draw on key international decolonial and critical thinkers, such as Mignolo (2011a), Quijano (2007), Lugones (2007; 2008), and Mendoza (2016), as well as scholars from within the South African context, such as Mbembe (2015; 2016) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013; 2015). Additionally, I employ De Sousa Santos' (2018) notion of cognitive justice and Fricker's (2003; 2008) concept of epistemic injustice, which I link to Fraser's cultural domain of social justice. This refers to the types of situated knowledge held by Black women in higher education that have historically been, and may continue to be, deemed invalid by Eurocentric male-dominated institutions – along with how women make sense of these experiences. This approach also interrogates questions such as who are considered legitimate knowledge producers, whose linguistic identities can be relied upon and why, and how knowledge intersects with language (race, class, and gender) in matters of legitimacy. This combined theoretical lens facilitates a deeper understanding of the racialised, classed, and gendered realities that Black women both bring with them into South African higher education and that further inform their experiences and meaning-making through access and participation.

Thirdly, I integrate Lugones' (2003) conception of "World-Travelling" and pilgrimages and Anzaldúa's (2012) borderlands with Fraser's third domain of representation, as a means to give Black women in STEM a voice and a sense of belonging in further STEM studies and masculinised employment contexts. In other words, Lugones' World-Travelling and related concepts are drawn upon to show how women in male-dominated workspaces remain invisible and excluded, while often being compelled to navigate in-between spaces. Hence, this research draws on insights from critical and decolonial theory. Notably, Fraser's participatory parity framework assists in understanding the overarching mechanisms that enable or restrain equal participation in, through, and out of STEM higher education from an institutional perspective, whereas decolonial and decolonial feminist thinking allows for insight into Black women's lived realities from an onto-epistemic angle in a Majority World context. This aligns well with Mignolo's (2011a, p. 17) assertion that daily structural issues are not particularly endemic but are "being articulated through the colonial imperial difference".

In the first part of this chapter, I draw on decolonial theories, referencing Fraser's distribution element, and demonstrate how these interrelated concepts can be applied to Black women's lived experiences in preparing for STEM higher education. The second part addresses issues of knowledge politics and draws on concepts of cognitive justice and epistemic injustice in relation to Fraser's recognition dimension. This focuses on the dialectical tension between valid and invalid knowledge in Western educational enclaves, including who has a claim to knowledge and what those claims depend on in the higher education context. The third part incorporates Black decolonial feminist political thought, in conjunction with the representational dimension of Fraser's social justice model. This enables the inclusion and representation of women as knowledge producers and not mere consumers in affording minorities[2] with voice and agency in matters of equity in further STEM studies and employment contexts. I discuss each theory

2 This term suggests how non-dominant identities have been dehumanised by dominant hegemonic influences, such as conservative Western feminism, which overlooks Black, Brown, queer, and trans bodies for not fitting the standards of being white, bourgeois, and feminine (see Lugones, 2007). In this way, minority identities and non-dominant ones are still vilified and regarded as unequal and inferior (Vergès, 2021).

in turn and draw links and inferences between each but first provide a rationale for using both as analytical lenses.

A Rationale for Critical Theory and Decolonial Thought

Since I seek to merge two distinct schools of thought, decoloniality and social justice, both of which converge on untangling salient aspects of inequality, it is important to outline their differences. I provided a recent example of how this can be achieved (see Solomons, 2025), since the former investigates the origins of social (in)justice, while the latter highlights the repercussions that result from such inequality (Adam, 2020). Pertaining to the former, Runyan (2018) contends that ignoring colonialism implicates us in ongoing violence that continues to affect already deprived groups and individuals. It therefore becomes essential to foreground the role of (de)colonisation in our analytical interpretation and conceptualisation of rising inequality and oppression (Mignolo, 2011a; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, 2016; Shepherd, 2018). Another matter of contention arises from the omission of how the coloniality of gender continues to shape the lived experiences of women and non-hetero bodies in the developing world. As Chávez (2019, p. 190) points out, by overlooking the historical arrangements relating to gender, we leave its colonial dimension intact and "undisturbed", which allows it to persist into contemporary challenges, such as gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide.

Moreover, Fraser's (2008) social justice paradigm omits the processes of coloniality and their implications in her theorisation of inequality and social justice. De Sousa Santos (2012, p. 48) further argues that this omission "takes on a derivative character which allows it to engage in debate, but not to discuss the terms of the debate, let alone explain why it opts for one kind of a debate and not another". Adam (2020) highlights the limitations of both coloniality and the concept of participatory parity in addressing the social justice phenomenon and suggests that the adoption of both can serve as a novel framework in our theorisation of inequality. I thus adopted this bifocal approach to ascertain how both historical and current underlying structural mechanisms impact the ability of underserved student communities to fully access and participate in higher education, and what implications may arise from this. Decolonial and participatory parity theories have been widely used, both individually and in conjunction with other frameworks across sociology, social work, education, and psychology. However, from my understanding, very little work has been done to bring these two frameworks together to develop new ways of theorising social justice and gender equity in higher education settings, particularly in the Global South. Given that both phenomena remain pernicious and problematic, especially in Majority World contexts that exhibit remnants of historical ills against the majority of society, it is imperative that we explore new ways of articulating our conceptualisation of both (in)equity and social (in)justice (Mutekwe, 2014). For example, as Lister (2007) observes, Fraser's participatory approach has primarily been geared towards addressing inequality in developed contexts, omitting salient features relating to poverty and injustices in the Majority World. Therefore, we need additional lenses that address coloniality, geospatially, and rurality that affect the developing world and its people (Masinire, 2020; Mignolo, 2011a, 2011b; Omodan, 2022; Timmis et al., 2022).

Coloniality/Modernity Nexus and the Coloniality of Gender

I unpack what various decolonial scholars refer to as the coloniality/modernity entanglement, which is responsible for the interrelated systems of oppression faced by non-Western subjects due to colonialism. Coloniality is distinct from colonialism in that it is an extension and an ongoing process of colonisation (Baker, 2012). Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 43) argues that it "refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations". For Mignolo (2011a, p. 17), the process of ongoing coloniality operates within a "colonial matrix, [that consists] of interconnected heterogeneous historic-structural nodes crossed by colonial and imperial differences and by the underlying logic that secures those connections". Consequently, it has been nearly impossible to eradicate the remnants of coloniality altogether. As De Sousa Santos (2018, p. 109) argues, the post-colonial process has merely been altered in its "form", but not in its substance. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 488) describes it as "an invisible power structure, an epochal condition, and an epistemological design, which lies at the centre of the present Euro-North American-centric modern world". Other decolonial scholars refer to this phenomenon as the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2011a), as it sustains the ongoing "wicked problems" (Hopwood, 2019, p. 266) that particularly affect disadvantaged communities. This is what Carter (2012) refers to as "stubborn roots" in her work paralleling educational inequalities in both the United States of America and South Africa – two distinctly similar unequal contexts.

To contextualise inequality from both historical and colonial processes, it is necessary to carefully examine the coloniality/modernity nexus to understand the underpinning mechanisms involved in issues of oppression and social (in) justice (Quijano, 2000, 2007; Mignolo, 2007, 2011a). Critical decolonial scholars, particularly those from the modernity-coloniality schools of thought, largely agree that coloniality and Western modernity are one and the same phenomenon (Icaza, 2017; Mignolo, 2007). Both remain rooted in Eurocentric agendas (Mignolo, 2013), are deeply intertwined, and work in tandem to achieve similar goals in structuring the entire global landscape (Escobar, 1995; Quijano, 2000, 2007; Mignolo, 2011a). To illustrate this, Mignolo (2007, p. 450) asserts that the sinister "rhetoric that naturalizes 'modernity' as a universal global process and point of arrival hides its darker side, the constant reproduction of 'coloniality'". This is evident in the case of racial identity and the exploitation of labour, which give rise to processes of capitalism and the constant need for the accumulation of wealth (Quijano, 2000). Moreover, for coloniality to be successful, it is heavily reliant on the establishment of boundaries and the creation of binaries, such as North–South, Black–White, and Male–Female (Amin, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013), as a means of subjugation and enslavement in crafting a utopian West (Quijano, 2000; 2007). This provides a lens through which the entire world could be viewed (Quijano, 2000; De Sousa Santos, 2018; Tlostanova, 2010) and a "mirror in which Europe, as an identity and culture, could recognise itself as modern" (Aman, 2016, p. 101). According to Mignolo (2011a; 2013), this standard can be regarded as Western modernity. This standard not only pertains to how the terms are set out, but also to the content of relations between coloniser and colonised, and North and South (Mignolo, 2011a). It suggests that Western modernity is unable to provide solutions for the problems it has created (Escobar, 2004). Hence, for Aman (2016, p. 101), there lies a sinister motive behind reasonings from the West such as "'salvation', 'development' and 'progress', or, to put it differently, coloniality".

The hierarchisation and categorisation of various identity markers are also essential in our analysis of the hegemony of wealth accumulation (Quijano, 2000; 2007) and the processes of the coloniality of gender (Lugones, 2007; 2008; 2010). In the case of the former, the hegemony of wealth accumulation can be seen as a structure that emerged with the colonisation and expansion of the imperial world by exploiting Black labour and physical power in the colonies for the benefit of the empire (Grosfoguel, 2011, 2020; Quijano, 2007). Quijano (2000) notes that the processes of Western modernity are prevalent throughout the globe, where the standard is set for cheap labour, leading businesses to offshore operations to save costs, while it remains morally acceptable to desire something from someone for next to nothing in return (capitalism). Therefore, as De Sousa Santos (2018, p. 109) states, "capitalism cannot exert its domination except in articulation with colonialism".

De Sousa Santos (2018) takes this a step further by locating the ways in which gender as a construct has been shaped and influenced by the structures of colonisation (see also Lugones, 2007; Tlostanova, 2010; Mendoza, 2016), articulating heteronormativity among both colonised men and women, as well as further complementing the hierarchical colonial system (Lugones, 2008; 2010). Here, enslaved and colonised women were unable to stake any claims in economic matters and were particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation by both colonisers and colonised men (Mendoza, 2016; Vergès, 2021). Moreover, in this classification, gender was further inscribed into neat categories of those who possess a gender and those who are non-gendered (Lugones, 2003; 2007). Similarly, Fraser (2007a) draws a parallel by untangling the nexus between work and gender, as we will see later in her framing. She argues that women are most at risk of exploitation, with class and race as defining categories in the intensity of that risk. Her argument stems from the concept of the "labour of love" or unpaid work that Black women often endure; not only caring for their own offspring but also for those of their white masters.

Subaltern women (Spivak, 2010), particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, are not afforded the opportunity to economically participate on par with their male counterparts due to gender-organising principles established through the processes of colonisation, which invalidate and dehumanise Black femininity in general. This often manifests in various impoverished contexts in South Africa, where the girl child is frequently burdened by household duties while contending with patriarchal expectations, which affects her schoolwork and impedes her ability to secure funding and a place in STEM higher education, due to its competitive nature (Solomons, 2024). This is why decolonial feminist theorists conclude that subaltern women are often regarded as "genderless", not only because their situatedness and social experiences (ontologies) are invalidated by colonial systems of oppression (Bhambra, 2020; Hlabangane, 2018; Segalo, 2015; Segalo & Fine, 2020), but also because their humanity is called into question (Lugones, 2007, 2008; Segalo & Fine, 2020). Various scholars have highlighted the human/non-human binary that lies at the heart of the colonial system in its inscription of race, class, and gender (Lugones, 2008; Wynter & McKittrick, 2015).

Higher education institutions continue to subscribe to the colonial order in their subjugation of anyone who does not fit into the mould of the dominant group (De Sousa Santos, 2020b), particularly in white masculine spaces (Liccardo & Bradbury, 2017). The liberal individual, neoliberal system (Luckett & Naicker, 2016), and the "plastic university" (Keet, 2014; 2018) as remnants of coloniality (Bell, 2018) should be critically interrogated, where markets, profits, and merits determine who is included and who is not (Liccardo, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, 2016), while remaining reflexive (Ndlovu, 2017), self-aware (Hlabangane, 2018; see also Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016), historical, and political (Keet, 2018). Keet (2018, p. 20) argues that,

> the 'origin' of the university, from which it has detached itself, is plastic: flexible, with an inscribed transformative ability rooted in the 'nature' of the knowledge and the disciplines with which it works. The university's essence is transformability. As our ways of disciplining the university have concealed this essence, the decolonial turn, with its circulations, in my reading, is a call to excavate the plasticity of the university … a kind of unburdening of epistemic freedom as a key notion in any definition on the decolonisation of knowledge.

Hence, the "delinking" from the shackles of colonialism and its properties that Mignolo (2007; 2011b) advocates for remains pivotal in assessing the inequalities created by a Western view of education. He adds that, in counteracting the dominant Western/Eurocentric ways of being and becoming in institutions, subaltern knowledge can be centred to allow the subaltern subject to evade the Western gaze to which it is constantly subjected. In this regard, Davies (2016, p. 42) suggests that knowledge is "multi-dimensional" in essence – operating in different ways and manners, emerging in relation to varying experiences, and "does not necessarily imply the need to be explicit". Knowledge is both epistemic and political and is always situated from a gendered (Haraway, 1988), as well as from a colonial "other" perspective (**De Sousa** Santos, 2012; see also Escobar, 2004; 2007)**,** created through prisms of identity and experience and informed by our intersectional bodies, ethnicity, age, disability, and habitus.

Cognitive Justice and Epistemic Injustice

Visvanathan (2005; 2006) introduced and developed the concept of cognitive justice and De Sousa Santos (2007a; 2007b; 2008; 2009; 2018) later furthered its relevance in the context of the ongoing struggle for decolonisation and knowledge parity. Cognitive justice calls for a transformation in how diverse knowledges can be viewed as legitimate (Boni & Velasco, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; De Sousa Santos, 2018) and equal, to the extent that "subaltern" or non-dominant knowledges are not merely tolerated or even dismissed, but are substantively recognised (Visvanathan, 2005; 2021). Visvanathan (2006) argues that such a possibility will only occur through cooperative principles, whereby we should strive at all costs to disrupt dominant forms of knowledge imperialism. By seeking to disentangle the various entities embedded in both dominant and non-dominant forms of knowledge, we can recalibrate what Oyedemi (2020) sees as a polycentric decolonial framework. Oyedemi (2020) avers that polycentricism calls for all voices and knowledge to be made visible in order to advance the efforts of a decolonised university.

Moreover, such frameworks include Afrocentric epistemologies, such as conceptions of "Ubuntu"[3] (Letseka, 2012; Ramose, 2020). For Letseka (2012, p. 48) Ubuntu "translates as humanness, personhood and morality". In other words, it emphasises that "the flourishing of one human being is not separate from the flourishing of all other", which makes it particularly "transformative" (Cornell & Van Marle, 2015, p. 5). Chilisa (2020, p. 25) notes that as Africans, "Ubuntu offers an example of how the researcher's ethical and moral obligation" undergirded by his/her obligation towards his fellow men are often interlocked with subjective reality and epistemic

3 This refers to an African way of being in the world with others, as well as with oneself (Chilisa, 2020), and has key tenets rooted in communalism, forgiveness, sharing, and reciprocity. It remains epistemic and can be regarded as a buffer against the social, political, and economic oppression that result from individualism, neoliberalism, and capitalism, all of which have called into question the humanity of those on the fringes of society (see Letseka, 2012).

awareness. "This also underscores the interconnectedness in the I/we relationship, where 'hierarchy' is discouraged" (Chilisa, 2020, p.25).

Yet, there remains tension between various factions regarding the applicability of Ubuntu as a moral philosophy of care in addressing contemporary challenges related to structural and gendered inequalities (Chisale, 2018; Letseka, 2012). Kubow and Min (2016), for example, concluded that African female teachers felt more aligned with Westernised ideals of individual sovereignty in schooling than with the ideological constructions of communalism and Africanism. However, upon closer examination of Western modernity and the meaning of being liberal, Letseka (2016) problematises these arguments as shortsighted and superficial. He further argues that "mainly due to the unintended consequences of [past] colonialism and imperialism, liberalism has mutated into new forms such that there is no single view that can be said to define what it means to be a liberal" (Letseka, 2012, p. 2; see also Fricker, 2013). Nevertheless, various scholars have commented on the value of alternative epistemologies, such as Ubuntu, as an antidote to a plethora of historically based injustices and the ongoing entrenchment of neo-colonial and neoliberal ideals in African societies (Gouws & Van Zyl, 2015; Higgs, 2016; Nicolaides, 2015; Ramose, 2020). This transformative potential further involves an ethics of care, which can be aligned with more liberal principles to help rectify past injustices, illuminating not only its philosophical orientation but also exposing its ideological and political ideals (Gouws & Van Zyl, 2015).

The concept of different knowledge systems, such as Ubuntu, should be regarded as dynamic, co-existing with other epistemologies and ways of being, rather than being viewed in isolation (Visvanathan, 2021). De Sousa Santos (2007a; 2018) coined this idea as the "ecologies of knowledge", wherein if one particular system fails to adequately address an issue, an alternative framework can be relied upon (Escobar, 2020; Ramose, 2020; De Sousa Santos, 2007a, 2008, 2018, 2020b). For example, if Western medicine cannot provide a solution to a problem, we may turn to traditional medicine or even a combination of the two. Escobar (2020, p. 43) and De Sousa Santos (2018) refer to multiple ways of knowing within the cosmos of knowledges as the "pluriverse". Moreover, drawing on a plurality of perspectives will bring us a step closer to achieving true transformation in the context of the decolonisation agenda (Bhambra, 2020; De Sousa Santos, 2018, 2020a).

To achieve knowledge equity, Leibowitz (2017a) advocates for a relational understanding of various epistemological practices that exist among groups, depending on the amount of power and influence being wielded. This raises the question of how those from lower socio-economic backgrounds generate knowledge and what such knowledge means for them compared to their upper-class counterparts. Furthermore, who has access to dominant knowledge that contributes to the global structure and power dynamics at play, and at whose expense? (Leibowitz, 2017b).

De Sousa Santos (2007a; 2012; 2018; 2020a; 2020b) urges us to critically examine the influence of coloniality on the subversion of other forms of knowledge, suggesting that it is imperative to understand "the intimate connection between the epistemic project and the imperial political project that construct the other as a non-human being, devoid of either knowledge or aesthetic sentiment" (De Sousa Santos, 2020a, p. 119). He argues that an "abyssal line" is constructed, whereby Western colonial knowledge, culture, and understanding on one side are viewed as human and valid, while on the other side, non-human epistemologies exist that should be disregarded and rejected (De Sousa Santos, 2007a, 2020b; Bhambra, 2020; see also Escobar, 1995; Tlostanova, 2010). This abyssal line creates a divide between so-called "true knowledge" (scientific and Western understanding) and "false knowledge" (that espoused by marginalised communities daily, which become erased in the process of knowledge subversion and silencing) (Bhambra, 2020; Leibowitz, 2017a, 2017b; Waghid & Hibbert, 2018). Imperial "sociability is thus the mode of operation of modern domination between unequal human beings, i.e., between fully fledged human beings and sub-human beings" (De Sousa Santos, 2020a, p. 119).

Similarly, Fanon (1986) categorises the experiences of individuals into the zones of being and non-being. Those who do not fit a Western understanding and outlook on life are relegated to the zone of non-being, which raises questions about their humanity. Conversely, those who neatly fit this mould occupy the zone of being and are deemed fully human. This further implies that the ultimate goal is to attain the zone of being, where experiences and sentiments are humanised, even if it means denying core aspects of one's own identity in emulating another; for example, Black bodies adopting whiteness, Eurocentrism, and Westernisation as means to validate their humanity (Gordon, 2005).

Others implicate the establishment of Western institutional values in "enclosing knowledge, limiting access to knowledge, exerting a form of control over knowledge and providing the means for a small elite to acquire this knowledge for the purposes of leadership of a spiritual, governance or cultural nature" (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 8), through the enlightenment agenda that has spread across the globe (Mignolo, 2011b; Small, 2012), initially by "Christian theology [standards, and later by] secular Reason" (Mignolo, 2011a, p. 16) through a conduit of Western philosophers and thinkers that shape our understanding of the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021). Nevertheless, Western knowledge also poses its own limitations, despite the elaborate universalism it has created. As Leibowitz (2017a, p. 101) states:

> The hegemony of Western knowledge is problematic in five respects: it is embedded in relations of violence and imposition; it is embedded in relations of social inequality; it is interwoven with dynamics of alienation; it lacks a foil to counter its own excesses and show up its weaknesses; and it is inadequate on its own to solve questions that require attention.

Fricker (2003; 2008) introduced the concept of epistemic injustice, encouraging a re-evaluation of whose knowledge is considered valid in the interests of epistemic and knowledge diversity. Epistemic injustice reveals how non-dominant ways of knowing have been decentred due to Western biases and prejudices (Fricker, 2008). Fricker (2013, p. 1320) argues that this refers to an individual being treated unfairly as a "knower", or rather what she terms an "epistemic subject", due to an "unjust deficit or credibility" afforded to them. Fraser (2001; 2007a) views the invalidation of non-dominant forms of knowledge as an injustice of misrecognition, which arises from the interplay of both class and culture. Dominant groups, regardless of race, enter institutions while sustaining and reinforcing the prevailing status quo, often at the expense of their lower socio-economic counterparts. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as an institutional habitus, as articulated by Bourdieu (1984; 1987) and further explored by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), as well as more recent research by Carter (2003; 2012). Moreover, Fricker (2013) categorises epistemic injustice into two types: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice.

Testimonial injustice undermines the credibility of the knowledge bearer based on external characteristics, which renders their word or understanding marginal or inferior, thus preventing them from reliably conveying facts and truths (Fricker, 2008). Fricker (2013, p. 1319) notes that this typically occurs "when a speaker receives a deficit of credibility owing to the operation of prejudice". This suggests that a subaltern individual is regarded as less equal, and their words are likely to be seen as misrepresentations simply because of who they are and what they represent, including factors such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

Hermeneutical injustice refers to "when a subject who is already hermeneutically marginalized (that is, they belong to a group which does not have access to equal participation in the generation of social meanings) is thereby put at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of a significant area of their social experience" (Fricker, 2013, p. 1319). Here, the idea is that when a marginalised person (e.g., non-white, non-hegemonic) is surrounded by a dominant group (e.g., white, hegemonic), their ability to make sense of or construct meaning around their own unique social experiences is inhibited due to the domination effect (Fricker, 2008; 2013). Fricker (2013, p. 1319) points out that varying degrees of hermeneutical injustice, including its severity and seriousness, often occur in instances where the status quo and norms of a group usually determine which members wield power and who are subjected to such power, which in turn can inadvertently produce and reinforce the dominant hegemony. She also suggests that there remains a “hermeneutical gap” in which the victim of such injustice is not in a position to make sense of their injuries, or they may be able to comprehend the injustice and relay such experiences to others but may struggle to articulate it to institutions of authority. Moreover, for Fricker (2013), both forms of epistemic injustice are often responsible for the discrimination and ultimate prevention of equal participation by actors who are bearers of their unique epistemic reasoning. Fricker (2013) further coins the term “distributive epistemic injustice”, which refers to the lack of education or information for all, relating to injuries pertaining to equity and social (in) justice in society.

World-Travelling, Pilgrimages, and Borderlands

According to decolonial feminist insights, variations among women were constructed and established with the advent of the colonial era (Grosfoguel, 2011), marked by the onset of the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000), whereby racialised and enslaved women were regarded as unequal to their dominant white bourgeois counterparts (Davis, 2019). This inequality arises from the privileges afforded to a certain group of women through the “logics of purity”, which determine the classed and racialised reproduction of white middle-class men (Spelman, 2019). It is evident in the violence instituted against non-dominant women and non-cisgender individuals at the hands of their dominant counterparts, as well as in how the latter are primarily deemed more privileged than Black men in the hierarchical structure of society (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2020). Lugones (1987) thus proposes the phenomenon of World-Travelling for two important reasons: firstly, it allows dominant bodies to truly experience "other" worlds, and secondly, it ensures that female bodies are marked as playful in the various worlds they occupy across interstices of difference, whether we identify as white/Anglo feminist or view ourselves as Black, Brown, hybrid, decolonial, mestiza, Dalit, queer, or trans (Velez, 2019; Vergès, 2021). She reiterates that this will enable all those who identify as women, including men of colour, to share in one another's struggles in forging a path towards acceptance and tolerance across boundaries of difference, as well as to establish a platform for deeper coalitional work in fighting oppression, which I will return to later.

In her theorisation, Lugones (1987; 2003) conceptualises a "world" as something real, actual, and occupied by "flesh and blood". It may be a community or even a small stratum of the broader society, but it should embody the lived realities of "crossing lines of gender, race, and class difference, as well as ability, where those lines mark social hierarchy" (Price, 2019, p. 220). Hence, the act of World-Travelling comprises workplaces previously dominated by white and Black upper- to middle-class men and examines how non-dominant outlier groups experience such "worlds" (Lugones, 2003). Moreover, being situated on the fringes of dominant worlds further generates an epistemic shift for the world-traveller (Ortega, 2006; 2016), since Anzaldúa (2012) demonstrates how the new mestiza reduces the scope for taking up space in both dominant and non-dominant "worlds". This multitude of identities possessed by the mestiza coalesces to produce oppressive encounters and instances of dehumanisation in both dominant and non-dominant worlds, leaving her to traverse the borderlands. Anzaldúa (2012, p. 102). states:

> As a mestiza I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is a queer of me in all races).

In the above, Anzaldúa (2012) draws our attention to how the coloniality of gender, in all its guises, is unable to accommodate her multiplicities selves. The mestiza thus remains a world-traveller or one who constantly occupies in-between worlds (Ortega, 2016). Moreover, these travelling selves create an opening and awareness for "identities [to be understood] as real and multiple, but impermanent and socially constructed, in the self and others", as Zaytoun (2019, p. 60) notes. Therefore, occupying such "in-betweenness" (Ortega, 2016, p. 198), which non-dominant bodies are subjected to, further exposes their vulnerability to the violence meted out by heteronormative masculinity and their "arrogant perceptions", belonging to both races and backgrounds, in traditionally male-dominated work contexts (Lugones, 2003). Since the traveller is compelled to occupy spaces that were not historically intended to accommodate her, she is thus further confronted with feelings ranging "from rage to despair and from insecurity to inflexibility" (Ortega, 2001, p. 4). This is why Lugones (2003) sees Black women occupying worlds that present implications for their onto-epistemic being and belonging, either being playful or unplayful, as a consequence. In other words, due to the tension arising from their positionalities, women of colour are compelled to forge different personas while travelling back and forth between worlds, as well as dwelling in such spaces simultaneously (Lugones, 1987). As Anzaldúa (2012, pp. 101-102) attests, these outliers take on a "subject-object duality" in "developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity". For example, they must succumb to the values, norms, practices, and ideological constructions that reproduce their status as a non-dominant "other". In addition, as Keating (2019, pp. 241-242) maintains, it further ensures a nuanced complexity associated with liminality by underscoring "the heterogeneity of people's positioning in relationship to power, and underscores the interlocking, intersecting, and intermeshing of multiple forms of oppression in people's lives" while travelling to "other" worlds. The layered embodiments of the non-dominant selves thus enable them to become the subject of oppression at times, as well as the raison d'être for such oppression at other times.

Furthermore, it remains pivotal in building solidarity, as well as opening ourselves up to "worlds" occupied by another's onto-epistemological understanding of what it is to become the "other" in a multitude of worlds, as Lugones (2003) insists. This comprises establishing deeper levels of coalition building in "amplifying" and illuminating the oppressive and subjugated realities of racialised women (Keating, 2019, p. 242). This is particularly important for heterosexual men of colour in establishing coalitions of partnership with women of colour and "other" non-hetero/cisgendered bodies in "delinking from the logics of colonial domination", as Chávez (2019) points out, given that it is through such entrenchment associated with the colonial imbrication of gender that non-dominant men and women are prevented from creating deeper understandings in mitigating and fighting all forms of oppression (Keating, 2019, p. 248). In doing so, it establishes a platform for Black men, but also white women, to open themselves up to unique perspectives from "worlds" uninhabited by both, since engaging in such alliances "is part of knowing them and knowing them is part of loving them", as Lugones (2003, p. 93) eloquently summarises. Furthermore, for the former, it aids in mitigating against GBV against already oppressed female bodies, whereby the fusion of race and patriarchy still bears a colonial nature and character, while for the latter, it should transcend purposes of voyeurism or "academic" research and should bear the promises of genuine self-discovery and a longing to see through the eyes of the "other" and not merely being motivated by curiosity (Price, 2019, p. 233).

The next section discusses Fraser's participatory parity framework.

Participatory Parity

Fraser (2007a; 2007b; 2008) developed her participatory parity model as a comprehensive approach to enable social justice among individuals and groups, as well as to illustrate how people can fully participate in society as equals. She articulates her framework through three areas: distribution, recognition, and representation. Her model provides key insights into the reasons why certain individuals are granted access and full participation while others are excluded from society, along with the implications for equitable participation (Hölscher & Bozalek, 2020). Although her model is relevant to society as a whole, various scholars have applied her work within the South African educational context (see Bozalek & Carolissen, 2012; Clowes et al., 2017; Garraway, 2017; Dykes, 2018; Khan, 2019) and beyond (Cazden, 2012; Keddie, 2012; Vincent et al., 2021), and with many others calling for it to be used more widely in educational contexts that are starkly unequal (Hlengwa et al., 2018; Hölscher & Bozalek, 2020; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016; Sobuwa & McKenna, 2019).

The South African context is just one example of egregious inequality. Luckett and Naicker (2016) argue that due to the vast inequalities [in places like South Africa], it is important to recognise the constrained agency of universities as institutions of civil society – they are not able to completely compensate for society, nor can they fully interpret the social reproduction of inequalities – nor will their internal public spheres ever be perfectly just and democratic.

Fraser's (2008) model provides us with a platform to understand the inherent inequalities that restrict, impede, or even enable certain individuals in their participation as full members in higher education. She developed her theoretical model on social justice by initially accounting for economic (distribution) and cultural (recognition) dimensions (Fraser, 1997a; 1997b; 1998). It was only much later that she decided to introduce the political dimension (representation) to provide a more robust framework for guiding our understanding of social justice (Fraser, 2007b; Zurn, 2003). The participatory parity model is particularly useful for understanding the plight of underrepresented groups' access and participation in dominant institutional contexts, including race, class, and gender in STEM.

Fraser's (2007b; 2008; 2010) participatory parity model centres on three dimensions: access to resources (distribution), consideration of diversity and acknowledgement of various worldviews and outlooks (recognition), and inclusion in decision making that affects the individual (representation). This trivalent aspect "either mitigates against or contributes to social justice" (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016, p. 112). Moreover, Fraser (1998) views these three dimensions as distinct yet interdependent, although not reducible to one another. She maintains that there can be no distribution or recognition without representation (Fraser, 2007b). This suggests that one cannot be substituted for the other, and each analytical account must be considered for social justice to be fully realised (Fraser, 2008).

Distribution

Fraser (1998) posits that for equitable participation in society, economic resources must be distributed both equally and fairly. This assertion highlights the significant disparities between the Global North and its less affluent counterparts, with intersectional identities playing a pivotal role in this divide (Fraser, 1995; 2010). In educational contexts, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are often inadequately prepared to engage as full agents in learning and teaching processes alongside their more privileged peers, primarily due to a lack of necessary economic or material resources. This situation results in a maldistribution of resources (Bozalek & Carolissen, 2012; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016). Consequently, to address maldistribution, the distributive element aims to ascertain whether individuals have unobstructed access to financial resources that will enable their full participation (Fraser, 2007a). In pursuing this goal, it seeks to identify structures and processes that hinder an individual's ability to acquire economic resources, such as "exploitative work or lack of access to income generating work and disparities in work, leisure time and responsibilities" (Bozalek & Hochfeld, 2016, p. 201). All these factors are considered in the effort to ensure the redistribution of material and economic resources to create a level playing field (Fraser, 1998).

The stark reminder of neoliberalism, disguised as equity in promoting a level playing field in education, is nothing short of a myth (Fraser et al., 2004). In fact, neoliberal ideologies concerning service delivery, such as education, have become individualised issues rather than being recognised as a moral public good (Hölscher & Bozalek, 2020). This perspective assumes an identical starting point for all individuals, irrespective of the historical and structural factors that contribute to the marginalisation and exclusion of certain groups (Cross, 2009; Bozalek & Boughey, 2012; Badat & Sayed, 2014; see also Fraser, 1995). This is particularly relevant to the South African context, where the legacies of both colonialism and apartheid have resulted in a largely fragmented society, not only along the lines of race but also significantly influenced by social class issues. Specifically, educational financing during apartheid was egregiously inequitable due to the segregated nature of white versus non-white educational spaces (Badat & Sayed, 2014). This suggests that Black educational institutions in the new democratic dispensation have been less able to catch up and remain on par with their former white counterparts, owing to generations of underfunding and a lack of skills and knowledge to manage their own financial affairs (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012).

Moreover, during the current dispensation, universities find themselves at a disjuncture between social transformation and redress on one side and their own economic interests on the other, which leaves many disadvantaged groups in precarious situations when accessing institutions (Botsis et al., 2013; Cross, 2009). This often impacts whether students from resource-deprived contexts possess the necessary resources to support their learning needs, particularly during unprecedented periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as the demand for technological learning and teaching exacerbates and intensifies these realities (Czerniewicz et al., 2020; Le Grange, 2020; Mpungose, 2020). Additionally, due to the significant disparity in educational opportunities available to various groups, Cross (2009) asserts that this further entrenches a hierarchised society – one that promotes and values a distinctive group and class structure that perpetuates power differentials (Botsis et al., 2013; Matsehela, 2018). Consequently, Fraser's (1998;

2007a) insights resonate with how the experiences of socio-economically challenged students regarding access to resources and equitable participation in higher education can be adversely affected. In other words, the distribution element necessitates a narrowing of the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" to eliminate issues of class status and to ensure that all individuals can enjoy the benefits of a democracy and participate equally (Fraser & Bedford, 2008). Furthermore, a particularly contentious issue for South Africa is that social class continues to exhibit a racial dimension (Naidoo, 2004; Ngoasheng & Gachago, 2017; Van Zyl, 2016). These issues are elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.

To contextualise the aforementioned, the 2015/2016 student uprisings, specifically the #FeesMustFall and subsequent #RhodesMustFall movements, emerged as critical encounters in revealing racialised and classed incongruences in South African higher education, as well as on an international scale. The former movement advocated for free education in response to the inflated costs of university education, which restrict access to higher education. Matsehela (2018) asserts that institutions are disconnected from the lived realities of impoverished students, rendering them incapable of providing adequate support, which in turn leads to student unrest. For instance, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are often required to travel long distances to initiate the application process, whether for attending interviews or submitting portfolios in support of their university applications (Khan, 2019; Matsehela, 2018). Furthermore, the scarcity of technological resources presents significant challenges for marginalised students attempting to submit online university funding and residence applications. In numerous instances, indigent students find themselves isolated in their efforts to make ends meet in residential settings (Khan, 2019; Le Grange, 2020; Matsehela, 2018), frequently being compelled to accept exploitative casual employment (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016) or seeking temporary accommodation prior to securing university residences (Khan, 2019; Walker, 2018), often while taking responsibility for younger siblings and elderly parents at home (Khan, 2019; Pather & Chetty, 2015).

Some students are burdened with the role of being de facto parents for their younger siblings due to the death of a parent or other circumstances, which limits their ability to engage in activities that could enrich their academic pursuits during their free time (Lareau, 2011, 2015; Pather & Chetty, 2015). Moreover, Van Zyl (2016) contends that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are disproportionately affected by attrition as they navigate their university journey. Van Zyl (2016, p. 3) posits that "many talented students in South Africa find themselves constrained by finances and, as a result, unable to translate their potential into actual performance". Such factors became evident in the student protests of 2021, during which students demanded unrestricted access to university for all those facing financial difficulties, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted these inequalities. At the onset of the 2021 academic year, students threatened to shut down all public universities in South Africa should their demands remain unaddressed. Higher education institutions subsequently engaged in mediation with student leaders and Student Representative Councils to develop a pathway forward in financially supporting resource-deprived students.

In addition, the issue of gender, when considered in conjunction with race and class, assumes a distinct yet subjective dimension (Chilisa, 2020; Davis, 2019; Mama, 1995; Tlostanova, 2010). Fraser (1998) argues that the situation may be particularly dire for women from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds, as they are expected to undertake additional responsibilities such as caregiving and household duties, without any form of economic redistribution. Fraser (1998, p. 2) states:

> From the distributive perspective, gender is a basic organizing principle of the economic structure of society. On the one hand, it structures the fundamental division between paid 'productive' labor and unpaid 'reproductive' and domestic labor, assigning women primary responsibility for the latter. On the other hand, gender also structures the division within paid labor

> between higher-paid, male dominated, manufacturing and professional occupations and lower-paid, female dominated 'pink collar' and domestic service occupations. The result is an economic structure that generates gender-specific forms of distributive injustice.

Extending Fraser's gender lens to low SES female students specifically, as Helman and Ratele (2016) point out, these individuals are more likely to be expected to engage in domestic and caregiving responsibilities at home, in comparison to their male counterparts, which impacts their academic progress and the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities and socialisation benefits. Shefer et al. (2012) also identify that female students from low SES backgrounds are often particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation in exchange for pocket money and low-value gifts. Consequently, the overburdening of duties without financial compensation produces a ripple effect, which culminates in broader psycho-social issues, such as a lack of motivation to concentrate on academic studies (Bozalek & Leibowitz, 2012; Clowes et al., 2017). The plight of marginalised women in higher education, especially within male-dominated Western contexts, necessitates an analytical approach that considers both the dimensions of distribution and recognition (Fraser, 2007a; Fraser & Bedford, 2008). The oppression of Black women in the Majority World is often characterised by a duality – one aspect concerns economic maldistribution, while the other pertains to cultural misrecognition, particularly regarding societal expectations that normalise men as breadwinners (Czerniewicz et al., 2020; Fraser, 1998; Khan, 2019).

A further example of how the effects of maldistribution intermingle with misrecognition in the context of gender can be observed in the 2015/2016 student unrest (Davids, 2016; Xaba, 2017). Findings affirm that, while female students of colour were actively advocating alongside their male counterparts for the right to a free education and for curriculum reforms, they were simultaneously subjected to sexual abuse, where their feminine attributes were perceived as inferior, thus misrecognised and sexually exploitable (Khan, 2017; Xaba, 2017).

Recognition

Recognition pertains to the manner in which differences in physical appearance or visible characteristics, such as cultural affinities in institutional contexts, are addressed in ways that either hinder or promote participatory parity for all (Fraser, 1997b; 2000; 2001). This is contingent upon the respective identity markers an individual possesses, such as race, class, and sexual orientation/identity, among others, which take on various forms in the valuation (recognition) or devaluation (misrecognition) of such characteristics. In other words, recognition, within Fraser's framework, considers how different sets of epistemologies and even ontologies are perceived and regarded by institutions in critically examining institutional responses to such perceived differences. In this regard, Fraser (2008, p. 405) notes that "people can be prevented from interacting on terms of parity by institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value that deny them the requisite standing; in that case they suffer from status inequality or misrecognition". Common examples of recognition within institutional contexts involve whether student linguistic identities are valued and promoted, or otherwise (Clowes et al., 2017), and how prevailing structures influence the dominant cultural landscape, which often reflects the perspectives of a small minority. Recognising linguistic identity exclusions could, in turn, underscore the relevance of promoting the practice of multilingualism within the South African higher education context and how such an initiative could positively contribute to enhancing student identity formation, yielding improved academic outcomes, and thereby reducing the achievement gap between different groups and ethnicities (Carter, 2012). The broader structural frameworks and normative institutional policies therefore remain predominantly focused on the hetero-cisgendered white, Christian male and his needs and experiences (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016). Indeed, it is through such patriarchal structural frameworks that heteronormativity and masculinity as social constructs are perpetuated in universities (Ngabaza et al., 2018; Shefer, 2016; Shefer et al., 2012).

Fraser (2000; 2001) makes a clear distinction regarding identity politics and how identity theorists frame the issue of recognition. She provides her account of the conceptualisation of recognition by arguing that identity politics remain more concerned with group dynamics and how such collective entities are perceived, including the psychological effects experienced by members and the group as a whole (Fraser, 2000). This traditional framework, on the one hand, often depends heavily on "a single, drastically simplified group identity, which denies the complexity of people's lives, the multiplicity of their identifications and the cross-pulls of their various affiliations" (Fraser, 2001, p. 24). However, Fraser's (2000; 2007a) model of recognition is, on the other hand, more centred around what she refers to as status subordination, as opposed to identity. She argues that scrutinising the impact that institutional cultural patterns have on an individual's marked characteristics would either promote or impede equal participation. She suggests that the act of misrecognition is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down upon or devalued in others' attitudes, beliefs or representations. It is rather to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction, as a consequence of institutionalised patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem (Fraser, 2000, pp. 113–114).

To be misrecognised therefore pertains more to the dynamics involved in social interactions shaped by overarching patterns that are responsible for excluding and occluding identities perceived to "misfit", rather than the psychological impact of such identities by institutions (Fraser, 1997b; Fraser et al., 2004). Misrecognition also operates distinctly from maldistribution, as it requires its own analytical lens and should not be reduced, although it may be analysed in relation to it (Fraser, 1997b; Fraser et al., 2004). Fraser (1998; 2007a) maintains that there is often an intersection, an overlapping, and even an influencing of the analytical dimensions, although each stands in its own right and should not be substituted for the other, thereby refraining from reducing one at the expense of the other. She strongly cautions against this and even critiques feminist interpretations by asserting that "it is no longer clear that feminist struggles for recognition are serving to deepen and enrich struggles for egalitarian redistribution" (Fraser, 2007a, p. 24).

Moreover, aspects of misrecognition can be observed in the South African educational context from a gendered perspective. For instance, Black impoverished women in male-dominated academic fields often experience a disjuncture or feel conflicted by the Western, heteropatriarchal cultural landscape they perceive they must conform to, which can conflict with their own lower SES African backgrounds and the prior knowledge they carry with them (Liccardo, 2018; Liccardo & Bradbury, 2017). This highlights the concept of misrecognition, as suggested by Fraser et al. (2004) and later by Fraser (2007a; 2016), which is predicated on an individual's position in societal hierarchies, wherein societal constructions and institutional values are often oriented towards exclusion rather than inclusion of non-hegemonic identities. Consequently, the pervasive Western hegemonic influence in institutions, characterised by competitiveness, metrics, and informed by its neoliberal counterpart, poses a disservice to indigenous low SES students, as they are unable to connect with or relate to such frameworks. This form of exclusion is compounded by a lack of consideration given to mitigating these obstacles, which results in already marginalised groups becoming further disenfranchised (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012; Morrow, 2007).

The various forms of exclusion are particularly problematic against the backdrop of a stratified South African schooling system, which has its roots in both the colonial and apartheid eras. Numerous studies have emphasised that students from impoverished township schools encounter issues of epistemological exclusion when entering higher education, in contrast to their more privileged counterparts who were educated in the former Model C and private schooling systems (see Morrow, 2009; Bozalek & Boughey, 2012, 2020). Liccardo et al. (2015) demonstrated how a group of Black female students engaged in STEM higher education at a South African university experienced imposter syndrome, which is attributable to several factors associated with the prevailing white masculine hegemony, the colonial settler legacies, and the Eurocentric course content to which they were subjected.

Correspondingly, the current dominant institutional framework runs counter to the principles of communalism, sharing, and reciprocity, which are based on the underpinning of Ubuntu as a moral compass and a value system embedded in the African understanding of existence (Higgs, 2010; Letseka, 2012; Venter, 2004). An alternative non-dominant framework therefore has the potential to address the misrecognition of women (culture) and its associated effects of maldistribution (economics) in developing contexts in rethinking Western values (liberalism) and shifting our focus towards alternative perspectives (Ubuntu).

Another key concern that differentiates the status subordination model from conforming theories on recognition and identity is its avoidance of "essentialising" a specific identity marker over others or other significant factors. Such a narrow focus may lead to further issues of inequality and social justice (Keddie, 2012, p. 264). For instance, concentrating solely on dominant experiences, such as Black and white groupings, risks misrecognising "other" in-between groups, simply because they do not fit into such binary classifications. Moreover, an emphasis on specific identities in marginalised groups can silence those embodied identities that have suffered most from oppression within these confines, such as same-sex, trans identities, and disabled bodies. This is why Fraser (2000) perceives misrecognition as a moral contention rather than an ethical one, in contrast to the way mainstream recognition theorists, such as Honneth (1995), conceptualise it. By approaching misrecognition radically, Fraser (2000, p. 109) argues that "struggles for recognition can aid the distribution of power and wealth and can promote interaction and cooperation across gulfs of difference". However, scholars such as Honneth (1995), Lister (2007), and, more recently, Hochfeld (2022) have also problematised and cautioned against Fraser's notions for not considering the psychological impact on already marginalised groups that arises from being misrecognised.

Representation

Representation pertains to how and where individuals are situated politically and whether they possess leverage in decision-making processes that concern them. This dimension of social justice addresses voice and political agency, which are intended to mitigate the effects of injustices. When this agency is removed or when an individual is denied this right, it can therefore be regarded as an instance of misrepresentation (Fraser, 2007b; 2010). Fraser (2008, p. 403) suggests that "through the lens of democratisation struggles, justice includes a political dimension, rooted in the political constitutions of society, whose associated injustice is misrepresentation or political voice". In higher education or even in the workplace, this pertains to whether students and workers are able to participate in student and work unions, vote for and elect representatives, as well as engage in political rallies on campus or in workspaces without facing persecution or victimisation (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012; 2020).

With that said, she highlights the importance of distancing ourselves from a post-Westphalian perspective, which primarily accounts for the nation-state while neglecting the significance of the global (Fraser, 2007b; 2008). Fraser (2007a, p. 23) asserts that "the Keynesian Westphalian frame is now considered by many to be a major vehicle of injustice, as it partitions political space in ways that block many who are poor and despised from challenging the forces that oppress them". The central argument presented here is that transnational policies established by global entities are largely responsible for the reproduction of inequality, which further exacerbates the oppression and marginalisation experienced in nation-states by those already on the periphery of society (Clowes et al., 2017). Moreover, such global entities are self-insulating against scrutiny and critique, and as a result of their power and influence, they are able to operate outside the parameters of democracy (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012; 2020). An illustrative example of this is the issue of the internationalisation of higher education and its differential impact on advancing neoliberal agendas, particularly for institutions in the Global South, which must contend with the additional burdens of colonialism and, in the case of South Africa, segregation. This poignant reminder should serve as a message to the global academic community that the construction and introduction of metric league tables and rankings of institutions are not developmental, particularly for underserved communities in the system. This is due to the fact that not all participants have access to the same level of playing field from the outset, given the historical, socio-cultural, economic, and political structural frameworks in which they are situated (Bozalek & Boughey, 2020; Fraser, 2007a, 2007b; Mathebula, 2018). Consequently, student groups on the periphery, such as women of colour, are not afforded a voice in the ongoing ranking system, which hierarchises universities, distinguishes elite institutions from non-elite ones, and further determines the value of a qualification conferred by an institution. This qualification is subsequently utilised as a form of cultural capital to leverage further opportunities, depending on which side of the divide one occupies (Bourdieu, 1984, 2008; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Moreover, within this dimension, Fraser (2007a; 2008) introduces a deeper level of political representation, which she terms "boundary-setting". For Fraser, boundary-setting serves as a means of examining how the misframing of less privileged groups and individuals within institutional contexts results in differential participation in political matters. Central to this discussion is the question of who should be considered a legitimate student or worker in terms of access to and participation in higher education or work environments, and who should not (Fraser, 2007a; 2007b; 2008). This often occurs when institutions and workplaces establish a uniform starting point for all individuals, without consideration of the socio-cultural, economic, and historical contexts that may afford certain individuals more advantages than others. Consequently, this approach can inadvertently lead to the exclusion of non-dominant groups (Carter, 2012; Fraser, 2007a). It is crucial to recognise that the issue extends beyond the "what", in terms of resources (distribution) and culture (recognition), that informs social justice claims, to also encompass the "who", regarding the individual (political) and what they represent, which deserves greater scrutiny (Fraser, 2007a). An illustrative example of individuals (political) who are often misframed and not perceived as "real" or legitimate students and workers, from the perspective of higher education institutions and organisations, includes those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, non-dominant women, and individuals who do not conform to the dominant characteristics of being white, heteronormative, able-bodied, and Christian (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012).

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how two conceptual paradigms can be positioned alongside each other from both a social and institutional perspective, as well as from an epistemic one, to provide a nuanced understanding of issues of equity and social justice concerning the entirety of Black South African women's journeys in STEM. This is particularly evident in the South African context, where neoliberal policies dictate that all entrants into the university system are perceived as equal, predominantly white, upper-middle-class men (Bozalek & Boughey, 2020). In this regard, I illustrated how various strands and facets of both critical theory and decolonial thought can be employed at different stages of the STEM journey to impart deeper meaning and voice concerning the inclusion-exclusion nexus of Black and female South African scientists and those aspiring to enter the field.

I initially provided a rationale for employing both philosophical strands to complement the strengths and weaknesses of each, as well as to offer insight into how both can be integrated into higher education research, addressing issues of gender in STEM, inclusion, and participation. Furthermore, I engaged with various decolonial and decolonial feminist concepts, such as the colonial/modernity nexus, to understand how the "historico-structural nodes" (Mignolo, 2011a, p. 17) of capitalism and neoliberalism continue to be implicated in the subjugation of subaltern women through ongoing neo-colonial processes that shape the current status quo regarding Black women's access to the STEM field. I also critically assessed the concepts of cognitive justice and epistemic injustice to ascertain how non-dominant forms of knowledge are invalidated, which consequentially affects equitable access in elite and masculine contexts, such as STEM higher education. Additionally, I presented decolonial feminist thinking to illustrate how dominant paradigms create exclusionary experiences for those who do not conform to the standards established by both white and Black men in STEM workplaces. In this regard, Maria Lugones' insights provide valuable understanding of how the dehumanisation of Black women is perpetuated through "world-travelling" events in both dominant and non-dominant worlds.

Secondly, I incorporated Fraser's participatory parity mechanisms by drawing on her three dimensions of distribution (economic), recognition (cultural), and representation (political) to complement the aforementioned insights into how access and participation are either impeded or enabled in STEM through the entire STEM journey.

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Decolonising Engineering by an Engineer

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Introduction

Engineering is frequently perceived as a discipline that is factual and, consequently, unbiased. As engineers, we take pride in our commitment to justice and rely on the premise that numbers and equations are inherently truthful. Indeed, numbers do not lie. However, if we begin with incorrect data, we cannot anticipate an accurate outcome.

Engineering students, academics, and professional engineers are often not fully aware of the historical context surrounding inventions and engineering developments. As engineers, we excel at identifying problems and devising solutions, primarily in an effort to enhance quality of life. There is, however, a notable lack of curiosity regarding the origins of the theories or equations we employ, the timeline of their development, or the processes that led to their formulation. Furthermore, there is insufficient reflection on the entire process. Questions concerning our own understanding, such as how we arrived at a particular answer and what biases may have influenced our approach, remain largely unaddressed.

Consequently, the decolonisation of engineering presents numerous challenges, the most prevalent of which is resistance. Statements such as “Engineering does not need decolonising, it is all about numbers”, “Why change it if it’s not broken?”, and “How can we decolonise 2+2?” exemplify this resistance.

This chapter elucidates the what, why, and how of decolonisation. What does decolonisation entail? Why is it necessary to decolonise engineering? How can we effectuate the decolonisation of engineering? The straightforward steps outlined in this chapter will enable lecturers and educators to embark on their journey towards decolonising their modules or programmes and addressing the inequalities present in our education system.

What Is Decolonising?

Numerous definitions of decolonisation exist, yet they generally convey a similar message.

> Decolonising … means introducing previously ignored voices, images, authors, topics, theories and arguments into the curriculum" (Scholar 1 narrative, in Manchester Metropolitan University, 2022).

> Decolonisation itself refers to the undoing of colonial rule over subordinate countries but has taken on a wider meaning as the 'freeing of minds from colonial ideology' in particular by addressing the ingrained idea that to be colonised was to be inferior" (Warwick University, 2018).

> Decolonisation not only refers to the complete removal of the domination of external forces within a geographical space, but it also refers to decolonisation of the mind from the colonisers' ideas – ideas that made the colonised seem inferior" (Keele University, 2018).

More specifically, what does decolonising mean for engineering? In my view, decolonising engineering entails recognising and valuing the fact that engineering knowledge has originated from diverse cultures across the globe at various points in history and is practised in a multitude of styles.

Decolonising involves contextualising knowledge; it requires us to ask questions such as: Who was responsible for its development? Why was it invented? How did it come about? Understanding the origins of knowledge is essential to establishing its credibility. Remarkable engineering achievements are being realised worldwide, by numerous individuals, and we ought to acknowledge them and incorporate them into our teaching. Decolonisation allows engineers and engineering academics in the West[4] to gain deeper insight into existing knowledge, broaden the parameters of understanding, and ultimately enhance innovation and creativity in the application of engineering skills and knowledge.

Why Decolonise?

In the words of the artist, Chronixx (2017), "They never told us that Black is beautiful." The biases that exist regarding physical traits and skin colour in our societies, sports, and education systems are undeniable. Angela Saini's (2019) book, Superior – The Return of Race Science, elaborately describes how the term "race" was constructed to define Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) individuals, with its primary purpose being to control and subjugate. Race is a socially constructed term; it lacks scientific validity and serves as a mechanism of oppression. Racial categorisation is a tool developed by the West to impose its values on others. Unsurprisingly, the highest status is accorded to how it perceives itself – white. One might contemplate how a racial structure devised by Black or Brown individuals, who constitute the majority population globally, would manifest.

Numerous historical events underscore the profound cruelty and violence perpetrated by the West. Michael Holding's book, Why We Kneel, How We Rise (2021), vividly illustrates the atrocities committed by Western powers and their enduring consequences for contemporary life. The West engaged in acts of robbery, plunder, and murder during the colonial era, justifying these actions as "good". The colonial era is responsible for, among other atrocities, the systemic elimination of the Aboriginal population in Australia (Australians Together, 2022), the killing of the Māori people in New Zealand (Graham-McLay, 2019), the Bengal famine, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the looting of approximately £9.2 trillion over 200 years from India (Randeep, 2007; Histories of Colour, 2021; Sreevatsan,

4 The term "West" refers to majority white countries that have historically engaged in colonisation.

2018), genocide and the illegal seizure of natural resources in the Congo (Gregoire, 2017), apartheid in South Africa (Mandela, 1994), and the dehumanisation of millions of Africans under slavery (Olusoga, 2017).

Africa is a continent that is rich in natural resources and larger than the combined landmass of the United States of America, Europe, India, and China. The disdain and contempt inflicted upon Africans by the West are both inhumane and vicious. Men, women, and children were violently abducted and killed, leaving families permanently scarred; languages, cultures, and faiths were obliterated; and individuals were tortured and murdered over centuries. This violence stemmed from the West's disapproval of how Africans looked, lived, or possessed wealth. Today, generations later, it remains exceedingly rare for the respective governments to offer an apology.

Colonialism is not merely a relic of the past, and its principles are not only perpetuated by the ignorant (Saini, 2019). Colonial practices are embedded in our society, and various systems continue to embrace and often reward them. One notable example is the education system, which perpetuates colonial philosophies across disciplines such as history, medicine, science, literature, sports, engineering, mathematics, the arts, and many others. How is this system fit for purpose? The current education system emphasises a biased perspective, which results in school leavers and graduates being socially unaware and uncritically admiring colonial beliefs. Had we been more inclusive and diverse in our pedagogical approaches, events such as the murder of George Floyd, the disproportionately higher mortality rates among BME populations compared to white individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic (Office for National Statistics, 2020), the increase in hate crimes particularly following Brexit (Home Office, 2020), the significantly higher likelihood of death in police custody for BME individuals under restraint (Coles, 2022), the fourfold disparity in maternal mortality rates between Black mothers and white mothers (Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK [MBRRACE-

UK], 2020), the rise of extremist and intolerant political sentiments (Gale Primary Sources, 2022), and the growing number of BME families living below the poverty line (Butler, 2020) may have been mitigated.

A number of studies and research projects have been conducted that demonstrate that our education system, as it currently stands, is outdated and biased (Arday, 2021; Bancroft, 2018; Sylvester, 2022; Cultural Intelligence Hub, 2021). It fails to promote creativity, diversity, or inclusion. Our current curriculum, whether in primary, secondary, or higher education, is not fostering independent thinkers and creative minds; rather, it is producing narrow-minded professionals with a colonial perspective.

Decolonising Higher Education

The process of decolonising is painful and agonising, as it reveals how one segment of society has disproportionately benefitted from existing systems, while others have suffered. The current education system was created by and for white culture and white values. It is an inequitable system that was further exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic (Morreira et al., 2020). Much of the curriculum is not suited to our current student population.

It has been extensively researched and established that the disparities in attainment gaps between white students and BME students are alarming in higher education (Universities UK, 2022; Nicholson, 2022; Universities UK & National Union of Students, 2019; Cabinet Office, 2017). Figures released by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) indicate that in the 2020-2021 academic year, the awarding gap between white students and Black students for a first-class degree was 19.3% (Universities UK, 2022). Students' final degree classifications and progression rates are determined by academic performance, which is heavily reliant on student engagement. BME students often experience feelings of isolation and differentiation (Davies & Garrett, 2013; Bunce et al., 2019). Personal biases of both staff and students contribute to this sense of non-belonging, which results in poor student engagement and inadequate performance (Bernard et al., 2011; Narang, 2021). Personal biases can be particularly severe for Black students; in the words of Frank Wilderson III: “One of the bleakest aspects of Afropessimist thought is its denial that there is any meaningful analogy between Blacks and other nonwhites” (Cunningham, 2020).

Furthermore, employment figures for graduates were at best 67% in 2019 and at worst 47%. The disparity is largely attributable to ethnicity, with the lowest figures recorded for Arab graduates (Department of Education, 2022). These statistics serve as a stark reminder that our current higher education curricula do not meet the needs of the student population or the requirements of industry.

If a university aims to remain committed to the pursuit of knowledge and its dissemination, it is imperative that it undertakes a process of decolonisation. In higher education institutions, each programme[5] comprises a series of subject-specific modules, which are facilitated by a cadre of scholars.

These modules generally encompass a variety of learning outcomes and several teaching techniques to ensure that the content delivered is both relevant and engaging. However, the content and delivery of these modules are often driven by past practices and do not evolve over time, especially if the module is already achieving high progression and student satisfaction figures. This underscores the importance of having a decolonising directive from the upper echelons of the institution or as part of the institution’s strategic goals.

A number of initiatives have been initiated by universities, as described in the report by Stevenson et al. (2019), but these tend to be at the institutional level. Such changes must be cascaded down to the teaching level. Specific, well-defined changes and measurable decolonising objectives should be established at the programme level to ensure that they are both actionable and reportable. It is crucial to avoid allowing

5 A programme refers to an academic course that students can enrol in at universities, which culminates in the attainment of a degree upon successful completion.

decolonisation to devolve into a tick-box exercise, such as completing awareness training without subsequent actions or forming decolonising committees without an actionable plan.

As Rao (2020) notes in his paper on neoliberal anti-racism and the British university, "Decolonisation movements are 'in but not of' the university, using it and abusing it for purposes that are not reducible to its mission."

How to Decolonise Engineering

There is a belief that the West possesses the most advanced technology and is responsible for the majority of engineering achievements (Eichhorn, 2020); however, this belief is fundamentally flawed, and higher education has a responsibility to address it. This section outlines practical steps that teaching staff can implement across various areas in their modules. The selected areas include module delivery, module content, assessment design, representation, and institutional structures. These areas align with the findings of the paper "Decolonising the engineering curriculum in a South African university of technology" (Fomunyam, 2017), as well as the three forms identified by Le Grange (2016) in his research on decolonising the university curriculum: explicit curriculum, hidden curriculum, and null curriculum.

Module Delivery

When planning a module, module leaders[6] should deliberately consider the methods of presenting information to students. Generally, in engineering, presentation modes are employed to convey information, and practice example questions are conducted during tutorials. During these presentations, various online platforms should be utilised, such as Microsoft PowerPoint, YouTube videos, virtual subject experts, face-to-face industry speakers, case studies, research, and quiz

6 Module leaders are academic staff members who are responsible for delivering the module and ensuring that it meets the learning outcomes and assessment criteria established by the university and accrediting bodies.

questions. Adopting a range of different platforms will cater for different learning preferences and promote inclusive delivery. Particular attention should be paid to representation and diversity on these platforms. For example, in the context of aerospace engineering, companies such as Airbus and Boeing are frequently cited as prime examples in case studies or videos. This should be expanded to incorporate global perspectives, including Hindustan Aeronautics in India, Embraer in Brazil, and Mitsubishi in Japan. When including industry speakers and subject experts, it is essential that they reflect diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, and nationality, both in face-to-face and online formats.

Similarly, for all reference materials, such as books, journal articles, conference papers, regulatory bodies, and specifications, a wide range of examples should be integrated into the module, and students should be encouraged to explore the full variety of reference materials. It is relatively easy to find information that originates from or is disseminated by Western sources on search engines or social media platforms. Consequently, students may gravitate towards reviewing only these sources and develop a perception that "the West knows best". It is the responsibility of the module leader to rectify this misconception. Given that significant effort is required for students to expand their reference pool, extra credits or marks can be awarded for such initiatives. For instance, in an assessment that requires students to review publications on engineering developments, additional marks could be granted for reviews that encompass authors and scientists from diverse ethnic backgrounds, as well as from various countries worldwide. This approach will not only encourage but also reward diversity in the module.

Module Content

Similar to mathematics (Brodie, 2016), decolonising content in engineering programmes is not straightforward, but it is not impossible. The first step towards decolonising the content requires the removal of knowledge boundaries. The modules should include engineering examples and theories that originate from all corners of the globe, in any format and at any given time. They should not be constrained by Western knowledge restrictions. Moreover, they should also encompass information regarding the circumstances that led to these engineering developments in order to provide a holistic understanding. The following are some examples of facts that are not commonly known or discussed as part of engineering developments:

> The Suez Canal, regarded as one of the major engineering successes, was not a project supported by the British, who, in fact, considered it impossible. The political climate of the time was a significant factor in determining the involvement of various parties and the development of the project (Eichhorn, 2020; Chamberlain, 2014).
>
> One of the greatest engineering feats of the British Empire is attributed to the Indian railway network. However, the railway network was not constructed to aid in the development or prosperity of India and its populace. Its primary purpose was to facilitate the transport of India's valuable resources and wealth to Britain. This initiative represented Britain's strategy of enriching itself at the expense of another nation (Eichhorn, 2020; Satya, 2008).
>
> The Moors introduced Spain to education, libraries, music, architecture, science, technology, and engineering in the eighth century, well before these capabilities had developed in Europe.
>
> At its height, Córdova, the heart of Moorish territory in Spain, was the most modern city in Europe. The streets were well-paved, with raised sidewalks for pedestrians. During the night, ten miles of streets were well illuminated by lamps. This was hundreds of years before there was a paved street in Paris or a street lamp in London" (Black History Studies, 2009).
>
> The invention of zero as a number enabled mathematics to flourish and paved the way for advances in engineering.

> The credit for the invention of zero is attributed to Indian mathematicians, who began using it as early as 300 CE (Ward, 2018; Revell, 2017).
>
> While most aerospace engineers will encounter Sir Frank Whittle and the Wright brothers during their university studies, they are unlikely to be introduced to the aircraft mentioned in the "Ramayana", an epic piece of Indian literature composed around 500 CE by Valmiki (Basu, 2016; Booksfact, 2016).

Engineering higher education programmes are characterised by learning outcomes that align with each university's quality assurance standards, higher education specifications, such as the Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes and the United Kingdom Standard for Professional Engineering Competence and Commitment (UK-SPEC), as well as the requirements established by various accreditation bodies, including the Royal Aeronautical Society, the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, and the Institution of Engineering and Technology, in addition to the needs of the engineering industry. These learning outcomes require critical examination and deconstruction. They must reflect the contemporary needs and demands of the engineering sector and society at large. Furthermore, they should encompass practical learning experiences, including technical drawing, laboratory experiments, and prototype development, as well as the cultivation of employability skills, sustainable design solutions, an understanding of the history of engineering advancements, and the promotion of social responsibility among engineers. As part of the annual quality review of each programme, programme directors[7] should conduct an evaluation of the learning outcomes and examine them through a decolonising lens. This presents a significant opportunity for students to be encouraged to engage in and contribute to the development of the course. Student voices have been instrumental in driving

7 Programme directors, also referred to as course directors, are responsible for the quality, delivery, student satisfaction, progression, scheduling, and accreditation of a specific course and all its associated modules.

major changes in higher education (Pimblott, 2020), and their insights and lived experiences provide invaluable contributions to the decolonisation of the curriculum. “Acknowledging that the students too have intelligence and are not just blank slates, is an important step” (Baron, 2016).

Programme directors should avoid addressing decolonisation through the inclusion of superficial decolonisation-specific learning outcomes for modules, such as “implement decolonising activities in the module”, or decolonising performance objectives for programme team members, as these merely serve as a tick-box exercise and do not constitute a genuine effort to decolonise. Universities and accreditation bodies should establish a process that allows programme directors to propose changes aimed at decolonising learning outcomes and support them in realising those changes. Furthermore, awarding bodies, such as the Teaching Excellence Framework, should also recognise programmes that proactively pursue decolonisation.

Assessment Design

Not all assessments need to be conducted in written format or via presentations. Engineering, in particular, is diverse in this respect; assessments encompass laboratory experiments and reporting, technical reports that involve research and analysis, examinations with structured qualitative and quantitative questions, posters, presentations, and design activities. However, are these the most effective methods for assessing the learning outcomes? Do these methods cultivate an engineering mindset that is creative, problem-solving, and innovative? Or are they employed merely because of tradition?

Module leaders must critically analyse the module and consider the following:

- What is the module trying to achieve?
- What kinds of skills and knowledge is the module looking to develop?
- Are those attributes in demand in industry and in need in society?

These questions will enable the module leader to plan and deliver assessments that are both adequate and appropriate. We should not confine ourselves to the methods that we know and are familiar with; instead, we need to explore and learn from diverse cultures around the world. In the book *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer (2010), it becomes evident that, despite not having undergone assessment through a Western-defined engineering programme structure, William is indeed an engineer. He designs, develops, manufactures, and maintains a working windmill in Malawi. Various cultures around the world engage in engineering in numerous forms, and rather than attempting to reduce these practices to Western methodologies, our pedagogies must expand to encompass all forms of engineering.

Engineering is often characterised by a lack of reflective analysis, debates, and open discussions. It tends to be delivered as a mere amalgamation of number-crunching, experimental, and theoretical modules. However, engineering does not exist in isolation; engineers must engage with societies to understand the challenges and remain mindful of their own biases when designing solutions. Module leaders should incorporate reflective sessions related to the historical context of engineering topics, promote debates surrounding sustainable design solutions and ethical practices, and facilitate round-table conversations on contentious issues. Such practices can be integrated into the module as engagement activities or incorporated as part of an assessment.

A significant component of an engineering degree is the individual project, which can be a rather isolating module, given that students are required to progress their research independently with minimal supervision. The structure of supervision is difficult to define and often results in a highly subjective experience; some academics provide guidance through regular meetings, formative feedback, personal care, and performance advice, while others may not interact with their students at all. This module is a prime example of how personal biases among staff can impact student performance, particularly for BME students (Hopkins, 2011; Woolf et al., 2008). A study conducted by Dancy (2020) revealed that BME students often feel more intimidated and out of place, with students identifying as women of colour experiencing the most significant impact when surveyed in a cohort of students pursuing STEM subjects at the higher education level. To ensure that students receive appropriate support, the module leader should implement a structured approach across all supervisors, mandating the scheduling of meetings via Microsoft Outlook, weekly minute-taking, and timely feedback on students' progress. This should be complemented by a monthly meeting with the programme director to capture and address concerns and issues raised by students. This approach will not only benefit all students but will also help to mitigate any staff biases against BME students.

The research remit for individual projects is relatively broad, with proposed titles being submitted by both academics and students. However, the project proposals themselves often reflect engineering challenges and problem-solving techniques as perceived through a Western lens (Mkansi et al., 2018). The module leader should ensure that project titles represent the engineering industry globally, taking into account the challenges faced in various parts of the world and by different cultures. For instance, in aerospace engineering, one project proposed by my student focused on exploring the challenges of establishing a small aviation company in East Africa, from which we both gained significant insights into the region's aviation industry and its demands. Offering students the opportunity to choose their own titles, with guidance on scoping and planning, can help to broaden the traditional list of projects, while also involving students in this process as an empowering means of decolonisation (Notman, 2021).

Representation

Data collected by the HESA during the academic year 2020–2021 and analysed by Universities UK (2022) indicate that 19% of academic staff identified as BME at a time when 26% of students were BME. There is a notable lack of BME lecturers in engineering or in senior leadership positions in higher education. The Equality Challenge Unit (2015) found that only

2.9% of British academic managers, directors, and senior officials were BME. In addition to teaching staff and leadership teams, the research sector also suffers from a lack of BME representation. BME researchers are less likely to be recruited or receive grant funding, as evidenced by a study conducted by the Bridge Group (2017). Moreover, even in the BME student population, progression to postgraduate degrees and interest in research is limited (Wakeling & Kyriacou, 2010).

The significance of representation is immense. The impact of diversifying the teaching workforce to ensure better representation was emphasised in research conducted by Arday (2021) as part of The Black Curriculum initiatives. Engineering schools should ensure that each course team, including teaching staff, support staff, and student ambassadors, is diverse. Programme directors should analyse and reflect on their diversity and inclusion practices as part of their annual review process and propose plans to address any shortcomings, mirroring the approach taken with national student satisfaction and awarding gap figures. The report published by Guyan and Oloyede (2019) outlines clear actions that institutions can undertake, as well as best practices that have been successfully implemented.

To enhance the recruitment of BME staff, a comprehensive review of recruitment processes should be undertaken to ensure impartiality and fairness. The composition of interview panels, types of interview questions, methods and locations of job advertisements, and job specifications must be scrutinised. In addition to recruiting new staff, the retention of existing BME staff members should be prioritised. Often, the few BME staff members in a school are burdened with every initiative related to diversity and inclusion, which increases their workload and hinders career progression (Advance HE, 2015). Furthermore, pathways to senior roles often lack support and may be intentionally obstructed by racism, bullying, prejudiced perceptions, microaggressions, and biased processes; all of which contribute to detrimental stress and pave the way for BME staff attrition (University and College Union, 2016; Equality Challenge Unit, 2011). Schools should establish clear and stringent policies against racism, bullying, harassment, and any form of derogatory behaviour. The complaint procedure should be well-publicised and clearly explained to ensure that staff and students feel safe to raise concerns and that any individual found guilty of discriminatory behaviour faces severe repercussions. Additionally, BME staff progression should not only be encouraged but actively sponsored by the leadership team through established progression pathways, professionally recognised training, and mentoring opportunities.

The myriad of "university faces" that students encounter throughout their degree significantly influences their sense of belonging and self-worth. This includes not only academics, leadership teams, and support staff but also engineers and scientists in their respective fields. Role models play a crucial role in this context. As articulated by Charles (2019b), "The human aspect of knowledge origination is extremely important for learners of any age in any learning space." Black engineers and scientists have not received the same level of visibility as their white counterparts (Nobles, 2017). At times, they have not even been recognised or credited for their achievements; a prime example being Lewis Howard Latimer, who invented the carbon filament for electric bulbs but never received the same recognition and rewards for his engineering skills as his white counterpart, Thomas Edison, who was responsible for the paper filament bulb. Programme directors should ensure that, as part of the course, students are made aware of the remarkable contributions of BME engineers and scientists in their field (Nicolson, 2022). BME engineers should be mentioned as frequently in university teaching and promotional materials as white engineers. Furthermore, BME alumni who have excelled in the course should be invited as guest speakers to share their journeys with current BME students and be encouraged to act as mentors. This approach will foster a sense of belonging for BME students and will ultimately lead to enhanced student engagement and progression.

Peck (2017) articulated this brilliantly through the words of James Baldwin:

I attest to this

The world is not white

It never was white

Cannot be white

White is a metaphor for power

And this is simply a way of describing

hase Manhattan Bank

Lastly, one important action that can be taken to help BME students feel more at home in their classrooms is to pronounce their names correctly. Lecturers should not hesitate to ask BME students how their names are pronounced. This demonstrates that their identities matter and that lecturers acknowledge and value cultural differences. Although this may seem a small request, it is crucial to fostering a sense of belonging.

Institutional Structures

There are several changes (as described earlier) that can be implemented by an engineering programme director or module leader. However, to cultivate a greater sense of belonging for BME students during their time at the university, some institutional-level changes are necessary, including a critical evaluation of core processes and a reinvigoration of the mindset of heads of schools, deans, and vice-chancellors.

Schools should emphasise the need for staff to engage with decolonising activities. Staff can be encouraged to participate in decolonising initiatives through involvement in awareness campaigns, membership of decolonising and BME committees, or engagement with self-educational material ranging from books and publications to stand-up comedy performances, such as those by Trevor Noah and Loyiso Gola, who address colonisation (Noah, 2021) and white privilege (Gola, 2020) in a humorous yet factual and impactful manner. Staff should also be provided with the appropriate tools to initiate the transformation of their modules. Pedagogical research in this area should be facilitated and funded by the school. Moreover, the school's quality board should mandate that module annual reporting includes improvements relating to the application of a decolonised approach. Exceptional progress made regarding decolonisation in a course, module, or by an individual should be recognised, akin to awards for student support and excellent performance.

Another process that necessitates significant revision is the academic conduct review, which includes assessments of collusion, plagiarism, and ethical violations. Many BME students, particularly international students (Bamford & Sergiou, 2005), do not have a clear understanding of these processes. They encounter challenges when writing technical reports in a language that is entirely foreign to them (Amsberry, 2009) and may resort to assistance from websites by copying certain "intellectual" phrases. Schools should ensure that students receive adequate support in comprehending the meanings of collusion and plagiarism and are offered guidance on their assignments, along with formative feedback on draft submissions. Easily accessible online quizzes on understanding plagiarism and collusion, as well as additional links to supporting information, can be made available on module pages or the school's website.

In addition to the teaching and learning aspects of universities, facilities and resources also need to be decolonised. Libraries play a crucial role in providing reference materials for students to conduct their research. Libraries should ensure that the books, journals, and publications they offer encompass authors from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. They ought to monitor reading lists for modules and advise module leaders on how to create more inclusive and diverse reading lists (Charles, 2019a). Furthermore, libraries should actively seek out research materials that are non-traditional from a Western perspective, such as artwork, short stories, and poems, which are common methods of preserving valuable knowledge in other cultures.

The names of buildings, lecture halls, artwork, and monuments should be carefully selected to reflect inclusivity and diversity across a university campus. Existing names should be reviewed and amended if necessary. External organisations and subcontracting firms should be thoroughly vetted to ensure that they are impartial and do not promote anti-decolonising views. University cafés should offer a variety of food and beverage options, and engineering buildings should provide prayer rooms as well as facilities for baby feeding and changing.

All festivals and celebrations should be afforded the same platform and enthusiasm on university premises. Eid, Diwali, Chinese New Year, and Pesah should be acknowledged and celebrated with students just as we extend Merry Christmas wishes. Moreover, assessment planners should be instructed to take into account festivities or fasting periods when setting examination or test schedules.

Lastly, engineering schools are intended to serve communities and, as such, they should engage in more community projects and fund research to understand the challenges faced by different ethnic groups. They should also support and participate in outreach activities, promote engineering in primary and secondary schools, and offer scholarships to BME students who wish to pursue engineering degrees.

Conclusion

Decolonisation is a journey, not a destination. It involves questioning our current knowledge, accepting our mistakes, and possessing the willpower to change. It will occur gradually and over an extended period. The colonial era has persisted for more than 500 years (Blakemore, 2019) and decolonisation will, undoubtedly, require time. The actions mentioned in this paper can be easily implemented by engineering module leaders to initiate this journey. As we engage further in decolonisation, we will become aware of additional areas that require attention. Anyone involved in the education system should be willing to educate themselves and unlearn before they can educate the next generation. This journey can be further reinforced by university leadership teams through the implementation of more challenging actions, such as supporting and developing BME staff members, reviewing existing policies and procedures, and setting decolonising directives for all programmes. Encouraging diversity is essential; supporting diversity is commendable, but rewarding diversity is paramount.

Decolonisation will not only address the biases in the education system, leading to improved student satisfaction and progression, but it will also tackle the challenges surrounding equality, diversity, and inclusion in engineering. Providing a global perspective of engineering, valuing diverse viewpoints, and reducing colonial influences will cultivate well-rounded graduate engineers who are more cognisant of societal disparities.

To conclude, I borrow the words of Maya Angelou:

> "Do the best you can until you know better,
>
> Then when you know better, do better."

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Hijra in Stasis

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Introduction: **Maybe a Hijra?**

When I moved to the United States of America (USA), I believed I understood trans politics extensively. I could not identify as trans simply because I was not accessing hormonal, surgical, or any other procedural means to indicate my transition. Transitioning bodies need to possess the relevant paperwork to qualify their transness. While providing access to such legitimisation becomes crucial political work, as it enables marginal bodies to be seen by the state as visible participants in the body politic, it raises the question: What is the appropriate time for someone to call themselves trans?

On a dating app, a profile once sent me a kind message: "Do you identify as a man, woman, or trans?" This compelled me to reflect: what made this person ask this question? This was not the first time I had been confronted with such an inquiry. At airport check-in, I was greeted with "Ma'am" before the attendant leaned in and fumbled to change it to a polite and apologetic "Sir". At restaurants, the steward addressed me as "Ma'am" and did not fumble, hoping I would not notice the straightened back. I did not mind it; in fact, I enjoyed it. For the longest time, people have pointed out the break of my wrists, the sway of my hips, and the pitch of my voice. In school and at bus stops, individuals would clap their hands, look at me, and call out, "There goes a hijra!" A eunuch, sissy, tranny. Initially, it was embarrassing. However, over time, I recognised that I had more in common with hijras in their hopes and aspirations for transformation and acceptance. Thus, rather than an insult, it became a signifier of my reality – at once shameful yet delightful.

However, my interrogator's question was more loaded than it appeared on the surface. My appearance certainly elicited some form of curiosity or, rather, confusion regarding my gender. He asked me for a category into which I fit. Dating ultimately is a quest to identify and discern what is pleasurable and what is not. It is a process of asking and answering, which, fortunately or unfortunately, generates definitions. However, I found his vocabulary rather limited. The options presented to me were to choose between the binary, man or woman, or to indicate whether I had a desire to be the other. Trans here is perceived as a movement between the binary. It did not matter that there were differences in the ways individuals experience transness. To insert this knowledge, I told him, "I may be a hijra." Just to confuse him further.

In April 2014, the Supreme Court of India legally recognised hijras, eunuchs and transgender and intersex people as a "third gender" in the National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India judgement. The term "third gender" is another umbrella term that is legally significant, as it compels the state to acknowledge those whose gender specificities differ from the binary. Am I a third gender? Or am I a hijra? My claim to being a hijra is tenuous. Hijras, as Gayatri Reddy notes in With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India, refers to a group of male-bodied individuals who undergo castration in devotion to a goddess, namely Bedraj Mata or Bahuchara Mata. This Hindu goddess of fertility and chastity is depicted perched on a rooster and is known to bless those who perform castration in her devotion. This has allowed hijras in Indian history to be seen as keepers of fertility. Even today, in many parts of India, hijras earn money through the ritual blessing of newborn children for protection. Simultaneously, the term "hijra" derives from the Arabic root hijr or hegira, marking the Prophet's journey from Mecca to Medina in 622 and denoting the onset of the Muslim era. Within the Mughal courts, hijras or eunuchs were an important part of the socio-political scene in the royal chambers, as no men or penises were allowed in the women's quarters. During British colonial rule, however, hijras were portrayed as baby snatchers and vectors of diseases. Despite the state of their social status, hijras have been an integral part of the social landscape of South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka for centuries. The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) judgement of 2014 asserted that the recognition of a third gender was a means to acknowledge "historical, social and cultural discrimination against transgender communities" and advocated for a willingness to "embrace different gender identities and expressions" (Loh, 2018, p. 40). It can be viewed as a single label that encompasses gender identities such as hijras, kinnars, kothis, zenanas, aravanis, and others, all of which arise from different mythological stories, patronage, indigeneity, and tradition.

Herein lies the tension between legality and sociality. To what extent does legal recognition extricate the nuances of identities that may appear similar but, upon closer inspection, are distinct? I raise this issue to assert that my claim to hijrahood is both credible and tenuous. Reddy (2006, p. 225) would contest my claim by stating that hijra identity is an amalgamation of "performative sexual acts/positions; emasculation; enactments of religious difference through circumcision, clothing style, and eating practices; … ritual affiliation with lineage houses; or individualized 'pleasures and afflictions' – that is central to the constructions of hijra and koti identity". The hijra is a cultural identity that has evolved distinct rules and rituals embodied in gender performance. To be a hijra is not merely to accept an insult or an identifier; it constitutes embodied participation in various acts that have material consequences of poverty and alienation from society. Many of these axes, such as sex work, begging, and castration, refer to specific spaces of marginality. Individuals like me, who possess the privilege of not engaging in certain axes, therefore cannot claim the hijra identity.

Is hijra merely a specific experience? Or can it delineate a broader set of values that defy heteronormativity and reveal gender queerness that is deeply rooted in South Asian culture? In her book, Reddy (2006) demonstrates that hijras have developed an insular community with a hierarchy and constitution independent of what we perceive as society. A clear demarcation of who belongs and who does not thus becomes significant. However, in this chapter, I am interested in mechanisms of self-identification. Can one claim to be that which one outwardly does not belong to? Are we all trans? Is being trans a recognition of movement from one state to another? Can this be universal? Tlostanova and Mignolo (2012) challenge the notion that framings and understandings originating from the Third World are only applicable to the Third World (people of colour and queer), while those from the First World (white and heterosexual) possess universal applicability. These third-world knowledges are often referred to as wisdom, experience, and culture, whereas first-world knowledges are categorised as information, philosophy, and science (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012). This highlights an essential aspect of a decolonial way of thinking, in which we unlearn the inheritances of colonial and imperial oppression and the prioritisation of the Eurocentric gaze at the expense of our indigenous perspectives. For me, adopting adjacency to the hijra identity accommodates the shame and beauty that the term elicits without erasing it from my subjective experience.

In Black Skin, White Masks, Frantz Fanon (1967), the French psychiatrist, posits that our authenticity and sense of self are jeopardised when we assimilate. He presents the case of Black Antilleans who return to their homeland and adopt the mannerisms and values of white individuals. This departure from the old self generates a hierarchy of what is deemed old and needs to be discarded, and what is new and thus embraced. Fanon (1967) observes that through the adoption of white values and intonations, the Black Antilleans lose their sense of self. But what constitutes this authentic selfhood? Are we born with it? Is it instilled in us during childhood? Or do we, over time, lose parts of ourselves and acquire new ones? I raise this topic because I am interested in asserting that our indigenous, local, and decolonial identities require space, while simultaneously recognising that we cannot extricate ourselves from the interconnectedness of the world in which we live. We must thus negotiate our identities. Does this imply a certain form of assimilation? Is it authentic to remain what one is or to remain true to one's changing environment? Fanon's understanding of identity formation is crucial because we inhabit a world in which we are constantly being othered or othering others. What would assimilation and authenticity look like in such a world? What does it mean for me to assert that I am both a hijra yet not exactly transitioning?

Transitioning World

At the turn of the 21st century, significant political and economic changes contributed to the emergence of a queer-friendly world. Part of this transformation arises from the historical dehumanisation of HIV/AIDS patients during the 1980s. Another aspect is the more deliberate discourse surrounding the gendered oppression of women in the workforce, with the #MeToo Movement representing a pivotal moment in this struggle. While the global landscape is increasingly dominated by reactionary conservative politics, this has, conversely, highlighted issues that were previously obscured. When healthcare benefits for transgender individuals are rescinded, it becomes crucial to interrogate: who is entitled to receive healthcare? What implications arise when only certain individuals can access such services? In this world, the conversation of being trans is also different. When one has transitioned, one has successfully moved to one's preferred gender through social and surgical changes. Therefore, to transition is to move from one distinction to another. However, who determines the success of this transition?

This inquiry leads us to Chapter 3 of the much-criticised 2019 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, which states that "A transgender person may make an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of gender identity" (Bhattacharya et al., 2022, p. 681). The District Magistrate may issue this certificate only after consultation with a "District Screening Committee". This committee comprises a chief medical officer, a district social welfare officer, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a representative of the transgender community, and a government official. This requirement undermines the promise of the NALSA judgement, which aims to uphold the dignity and autonomy of individuals in choosing their gender identity. The presence of this committee illustrates the state's surveillance over the construction of gender, even for identities that do not conform to the binary framework. It reflects the fundamental role of the state in eroding the agency of individuals concerning their bodily autonomy, including their gender perception, and rendering it pliable to prevailing power structures. In this instance, while the narrowing perspective of the Indian legislature is evident, one must also consider the societal aspirations surrounding the desired transgender body.

This situation is not markedly different from the state's expectations. Much of the opposition to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act has originated from the transgender community, activists, and queer scholars. For society at large, such surveillance is perceived as beneficial, preventing the perceived chaos of individuals opting for a third gender. A trans woman is expected to resemble a woman, a trans man a man, and a third gender individual to embody a distinct identity. This presents challenges when the binaries of male and female are often questioned and heavily context-dependent. Discussions regarding the acceptability of transition persist. Films, memoirs, television programmes, novels, and journalistic accounts often focus on the experiences of transgender individuals who have been marginalised and ostracised, later highlighting their profound desire for societal approval. Yet, is this approval truly reflective of the experience of trans individuals? Or does it merely project a heteronormative, patriarchal colonial narrative that relies on the validation of a sovereign authority?

Since there is a body that determines approval, whether it be the state or society as a reflection of the state, this leads to a discourse on who is deemed capable of successfully transitioning and who is not. Caitlyn Jenner's transition gained significant attention following the controversial July 2015 issue of Vanity Fair, which ignited discussions about trans visibility. While much of what the West celebrates as Pride is rooted in the efforts of people of colour, HIV-positive individuals, sex workers, and transgender activists such as Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, Jenner emerged as a prominent figure of trans identity through a fashion-forward lens in Vanity Fair. What accounts for this phenomenon? It is not an isolated incident but rather a repetition of historical patterns observed in the 1950s. In 1952, Christine Jorgensen became the first person to undergo gender confirmation surgery in the USA, subsequently becoming a media sensation as she transitioned from a military man to a "blonde beauty". In How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States, Joanne Meyerowitz chronicles the historical evolution of gender affirmation surgeries, emphasising that a specific type of trans identity is afforded acceptability in normative frameworks. The platform that grants visibility and acclaim to both Jenner and Jorgensen, despite their half-century separation, is fundamentally predicated on whiteness. Their experiences of transness are not isolated but rather distanced from the perceptions of trans identities that are rooted in the bodies of gender-non-conforming people of colour (Meyerowitz, 2002, p. 83).

In the USA, and owing to its current technological dominance, trans identities and understandings of gender are perpetuated through racialised constructs. African masculinity and Asian femininity are often understood in relation to whiteness rather than as inherent aspects of gender or racial identity. A 2022 Human Rights Campaign Foundation report indicates that, as of November 2022, 85 transgender individuals have lost their lives in the USA due to transphobic violence over the past two years. This figure does not account for unreported incidents and disproportionately represents cases involving individuals of colour. The question of whose trans identity is visible and which forms of visibility are celebrated is of paramount importance.

In their autoethnographic essay, "A trans way of seeing", Eisenberg-Guyot and Rotolo (2022, p. 278) reframe the notion of visibility from one that seeks validation from normative standards to one that embodies "a doing, a mode of embrace, the labor required to sustain the lines of sight that allow [trans individuals] to see each other while preserving forms of opacity that enable trans survival in a transphobic world". The act of embracing multiplicity, encompassing the positive, negative, and complex aspects of trans identities that do not seek approval from a surveillant state masquerading as society, is an act of resistance. Transitioning individuals navigate the ambiguities of their categorisation on their own terms and through the intersections of race, class, caste, and nationality. However, the concept of "owning" one's identity is complicated in a context of frequent migration. What occurs to colloquial and Indigenous gender identities that, upon entering Western contexts for education, work, safety, care, and aspirations, they are compelled to translate and articulate themselves within a vocabulary that is not legally or structurally equipped to accommodate them? Is this a form of limbo? A particular kind of stasis that individuals must endure?

Right to Hijrahood

In Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Butler (2006, p. 16) poses the question, "To what extent is 'identity' a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience?" Through this inquiry, she argues that gender functions as an effective order, signifying "a genealogical investigation that maps out the political parameters of its construction in the mode of ontology" (Butler, 2006, p. 32). In other words, gender constitutes the essence of being that exists within and navigates the public space of which it is part. Butler prompts us to consider that the desire for the normative is not an inherent predisposition. Butler (2006, p. 33) states that "certain cultural configurations of gender take the place of 'the real' and consolidate and augment their hegemony through that felicitous self-naturalization". In fact, the normative does not exist inherently; rather, it is constructed through the reduction and erasure of variation. Two genders dissolves what may exist in between them, but more problematically its rigidity also constrains that possibilities of what can exist within each of the binary. By adhering to a normative binary, Butler (2006) warns that there exists a burden of intelligibility on those gender identities that do not conform to the binary framework.

Other forms of gender and sexual expression are compromised in order to maintain the continuity of the normative within the cultural matrix. Gender is predominantly perceived through the lens of biology and medical authority. Butler (2006) challenges this perspective by asserting that gender also encompasses an experiential dimension. Gendered roles are inscribed through the mechanisms of play, imagination, expectations, and capacity. While there may be a connection between the experiences of a girl and a socially constructed female experience, this relationship is not fixed; it is fluid, allowing for the possibility that she may also engage in the play, imagination, expectations, and capacities traditionally associated with masculinity.

However, are trans women individuals who have always desired to be women, men who are transitioning to womanhood, or women who are in the process of becoming women? This question is not merely academic; rather, it highlights a deeper issue. The crux of the matter lies in the perception that certain types of bodies are regarded as truthful (typically white and heterosexual), while others are deemed deceptive (such as individuals of colour and queer individuals). Eisenberg-Guyot and Rotolo (2022) illustrate this point effectively in their ethnographic essay that details their prison experiences. In one instance, they describe how prison authorities assumed that breasts and bras were used to conceal and smuggle contraband. Bras were subjected to examination, while waistbands of boxers, similarly capable of hiding contraband, were not scrutinised in the same manner. This distinction underscores the societal perceptions of certain body parts as "deceptive, concealing the 'truths' of our bodies and contraband (drugs) in equal measure" (Eisenberg-Guyot & Rotolo, 2022, p. 87). It is undeniable that the body serves as a significant site for social performance. Our desires, needs, traumas, labours, joys, fears, knowledge, politics, and losses are inscribed upon our bodies. Nevertheless, there exists a gaze that dictates which forms of desires, needs, traumas, labours, joys, fears, knowledge, politics, and losses are deemed valid, acknowledged, and celebrated, while others are not. Understanding one's transness is a political concern because, as Beauchamp (2018, p. 6) articulates, "transgender and gender nonconforming populations [are] caught up in ongoing state surveillance practices that almost never explicitly name transgender as a category of concern". This observation should not be dismissed as mere paranoia but rather recognised as an imperialist necessity for subjugated difference as foundational to power dynamics. Consequently, transgender identity emerges as a significant category of state consent, with the potential to serve as a mechanism for regulating the "right way" to be queer, which implies conformity to the binary. Instead, one might consider what it would mean to exist adjacent to hijrahood and transness.

For Muñoz (1999, p. 6) transness represents "a way of seeing in order to highlight the intersubjective, dialogic, and collective nature of trans identifications". Transness is not merely a singular "other" that stands in opposition to the gender binary, nor does it encompass everything that is antithetical to it. Rather, it is constructed through the experiences of diverse individuals and their multicultural histories. Furthermore, as trans individuals navigate different spaces, they contribute to the discourse surrounding gender and sexuality, thereby facilitating a multiplicity of meanings. Gairola (2002, p. 308) asserts that "in different identities in different contexts, we inevitably reshape the socio-political atmospheres in the geographies within which we are role-playing". Gender is not an isolated phenomenon; its conceptions are continually evolving. My claim to identify as a hijra is therefore simultaneously justified and tenuous. On the one hand, it represents the closest identity that aligns with the women I admire, the familial structure I aspire to, the way I pray, the things I am sensitive about, the way I eat, what issues I deem important, and my responses to humour and slurs. On the other hand, it does not fully encapsulate the experiences described by Gayatri Reddy, Vaibhav Saria, or Jessica Hinchy in their research on hijras. While I have been subjected to the slur of hijra in India, I do not belong to that community; concurrently, residing in the USA, I find it difficult to relate to the experiences of trans individuals, aside from our shared childhood experiences of bullying that led to gender dysphoria.

I yearn for a sense of belonging, yet I grapple with the question: Where do I truly belong?

Bodies That reflect

In her book, Governing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial India, Hinchy (2019) explores the frustration and fear surrounding hijras as legacies of colonial desires and failures to classify and categorise these individuals. For the British, the question arose: Where do hijras fit within the framework of gender and family? The hijra community does not conform to a specific socio-economic standard; it includes hijras of significant social standing and wealth, while others engage in begging as a means of income. On the one hand, they may be perceived as unemployed vagabonds who use music and dance for entertainment; on the other hand, they are individuals who are involved in thriving economies related to drugs and sex work. The etymology of the word "hijra" is rooted in Muslim affiliations, yet the practice of castration among hijras is motivated by devotion to the Hindu goddess Bahuchara. Unable to comprehend their societal role, hijras were criminalised through a legal system that aligned with colonial objectives. Hinchy (2019) contributes to a Foucauldian understanding of criminality by positing that it is not an inherent capacity for disorder, but a product of state power exercised to police societal norms. If an identity is uncategorisable, it is rendered criminal.

Hinchy (2019) asserts that hijras became a site of hysteria as they were labelled as child abductors, a narrative that is closely tied to the British child-saving project. The hijra poses a perceived threat to male children; not only due to the potential for abduction but, more critically, because of the loss of maleness associated with the act of castration. This perspective fails to acknowledge that, within the hijra community, castration is a voluntary act of devotion to a deity. This narrative established a precedent for the child-saving initiative, the echoes of which persist today, reflecting state-sponsored anxieties surrounding gender categorisation that upholds the sanctity of a patriarchal nuclear family unit. Consequently, marginalised bodies are perceived as threats to societal privilege, which leads to a perceived need for their termination. In this way, the hijra identity resembles that of homo sacer – a historical entity that may be killed but cannot be sacrificed (Agamben, 1995, p. 71) According to Agamben (1995, p. 82), the enigma of a homo sacer individual lies in their being "simply set outside human jurisdiction without being brought into the realm of divine law". The homo sacer represents the original sovereign being whose life and death are under state control. Hijras epitomise this power dynamic in their marginalisation. Hijras thus serve as black boxes of gender relations in South Asia, illustrating the costs associated with transgressing social norms. While it may be claimed that there is little regard for the lives of hijras, who often beg and face disenfranchisement and discrimination, their material conditions reveal the operations of state, national, and global powers. Perceiving the world through a lens of disembodiment therefore reflects hijra sensibility. Both hijras and homo sacer enable this perspective.

Given the profound entanglement of colonialism with hijra identity, it is imperative to adopt a decolonial approach to understanding hijrahood – one that transcends the lens imposed upon this identity, which has historically served to disenfranchise it. Such an approach facilitates "a recognition of one's own positionality as scholar, critic, and speaker, recognises the necessity to decentre and pluralise knowledge formations, and finally offers alternative ways to conceptualize and experience the world" (Gallien, 2020, p. 28). Consequently, an individual's claim to their vernacular transness, not only in linguistic terms but also in relation to lived experiences, affords a deeper understanding of the possibilities for gender variance in contemporary society and the implications for cultural discourse and historical contexts. This understanding resists quick translation.

In Gayatri Reddy's (2006) With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India, the demand for respectability among hijras is articulated through the realities of their bodies. Reddy (2006) notes that Kotis, or effeminate men, are defined by their roles as receptive partners in penetrative sexual activity, without altering their assigned gender identity. In contrast, hijras undergo a rite of passage through the Nirvan operation, which involves the removal of their genitals, thereby committing to the life of a hijra. This act of sacrifice affords hijras a greater degree of societal respectability. It is only through the process of castration that hijras secure a place in society, which is a privilege that Kotis may not achieve. As one of Reddy's (2006, p. 225) subjects explained: "If people give us respect, then we are also respectful. But if they do not… then we also abuse them verbally and lift our saris. Then they bow their heads in shame and give us respect. It is like that." This highlights the precarious balance of the hijra body on the seesaw of shame and respect. To constitute hijra subjecthood necessitates enduring ritualistic humiliation through the renunciation of the ability to conform to hetero-patriarchal gender norms. Paradoxically, this loss enables hijras to attain social and, increasingly, political standing. The hijra experience demonstrates that individuals are not condemned to a life of shame; rather, they can transform circumstances of shame into sources of power. The embodiment of hijras closely aligns with the notion that shame does not negate respectability; indeed, it may, as hijras suggest, catalyse the demand for it. The navigation of shame and the acceptance of oneself and suffering become matters of respect.

Vaibhav Saria describes the hijra as a disembodied being who finds no benefit or status in the material realm, instead engaging with the spiritual world. Saria (2021) further elucidates that this spiritual dimension of hijra identity arises from practices of asexuality and asceticism. In mainstream culture, hijras are frequently portrayed as hypersexual beings that rely solely on sex work for their livelihood. Saria (2021) challenges this stereotype by asserting that, historically, given their ritualistic practice of castration, hijras were perceived as spiritual entities. The act of castration is rooted in a quest for spiritual liberation from the burdens and pressures of material existence. Castration constitutes only one aspect of what defines hijra as a spiritual identity. According to Saria (2021), begging represents another facet of this ascetic practice. She provides an example of a hijra interviewee who articulated the significance of begging to her identity. The act of begging positions individuals outside the capitalist framework of surplus generation; instead, it relies on the goodwill of others through the act of seeking. Here, the self in relation to the world becomes paramount. The shame associated with depending on others for sustenance is something that Saria's (2021) subject wished to convey to her. More than merely belonging, hijras offer valuable lessons. While hijrahood may be accompanied by shame, embracing that shame allows for alternative ways of being that hold meaning for those who grapple with the challenges of gender discrimination.

The characteristics of hijrahood, which involve navigating a feminine identity to carve out a non-binary space, invoke a form of liberation. The very act of severing the penis from the body propels hijras beyond a system that codes power according to the phallus. While this marginalisation may render them criminals in the eyes of society, it does not strip them of agency or power. The misconception that marginal bodies lack agency, or freedom is a significant fallacy. The plight of the marginalised body, often perceived as pitiable due to oppression, is far from the reality depicted by Reddy (2006) and Saria (2021). Despite the social designation of marginality imposed upon hijras, they embody vitality for those who are queer. They confront power with truth, expressing joy and sorrow in tandem. Although my own queerness was once derided by being categorised as a hijra, I have come to appreciate the resilience of the hijra body in the face of adversity. These women confidently occupy public spaces, soliciting alms with authority, regardless of societal shame and rejection. Hijrahood embodies a journey of overcoming the fear of emasculation and embracing shame as a means of resisting systems of oppression. In this light, the hijra transforms into a symbol of ecstasy/ex-stasis, showcasing liberation from bodily expectations and social regulations while delving into realms of both sexuality and spirituality, all through the lens of shame.

The Hijra Ecstasy

There is a story about an interaction between Narada, the messenger of the Devas, and Vishnu, one of the three aspects of the Hindu holy trinity, as recorded in the Bhagavat Purana.

Narada, unable to conceptualise Maya, the illusion of the material world, inquires of Vishnu regarding its nature. Vishnu responds that Maya cannot be explained and can only be experienced. At that moment, an inexplicable thirst arises within Narada, which prompted him to request water from Vishnu. Vishnu instructed him to go to the nearby river but cautioned him to wash immediately after drinking from it. When Narada inevitably neglected this advice, he transformed into a woman. Shortly thereafter, Narada's beauty attracts a passerby who requests her hand in marriage. This blissful union results in the birth of 60 children, symbolising an abundance of worldly pleasures. However, a plague subsequently claims the lives of all of Narada's children and her husband. In the depths of her grief, Narada experiences a profound hunger and, upon spotting a mango, climbs onto the bodies of her children and husband to reach the fruit. Before consuming it, a sage advises her to wash herself to avoid contamination from the deceased. As she immerses herself in the river, Narada keeps one of her bangled hands out of the water to hold the mango afloat. Upon emerging from the water, Narada realises that she has spent her earthly existence in pursuit of a grahasti, or household. Vishnu revealed himself, having transformed from the sage, and informed Narada that the hunger she experienced was Maya. In reverence, Narada brought her bangled hands together (Pattanaik, 2014, p. 63).

Myth, as Barthes contends, through its departure from logical order, enables us to arrive at meaning. Pattanaik (2014) examined this myth within a series on queerness as represented in Hindu mythology. His work prompted several pertinent inquiries concerning the queer narrative. Why does Narada transform into a woman to gain insight into Maya, the illusion of the material world? Why does she leave her hand outside the river at the end? Why does she retain a marker of queerness after the experience, even as a divine being endowed with power? This narrative addresses hunger and desire rather than gender. Nonetheless, it is through the gendered experience that Narada comprehends the limitations of the physical realm. A mother who weeps for her children and subsequently treads upon the bodies of her deceased children to sustain herself raises profound questions. Is the illusion here the expectations of motherhood? Motherhood is a state of being that places the child before the individual. What implications does this have for our understanding of humanity if categories remain inflexible in the face of contradictions and complexities?

Is there only one way for transness to manifest? A challenge persists in integrating contextual or supralocal trans experiences within broader trans politics. A monolithic theory may obscure the nuances of conflicting subjective and contextual experiences. The issue of a hijra claiming their space within trans politics, as dictated by the English-speaking world, aligns with what Spivak (1993) asserts regarding the subaltern. The subaltern is "not to describe 'the way things really were' or to privilege the narrative of history as imperialism as the best version of history. It is, rather, to offer an account of how an explanation and narrative of reality was established as the normative one" (Spivak, 1993, p. 76). The effort is therefore misplaced in seeking visibility that demands unification. Instead, there should be room for contextual experiences, aberrations, differences, and exceptions. One can embody queerness through a discursive and intentional effort to resist oppressive norms beyond their choice of partners, gender performance, or social relationships. The hijra, as more than merely trans or gay in a Western global lexicon, challenges the notion that a unified language is the sole model for comprehending trans experiences. There should not be a demand in queer politics for a comprehensive theory that renders all forms of queerness intelligible or neatly categorised. Perhaps the hijra can be valid, or perhaps not. Rather than conforming to a singular identity, one may also choose never to identify as a hijra.

Trans variance embodies trans joy. Eisenberg-Guyot and Rotolo (2022, p. 285) assert that a trans perspective entails seeing "each other through, between, and beyond transphobia and points toward seeing itself as a site and strategy of trans politics". The hijra extends and redefines this perspective into a realm of further possibilities. Recognising the hijra as a vernacular contributes to this trans joy, moving beyond the desire to align with binary norms or palatability. Instead, it reveals that transness can manifest in myriad forms, including in those who may not exhibit the conventional markers of trans identity. Trans identity and experience are lived and shared communally. While the roots of their identity stem from forces that are socially and historically significant to highlight, transness is simultaneously personal and universal. This understanding has the potential to alleviate the very fears surrounding transness that often provoke apprehension, thereby offering liberation, as the hijras have always understood.

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Do Not Leave Us Out! Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights for Women with Disabilities

A Review of Policies in Zimbabwe

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Introduction

A broad definition of disability that does not prioritise impairment as the primary cause of dysfunction is increasingly accepted in contemporary disability discourse. Disability is defined as long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, may impede full and effective participation in society (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [UNCRPD], 2006). This chapter does not aim to examine access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for women with disabilities through a medicalised lens of disability (Riddle, 2020). Instead, it seeks to explore existing policies in Zimbabwe within the context of a society that is evolving towards greater inclusivity (Berghs et al., 2019). Access to SRHR is crucial for the empowerment of women to enable them to make informed choices regarding their personal lives.

The demand for SRHR for women with disabilities is particularly pertinent given their cultural perception as asexual and unworthy of the full rights afforded to their non-disabled peers. The recognition of the rights of women with disabilities is grounded in the principles enshrined in the UNCRPD (2006), which aims to address the injustices faced by persons with disabilities. Rugoho and Maphosa (2017) assert that the UNCRPD delineates extensive rights for persons with disabilities, including access to SRHR. However, it appears that the majority of women with disabilities in Zimbabwe are not availing themselves of these rights. This chapter seeks to review policies in Zimbabwe that align with the provision of healthcare services within the framework of international standards.

The utilisation and operationalisation of legal instruments are critical in safeguarding the rights of women, particularly those with disabilities. Women with disabilities are more likely to experience marginalisation and exclusion from mainstream public health initiatives than their non-disabled counterparts. The examination of policies related to quality health provision in Zimbabwe is prompted by the observation that women with disabilities appear to be excluded from access to SRHR. This article aims to review the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the Disabled Persons Act [17:01] as amended, the National Disability Policy, the National Reproductive Health Policy, and the 2016-2020 National Health Strategy (NHS). Additionally, the discussion considers the National Development Strategy (NDS) 1, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (POA), and the Age of Consent. A significant challenge that requires attention is the lack of studies that address the complex relationship between health policies, legislation, and access to or utilisation of **sexual and reproductive health** services for persons with disabilities in sub-Saharan Africa (Mac-Seeing et al., 2020)**.**

Defining Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

SRHR encompass a broad spectrum of services that involve both physical and relational components of preventative health at minimal cost (Massay, 2021; Sundewall & Poku, 2018). These services include the reduction of unplanned pregnancies and unsafe abortions, the mitigation of the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), the prevention of sexual violence against minors and persons with disabilities, the provision of affordable contraceptive measures and counselling, pre- and postnatal care, access to skilled healthcare professionals during childbirth, the reduction of gender-based violence, and the increased uptake of condom use (Sundewall & Poku, 2018). Access to SRHR for women and girls, which includes the exercise of their agency in deciding if and when to engage in sexual intercourse, as well as if and when to bear children, is critical for achieving gender equality. Global studies conducted within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) have highlighted the urgent need to enhance access to SRHR for women with disabilities, a need that remains inadequately addressed within the African context (Ganle et al., 2021). The primary challenge lies in effectively addressing the SRHR needs of women while simultaneously meeting the requirements of women with disabilities (Ganle et al., 2021).

SRHR for Women with Disabilities

There are over one billion individuals with disabilities worldwide, and global prevalence rates indicate that there are more women with disabilities than men, at 19% and 12% respectively (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women [UN Women], 2019). Specifically, one in five women globally has a disability (UN Women, 2019). The majority of women with disabilities reside in low- and middle-income countries (UN Women, 2019). While women with disabilities encounter similar barriers as non-disabled women, they face compounded obstacles, including discrimination and environmental limitations that impede their rights (Cord, 2023). Unfortunately, women with disabilities are often excluded from activities that facilitate access to SRHR, such as screening, prevention, and healthcare services, due to the ongoing association of disability with asexuality and an inability to bear children (Gartrell et al., 2017). Consequently, healthcare facilities frequently lack the necessary infrastructure and expertise to address the needs of women with disabilities in accessing SRHR (Gartrell et al., 2017).

Globally, SRHR are often perceived as the sole responsibility of women, which may account for the low priority assigned to this broad area of health rights (Men Engage Alliance, 2020). The limited studies available indicate that women with disabilities encounter significant barriers to accessing SRHR in Africa, and more specifically Zimbabwe (Ganle et al., 2020). Women with disabilities worldwide have considerable unmet needs in accessing sexual and reproductive health services (Dean et al., 2017). These unmet needs are influenced by discourses that portray individuals living with disabilities, particularly women with disabilities, as lacking sexual needs or agency, implying that they do not require access to sexual and reproductive health services (Dean et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies have documented and acknowledged the marginalisation of women with disabilities in economic, political, and social participation compared to their non-disabled counterparts (Gartrell et al., 2017).

Furthermore, there is a dearth of literature on studies that provide narratives of sexuality among women with disabilities in Zimbabwe (Peta et al., 2017). It can be argued that this reflects a lack of clear policies and a legal framework that support women with disabilities in accessing SRHR. Globally, the SRHR of persons with disabilities have historically been substantially neglected, as evidenced by the lack of access to SRHR information and the right to decide whether to have a family (Gartrell et al., 2017). Gendered norms create expectations for women to bear children; however, the stigma that women with disabilities experience excludes them from fulfilling this expected role (Dean et al., 2017). A study conducted by Khan and Alam (2019) on the intersections of gender, disability, and sexuality in Bangladesh indicated that women with disabilities expressed feelings of being stigmatised when they shared their thoughts and desires concerning their sexual lives. Some of the disabled women in the study rejected the socially expected passive role of a disabled woman who lacks agency concerning her own sexuality (Khan & Alam, 2019). Social norms and various forms of stigmatisation therefore need to be challenged through carefully crafted policies to ensure that women with disabilities have equitable access to SRHR.

The lack of comprehensive policies on disability and access to SRHR is another gap that exists in many societies. A study conducted in Sweden targeting healthcare professionals working with young people with intellectual disabilities and SRHR showed that the absence of well-documented guidelines and policies affected the effectiveness of their work (Wickström et al., 2020). Similarly, a review of policies on gender, disability, and tourism in Zimbabwe concluded that there are inconsistencies in some policies that could exclude women with disabilities from enjoying their full rights (Munodawafa & Zengeni, 2022). The presence of these policy gaps underscores the immediate need to re-evaluate the policy and legal framework in Zimbabwe, with the aim of ensuring the comprehensive inclusion of women with disabilities in all spheres of life. Furthermore, while there are international conventions on disability and sexual health, the manner in which countries decide to implement them differs substantially (Bahner, 2019). It is therefore imperative to review policies that support SRHR in Zimbabwe to assess whether these policies enable women with disabilities to access such rights.

Intersectionality Theory and SRHR

The review of policies is informed by the intersectionality theory, which posits that women's lives are influenced by intersecting systems of oppression (Carastathis, 2014). The term "intersectionality" explores how various forms of inequality and identity interact in different contexts and over time, such as the intersectionality of race, gender, and disability (Gillborn, 2015).

Intersectional discrimination is defined as "a situation in which people are discriminated against on different grounds, which taken together result in a level of prejudice that is higher than if these different grounds were taken separately" (De Beco, 2020, p. 593). Developed by Crenshaw (1989), the intersectionality theory incorporates an advocacy element aimed at forming coalitions among diverse groups to resist and transform the status quo (Gillborn, 2015). This theory necessitates that researchers examine the simultaneous effects of systems and structures of oppression. Mainstream feminist theories often categorise vulnerabilities into single categories; however, the intersectionality theory compels researchers to engage in critical reflection on inequalities, which suggests that women with disabilities encounter intersecting layers of inequalities that hinder their access to sexual and reproductive health rights.

This chapter argues that these intersecting layers of oppression also impede women with disabilities from being recognised as sexual beings with SRHR. The intersectionality theory has further been employed to analyse health inequities and enhance understanding of the multi-layered nature of disparities (Hankivsky, 2014). Feminist discourse has established that women with disabilities face specific challenges linked to intersectional forms of gender inequality, such as the type of disability, severity, poverty, and rurality (Gartrell et al., 2017).

Women with disabilities rely on the availability of healthcare facilities that provide appropriate services and infrastructure tailored to their needs. The complexity of inequities that affect women with disabilities necessitates an intersectional approach, whereby the interplay of various characteristics of vulnerable populations at both individual and structural levels, such as class, ableism, gender, and sexism, shapes people's lives (Hankivsky, 2014).

Objectives of the Policy Review

The purpose of this study was to review SRHR policies in Zimbabwe to evaluate whether they address the diverse needs of women with disabilities. Central to this analysis are issues of accessibility, affordability, and availability of SRHR for women with disabilities.

Methodology

The study analysed whether the existing policies facilitate the availability, affordability, and accessibility of SRHR for women with disabilities. To achieve this, a policy review of SRHR was conducted employing document analysis in a qualitative research framework. Document analysis is defined as a "procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material" (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). This method entails skimming, in-depth analysis, and interpretation of documents (Bowen, 2009). The researchers meticulously examined various policy and legislative documents to assess whether the diverse needs of women with disabilities were acknowledged and whether resources were allocated to address these needs. This paper scrutinises various pieces of legislation, international conventions, and policy documents pertaining to SRHR and disabilities in Zimbabwe, utilising a gender perspective.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The presentation and discussion of policies in this section concentrate on the available SRHR policies in Zimbabwe. Each policy is analysed and discussed in accordance with the study's objective. The discussion also employs a gender perspective to evaluate whether the legal and policy framework effectively mitigates gender disparities for women with disabilities in accessing SRHR. The following policies and Acts are discussed:

- Disabled Persons Act [17:01]
- National Disability Policy (2021)
- Universal Health Coverage
- The New Constitution (2013)
- The NDS 1: Vision 2020-2025
- National Reproductive Health Policy
- ICPD POA
- NHS 2021-2025

- Age of Consent

Review of Zimbabwe's Legal and Policy Frameworks on SRHR for Women with Disabilities

The Disabled Persons Act [17:01] of 1992

Zimbabwe was one of the first countries in Africa to enact legislation aimed at promoting the empowerment of individuals with disabilities; however, this legislation is now considered outdated and in need of repeal (National Disability Policy, 2021). The Disabled Persons Act is one of the pivotal legal frameworks established post-independence in 1980. The Disabled Persons Act prohibits the denial of access to public premises for individuals with disabilities, to which members of the public are ordinarily admitted. The Act explicitly stipulates that persons with disabilities are entitled to full access to community and social services. Access to SRHR is essential for the emancipation of women with disabilities. In Zimbabwe, women with disabilities encounter significant challenges in accessing quality sexual and reproductive health services due to service providers' limited knowledge and skills in effectively communicating with them. Ganle et al. (2016) assert that there is a lack of adaptation of health information to accommodate persons with disabilities. Privacy concerns, which are a critical component of health service delivery, are compromised, as deaf women require someone who is proficient in sign language to convey the information they wish to communicate to healthcare personnel. Burke et al. (2017) highlight the absence of privacy and confidential services at the point of access. While writing a message on paper could mitigate breaches of privacy, some deaf women may be illiterate or semi-literate. Criticism of the Disabled Persons Act centres on its lack of the use of first-person language. Specifically, the term "disabled persons" does not conform to the preferred first-person language; the acceptable terminology should be "persons with disabilities". Activists for the rights of persons with disabilities now consider the Disabled Persons Act to be moribund or outdated. Furthermore, it has been argued that the Act is rooted in the medical model, which perceives individuals with disabilities as sick and in need of "fixing". This medical model is inadequate in addressing the intersecting forms of inequality and exclusion that women with disabilities encounter in accessing sexual and reproductive health services in Zimbabwe.

The National Disability Policy (2021)

The National Disability Policy was enacted against the backdrop of the government's commitment to fulfilling, promoting, protecting, and respecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the National Disability Policy was introduced at a time when the people of Zimbabwe were progressing towards the national vision of becoming an upper middle-income society by 2030. The purpose of the National Disability Policy is to guide the state and all institutions in formulating and supporting the implementation of laws, policies, and intervention strategies that facilitate the fulfilment of the rights of persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe. The policy explicitly stipulates that persons with disabilities must have access to free healthcare services in public health institutions, including in areas of sexual and reproductive healthcare and population-based programmes. Despite this robust policy framework for persons with disabilities, women with disabilities continue to be excluded from mainstream healthcare service delivery systems. Apolot et al. (2019) contend that there is limited availability of special outreach services for antenatal and postnatal care targeting persons with disabilities. Critical shortages of medications in public hospitals leave women with disabilities, who are generally economically disadvantaged, at risk of not receiving medical care for health complications that may arise. Moreover, the provisions of the National Disability Policy have yet to be fully operationalised to ensure that women with disabilities can fully access their SRHR. For instance, one of the objectives of the National Disability Policy explicitly states that the individual right to free and informed consent of persons with disabilities must be respected within healthcare settings and decision-making processes, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health.

Universal Health Coverage

It is encouraging to note that Zimbabwe subscribes to Universal Health Coverage, which stipulates that individuals should have access to the healthcare services they require without risking financial ruin or impoverishment (Mhazo & Maponga, 2022). Universal Health Coverage is conceptualised as a framework in which equity in healthcare provision is prioritised and disparities between the economically advantaged and the less advantaged are minimised. However, the situation for women with disabilities in Zimbabwe does not appear to reflect the successful implementation of Universal Health Coverage. Institutionalised discrimination, isolation, and stereotyping of women with disabilities persist unabated (Rugoho & Siziba, 2014). Women with disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and victimisation, as they are often perceived as weak and therefore easy targets (Rugoho & Maphosa, 2017). Many public institutions mandated to provide healthcare services in the country are characterised by infrastructural inaccessibility. Apolot et al. (2019) indicate the prevalence of prolonged waiting times and disability-unfriendly physical healthcare infrastructure. While the government is undertaking significant efforts to improve the accessibility of physical infrastructure at national and district hospitals, further actions are required to facilitate the movement of wheelchair users and individuals with varying physical disabilities. Additionally, the shortage of trained healthcare professionals who can assist persons with disabilities, depending on the nature of their disabilities, may compromise access to and the privacy of women with disabilities in relation to sexual and reproductive health services.

The New Zimbabwe Constitution (2013)

The Constitution of Zimbabwe serves as the foundational legislative framework that governs the nation within the context of the law. It explicitly establishes the right to healthcare in Section 74(1-4), which asserts that every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe is entitled to access basic healthcare services. This constitutional provision unequivocally affirms that no Zimbabwean citizen should be excluded from Universal Health Coverage.

Despite the Constitution's clarity regarding the accessibility of basic healthcare services, women with disabilities encounter significant barriers in obtaining healthcare services that cater to their specific needs. For example, women who are deaf require health-related services to be delivered in sign language; however, public hospitals in the country lack sign language interpreters among their staff, which results in a communication gap. The majority of hospital personnel are unable to converse in sign language, which hinders access to essential health services.

Moreover, women who are visually impaired do not receive health information in accessible formats, such as braille, which would enable them to fully engage with the information from the comfort of their homes. Additionally, women with physical disabilities face challenges due to inaccessible entrances to health service points in hospital environments. In rural communities, healthcare facilities are often located considerable distances from homesteads, which further complicates access for women with disabilities who must travel long distances to seek medical attention.

Cultural misconceptions regarding disability also contribute to the barriers faced by women with disabilities in accessing vital information related to SRHR. Healthcare providers may unconsciously overlook the importance of empowering women with disabilities with crucial information concerning their SRHR, which is often a consequence of deeply entrenched cultural fallacies about disability. Ganle et al. (2016) postulate that there is a lack of knowledge or limited capacity among staff regarding sexual and reproductive health issues that affect persons with disabilities.

The Constitution, in Section 83, clearly stipulates that the state must take appropriate measures, within the limits of available resources, to ensure that persons with disabilities can realise their full mental and physical potential, including access to medical, psychological, and functional treatment. While the state is committed to taking appropriate measures to facilitate the realisation of the mental and physical potential of persons with disabilities, the phrase "within the limits of the resources available" may provide a convenient justification for insufficient funding of public hospitals, thereby impeding the accessibility and affordability of sexual and reproductive health services for women with disabilities.

The National Development Strategy (NDS) 1: Vision 2020-2025

The NDS 1 delineates the strategies, policies, legal and institutional reforms, and projects that will be executed over the five-year period from 2021 to 2025, with the aim of achieving accelerated, high, inclusive, broad-based, and sustainable economic growth, alongside socio-economic transformation and development. Through a comprehensive stakeholder consultative process, one of the numerous priorities identified is health and well-being in the NDS 1. Under the section on social protection, there is clear emphasis on the need to protect vulnerable groups, which include persons with disabilities, children, and the elderly. While the NDS 1 explicitly states the need for new interventions and modifications to existing programmes, no disaggregated data currently exist that demonstrate the specific targeting of women with disabilities in SRHR education. This absence of information complicates the understanding of the access that women with disabilities have to SRHR in public hospitals.

National Reproductive Health Policy

This policy is pivotal in the provision of services encompassing maternal health, family planning, treatment for STIs, including HIV and AIDS, and adolescent reproductive health (Rugoho & Maphosa, 2017). Although the policy is crucial for the prevention of STIs and HIV and AIDS, there is a paucity of information regarding the services extended to women with disabilities concerning maternal health. There appear to be no disaggregated data that clearly outline the services provided to women with disabilities in relation to SRHR. Such data would be instrumental in determining whether there has been progress in incorporating women with disabilities into matters concerning SRHR or if there are gaps that require urgent attention. Rugoho and Maphosa (2017) note that very few studies have been conducted in Zimbabwe on sexual and reproductive health among women with disabilities, which results in a limited understanding of the challenges they encounter in accessing sexual and reproductive health services. The National Reproductive Health Policy serves as a significant instrument for advancing maternal health, family planning, and the management of STIs; however, there appears to be a lack of clarity regarding the inclusion of women with disabilities in this initiative.

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (POA)

The government of Zimbabwe has been implementing the principles enshrined in the ICPD POA. Zimbabwe has committed to providing universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, which include universal primary health services. At the Nairobi Summit, held in November 2019 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the ICPD, the Government of Zimbabwe reiterated its commitment to addressing the goals of the ICPD POA. Under SDG 4, which seeks to ensure access to comprehensive and age-appropriate information, education, and adolescent-friendly, comprehensive quality and timely services, the government of Zimbabwe pledged to ensure that hard-to-reach populations, such as persons with disabilities, have immediate access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. While this commitment is commendable, the approach is notably gender-blind, as it fails to specify the distinct needs of women with disabilities, which differ from those of men with disabilities. The neglect of the sexuality of women with disabilities is argued to have resulted in the perpetuation of various myths that contribute to the perception that women with disabilities do not need to be acknowledged in discussions about sexuality (Peta et al., 2017).

National Health Strategy (NHS) (2021-2025)

The government of Zimbabwe has developed a national health strategy that has the potential to yield positive health outcomes for its citizens. For example, the government has explicitly outlined improvements in health emergency preparedness and response capacities, which could enhance the resilience of the population against unforeseen pandemics or natural disasters. Additionally, health sector priorities have been clearly defined to establish a coherent roadmap for implementing strategies that promote health for all in Zimbabwe.

It is noteworthy that the NHS articulates strategies aimed at enhancing reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health nutrition, which are critical interventions for health delivery in the country. The strategy also delineates approaches for mitigating the impact of both communicable and non-communicable diseases. However, while Strategic Intervention 3.2.1.9 addresses the improvement of early identification and prevention of childhood disabilities through the upscaling of the At-Risk Surveillance System, interventions specifically targeting women and girls with disabilities are not sufficiently highlighted. This demographic appears to be underrepresented in health interventions designed to enhance their quality of life.

Furthermore, issues regarding access to SRHR are not adequately addressed in the NHS. The significance of SRHR is particularly pronounced for women and girls with disabilities, who are often excluded from sexuality education. It is also encouraging that Strategic Intervention 3.4.2.5 outlines morbidity management and disability prevention, proposing the establishment of routine and organised morbidity management and disability programmes for conditions that lead to disability, including leprosy, trachoma, and lymphatic filariasis. However, given the resource constraints faced by government healthcare facilities, women with disabilities may still encounter barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services.

Age of Consent

The age of consent constitutes a contentious issue in Zimbabwe's legal and policy framework, which is characterised by a lack of harmonisation in laws. The age of consent is defined as the age at which an individual can legally consent to sexual activity. A recent constitutional ruling established the age of consent in Zimbabwe as 18 years. Prior to this ruling, the age of consent was set at 16 years, as indicated in the amendment to the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23]. The elevation of the age of consent to 18 years has significant implications for girls' access to contraceptives. This issue is further complicated for women with disabilities, who are not only frequently excluded from decisions regarding their sexuality but are also often regarded as either ill or as minors, irrespective of their actual age. According to Kika (2019), a report by the Justice for Children Trust highlights the absence of legislation that specifies the age threshold at which parental consent is required for a child to access sexual and reproductive health services. While no formal legislation exists, it is common practice to require parental consent for children under the age of 16 years who are seeking access to these services. Such practices adversely affect girls with disabilities below the age of 16 in obtaining contraceptives. Given that children below the age of 16 years cannot legally consent to sexual intercourse, this law perpetuates the assumption that minors do not have SRHR.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The review of existing policies reveals a fragmented approach to SRHR, as relevant provisions are dispersed across various legislative and policy frameworks. This disjointed approach hampers the establishment of consistency in addressing the needs of women with disabilities. Although the more recent National Disability Policy acknowledges intersectional issues that affect women with disabilities, other legislation, such as the Disabled Persons Act, remains outdated and lacks specific provisions that promote inclusivity in accessing sexual and reproductive health services for women with disabilities.

The study also established that certain policies, such as the Disabled Persons Act, are gender-blind and do not differentiate between the needs of women with disabilities and those of men with disabilities. This blanket approach is detrimental to women with disabilities in accessing reproductive and healthcare services, as specific provisions are overlooked. There is a pressing need for the Act to be reviewed to ensure that it contains appropriate language that empowers women with disabilities. An urgent revision of the Disabled Persons Act is necessary to move away from the medical model currently employed in the legislation. Recognising the intersectionality of gender, disability, race, ethnicity, and geographical location is essential and should be enshrined in laws and policies that provide for SRHR.

The policy review clearly indicates that the policies are not supported by financial resources, which are critical for guaranteeing women with disabilities access to SRHR. This is evidenced in Section 83 of the Constitution, which only guarantees the provision of services for persons with disabilities contingent upon the availability of resources. The government should prioritise the needs of women with disabilities, as they are disproportionately affected by poverty compared to individuals without disabilities and men with disabilities. The availability of necessary resources for women with disabilities at healthcare facilities is vital for their well-being, empowerment, and independence. This entails the state ensuring that healthcare facilities are staffed by personnel who can provide comprehensive assistance to women with disabilities.

There is a need for further studies on SRHR and disability. There is currently a lack of comprehensive information on sexuality and women with disabilities in Zimbabwe. Such studies are instrumental in informing policymakers about the needs of women with disabilities. While this trend is not unique to Zimbabwe, there is a need to bridge the knowledge gap in this area. These studies are critical as they empower women with disabilities to exercise their agency and assert their identities in articulating their sexuality. Women with disabilities are often perceived as asexual or lacking the desire to marry and bear children. Such social norms must be eradicated.

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Class, Race, Gender, Geographical, and Environmental Expropriation According to Rosa Luxemburg's Theory

Super-Exploitation in South Africa, Then and Now

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Introduction

Deep features of colonial and apartheid-era political economy continue to ensure that in South Africa, despite political democracy having been achieved, various social, economic, and environmental factors of life are all in decline. Crucial international pressures were at work during the 1990s and an "elite transition" left the basic economic system of capitalist exploitation intact (Bond, 2003; 2014). More fundamentally, the analysis below suggests that what is crucial in South Africa, both historically and today, is the way that the capitalist mode of production has dispossessed wealth from non-capitalist sources. Decoloniality that accounts for colonial + apartheid-legacy political economy will require coming to grips with this structural feature of South Africa's predatory capitalism.

The first to make this argument as part of a general theory of imperialism was Rosa Luxemburg, in The Accumulation of Capital, written in 1913 amidst an exceptionally active schedule as a leading official of the German Social Democratic Party.

Luxemburg's understanding of South Africa was informed by a growing body of secondary literature available in Berlin, which included critical political and economic analyses by John Hobson, Olive Schreiner, and Sol Plaatje. These authors depicted an era characterised by extreme forms of "primitive accumulation", following the "Scramble for Africa" in 1884-1885, at a Berlin conference dedicated to the acquisition and administration of colonial territories. While Luxemburg was able to analyse South Africa's systems of migrant and quasi-slave labour, land expropriation, the exploitation of natural resources, and other forms of dispossession through various accounts, it was her task to extend Karl Marx's theory of capital accumulation by systematically incorporating the non-capitalist relations that facilitated accumulation.

Luxemburg (2003, p. 76) conceptualised accumulation as a "ceaseless flow of capital from one branch of production to another, and finally in the periodic and cyclical swings of reproduction between overproduction and crisis". Due to the crisis tendencies that influenced capital in geographical ways, it was inevitable that imperialism involved the dispossession of colonial lands as capital advanced from the centre to the periphery in search of new terrains for accumulation. In such contexts, there existed various forms of pre-capitalist society, including patriarchies, mutual-aid systems, and environmental assets.

As Luxemburg (2003, p. 327) articulated,

> Non-capitalist relations provide a fertile soil for capitalism; more strictly: capital feeds on the ruins of such relations, and although this non-capitalist milieu is indispensable for accumulation, the latter proceeds at the cost of this medium nevertheless, by eating it up. Historically, the accumulation of capital is a kind of metabolism between capitalist economy and those pre-capitalist methods of production without which it cannot go on and which, in this light, it corrodes and assimilates.

The subsequent advances on this theory since the 1970s were rapid after Harold Wolpe (1980) elucidated how capitalist and non-capitalist "articulations of modes of production" were functional within the framework of apartheid.

Although Wolpe's analysis did not incorporate gender considerations or ecological appropriations, Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe (1978) offered a feminist interpretation of capitalist-patriarchal societies, which later became known as "social reproduction" and the "second shift". By the 1970s, feminist critiques of modern society expanded beyond first-generation concerns with the public sphere, such as voting and other forms of political participation, into a second wave that emphasised women's unpaid labour in childbearing, child-rearing, caregiving for injured or ill workers and retirees, as well as community tasks aimed at advancing territorial social welfare. In South Africa during most of the 20th century, these occurred in distant Bantustan labour reserves, without the standard childcare crèches and schools, health systems, and retirement funds of advanced capitalism (aside from the sporadic existence of religious missionary schools).

As David Harvey (2017, p. 14) acknowledges, the capital-labour relationship that underpins capitalism possesses an additional characteristic that no political-economic analyst can afford to overlook: "… social reproduction as a separate and autonomous sphere of activity providing in effect a free gift to capital in the persona of the labourer who returns to the workplace as fit and ready for work as possible." Likewise, there is a "free gift of nature" in the form of environmental resources appropriated by extractive-industry corporations. When considered through even the World Bank's lens of "natural capital accounting", the associated resource depletion and pollution reveal how much plundering South Africa has suffered in the post-apartheid era.

The point about applying this theory to South Africa is that even in the earliest proto-colonial and later full-blown colonial stages, capital accumulation was amplified by resource extraction and other forms of brutal capitalist/non-capitalist power relations, including racism and patriarchy. Also, as shown through a variety of recent databases, present-day neo-liberal

South African capitalism has again amplified the underlying gendered and ecological aspects of super-exploitation, with extreme geographical features that also entail ongoing forms of racial bias.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Capitalist Crisis, and the Extractive Industries

Multinational corporations began to assume a significant and enduring role at the southernmost tip of Africa in the late 15th century, following the voyages of Portuguese mercantilists Bartolomeu Dias and Vasco da Gama in 1488 and 1497. These expeditions were soon succeeded by slavers, traders, and settlers from Portugal and the Netherlands. The first notable South African settlement, which exemplified FDI, was established by Jan van Riebeeck of the Dutch East India Company in 1652 at what is now Cape Town. Similar to other such enterprises, the immediate objective was the suppression of local indigenous populations, specifically the Khoi San (Magubane, 2001). Numerous overseas firms subsequently adopted a comparable approach to coastal port development and financial market deepening to facilitate global trade, as exemplified by the London-based Standard Chartered Bank, which was founded in 1857 in present-day Gqeberha (Bond, 2003).

However, of paramount importance to South Africa's future was the emergence of De Beers, the first company to arise from the combined extraction of natural resources and extreme surplus value appropriation in the interior of the colony. By the mid-20th century, it had evolved into a global monopoly controlling the diamond market. Rather than resorting to enslavement and suppression, the firm and its successors engaged in the economic coercion of Bantu peoples to work in Kimberley's "Big Hole" mine. This period marked the emergence of the region's notorious migrant labour system, which was largely funded through London-based financial capital, as orchestrated by entrepreneur-turned-empire-builder Cecil Rhodes.

The 1870s and 1880s witnessed a consolidation of Kimberley's diamond mines; however, Rhodes and his associates initially overlooked the gold rush in Johannesburg during the 1880s and 1890s. This oversight, coupled with the subsequent control of Johannesburg by the descendants of Dutch settlers known as Afrikaners, provoked a strong backlash from his office in Cape Town and, in turn, from London. This response first manifested in the infamous and failed Jameson Raid on Johannesburg in 1895. This event ultimately compelled Rhodes and Queen Victoria to engage in a full-scale war from 1899 to 1902. The British military, largely acting on Rhodes' behalf, embarked on a colonial land grab from the resident Afrikaners during the Anglo-Boer War (also referred to as the South African War), which was fought unsuccessfully by predominantly Afrikaner peasants against Rhodes' invading forces.

From the victory of what came to be known as "English-speaking capital", a favourable intra-white political settlement emerged in 1910, which determined the final borders of the Union of South Africa. Afrikaners remained in the numerical majority within the new national boundaries; it was therefore essential for English capital to assimilate one of their leaders, Jan Smuts, who became one of the world's leading politicians during the 1920s to 1940s. Shortly thereafter, in 1917, the most powerful company in 20th-century Africa, Anglo American, was listed in Johannesburg and New York. Aside from some allies on the London Stock Exchange connected to the founding family, the Oppenheimer's, who soon also took over De Beers, Anglo's main funder was J.P. Morgan.

While they had numerous British and American investors, these multinational corporations were increasingly home-grown, particularly De Beers and Anglo (although both left Johannesburg to list on the London Stock Exchange in 1999 in response to the threat to their wealth posed by democracy). By the early 1900s, they had established an exceptionally profitable system. The corporates had fused the exploitation of Black workers, in part through colonial and subsequently apartheid political oppression, with the extraction and export of the country's vast natural resource wealth. This system facilitated generations of "super-exploitation", achieved through the appropriation of labour surpluses at extremely low rates of pay and unrestricted resource depletion. The former involved a patriarchal system of migrant labour that relied on women's unpaid work in social reproduction, located within distant "Bantustans", which resulted in unprecedented "cheap labour" (Wolpe, 1980). A 1930s period of what Samir Amin (1990) would term "delinking" intensified local capital accumulation, characterised by an 8% annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth from 1933 to 1945 and the development of secondary industry based on import-substitution industrialisation.

During this period, there was a danger of producing too many luxury goods given the small size of the local market and neglecting production for low-income South Africans' basic needs – points made by both Amin (2019) and Ruy Mauro Marini (1972) in their analysis of the interrelationship between sub-imperialism and super-exploitation (Bond, 2023). To a certain extent, the proceeds from the extracted minerals were recirculated through local shareholders and the local tax base; however, they were predominantly externalised to financial centres such as London, New York, Frankfurt, and other international headquarters (Bond & Basu, 2021). Vincent Harris (1985, p. 13) noted that "investment in South Africa provides U.S. transnational firms with some of the highest profit margins in the world. Between 1979 and 1983, for example, the average rate of profit on investment in South Africa was 16.31 percent, nearly double the international average". Nevertheless, this was a period marked by increasing concern regarding the ethics of profiting in a nation whose racist governmental system had been characterised by the United Nations as a crime against humanity.

Subsequently, a capitalist crisis ensued. Following a period of high private sector fixed investment rates during the 1960s and 1970s, when apartheid appeared resilient, the gold price plummeted after Federal Reserve Chair Paul Volcker significantly raised interest rates in 1979, swiftly reversing South Africa's trade surplus and precipitating a debt crisis. Private fixed capital reinvestment declined from 19% of the GDP in 1980 to below 14% (representing merely the replacement of depreciated machinery) by 1990, remaining at that level ever since, with the exception of a commodity super-cycle upturn primarily in the mining sector from 2002 to 2014. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, a combination of over-accumulated capital in core manufacturing sectors and class struggle, coupled with anti-apartheid social mobilisation and international sanctions, significantly undermined business confidence.

Although the profit share (between remuneration of labour and of capital) remained stable from the 1960s to the 1990s, the organic composition of capital (the capital/output ratio) exhibited a persistent increase from the early 1960s to the mid-1980s, which coincided with a decline in profits (Nattrass, 1989). The rate of capital accumulation (private sector gross fixed capital formation) decreased from 19% of the GDP in 1980 to 11.5% in 1993. Various strategies to address the capitalist crisis, through capital flight, financialization, and accumulation by dispossession, became necessary to restore the rates of accumulation for the principal corporations (Meth, 1991; Bond & Malikane, 2019). On the one hand, the crisis rendered the dominant fractions of capital, particularly in the English-speaking sector, highly vulnerable to the financial sanctions and debt crisis of mid-1985, which prompted leaders of the Anglo-American Corporation to travel to Zambia to meet with the African National Congress (ANC) in exile. This event marked a crucial moment in the fragmentation of the unity between white capital and Afrikaans-speaking state leadership. Consequently, it laid the groundwork for negotiations that led to the establishment of a one-person, one-vote democracy in 1994. This "elite transition" was facilitated by the acquiescence of white state rulers, white capital, and imperialist powers, and facilitated by the ANC leaders' decisive shift towards neoliberalism between 1990 and 1994 (Bond, 2014).

The commodity super-cycle from 2002 to 2014 presented a renewed opportunity for enhancing profit rates and reinvestment in the productive sector, with particular emphasis on the extractive industries, as well as those benefitting from the significant rise of the Black middle class (often civil service-based), accompanied by increased borrowing and consumption. However, the underlying disarticulation between the mass base, whose incomes were perpetually under threat and reliant on merely tokenistic welfare support (Bond, 2014), and the small group of over-consumers, generated insurmountable contradictions. Investment rebounded during the commodity super-cycle until two significant crashes, one in 2008 and another in 2014-2015, impeded the extractive industries' ability to restore the rate of capital accumulation.

Starting in 2015, the rate of capital accumulation experienced a significant decline, which coincided with a substantial decrease in the share valuations of the world's principal mining corporations, particularly those operating extensively in South Africa. From their peak values, Lonmin's London listing plummeted by 99.4%, decreasing from 427 800 cents per share in 2007 to a mere 41 cents in early 2016. Similarly, Anglo American witnessed a decline of 93.6% from its peak in 2008 (3 540 cents per share) to a low of 227 cents in 2016. Glencore's share price fell by 86% from its initial London listing price of 532 cents per share in 2011 to a low of 74 cents. BHP Billiton also experienced a substantial decline, with its share price falling from a peak of 8 452 cents per share in 2011 by 78%, resulting in a value of 1 787 cents per share in early 2016. A recovery in prices commenced in 2020, driven by a "quantitative easing" monetary stimulus that aided economies in recovering from the COVID-19 crisis. Subsequently, owing in part to unwarranted speculation in financial markets, and further exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the global commodity price index surged once again, although it declined again rapidly, from mid-2022 onwards, with the exception of gold.

This preliminary overview of historical FDI within the framework of capital accumulation cycles indicates that the overarching theories regarding the displacement of overaccumulation through spatial, temporal, and dispossession techniques are applicable in the South African context. Specific manifestations of extractive industry primitive accumulation can now be examined in greater detail, particularly concerning the costs associated with resource depletion and pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the degree to which the wages earned by labourers cover family reproduction costs is instrumental in evaluating the presence of "super exploitation".

Social Reproduction, Super-Exploitation, the Social Wage, and Profitability

Super-exploitation entails, as John Smith (2018) posits, the "reduction in the value of labor power by suppressing consumption levels (or what amounts to the same thing, shifting production to countries where workers' consumption levels and the value of labor power is much lower)" (original emphasis). The result is "the suppression of wages below the value of labour power and international variations in the rate of surplus value" (Smith, 2018). That value is measurable through the relationship between wages and family poverty levels. However, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) provides only partial and often inaccurate evidence; nonetheless, indicators suggest that super-exploitation, the payment of wages below the family poverty line, is widespread in South Africa. The period just prior to COVID-19 assists in understanding an enduring problem (not one that can be dismissed as pandemic-related): the "Upper Bound Poverty Line" of $83.46/month ($2.79/day) in 2019 covered what Stats SA (2019a, p. 6) defined as food sufficient to provide an average person with 2 100 calories per day plus "an allowance for the consumption of non-food basic necessities (such as clothing, shelter, transportation, education, etc.)."

Contestations of this poverty line were offered by the University of Cape Town's SA Labour Development Research Unit (Budlender et al., 2015) on the grounds that methodological flaws caused a 10% poverty undercount, and by the Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity (2019) research centre, which advocated a household budget of $498 (in 2019, $129/month/person for a household of average size; i.e., 3.86 members). With unemployment typically above 40% (when those who have given up looking for jobs are included, and when the "employed" include individuals who work as little as one hour per week), a vast share of society requires state grants to survive.

The most prevalent state grants designed to assist with social reproduction costs include a $30/month Child Support Grant, which supports 13 million primary caregivers and is means-tested for families whose head earns less than $3 300 per year or $6 600 if there are two heads of household. Additionally, eight million individuals receive a $20 per month Social Relief of Distress Grant, which was introduced in 2020 during the initial COVID-19 lockdown that is aimed at individuals aged 18 to 60 who can demonstrate unemployment. The withdrawal of this modest grant in May 2021 contributed to significant social unrest, which prompted its rapid reintroduction in August 2021. The state pension for the one million individuals living with disabilities and the 3.7 million elderly citizens (aged over 60 years), who each have an annual income below $4 715, is set at $119 per month. In 2024, life expectancy was estimated at 65 years; however, the ratio of those who are impoverished and who die earlier than the mean is significantly higher than that of middle- and upper-income earners, thereby limiting pension payouts. The 2022 census indicates a current population of 62 million South African citizens and immigrants.

Despite these grants, approximately two-thirds of South Africans existed below a realistic poverty line of $3.33 per day in 2024. Workers in these families are subject to super-exploitation, as they enter the labour market but receive remuneration that is insufficient to cover the full expenses associated with social reproduction. The minimum wage in 2024 was $1.50 per hour, equating to a monthly income of $240 (excluding state public works jobs, where the figure decreases to $0.82 per hour). For an average household size of 3.86 individuals, a single earner would require $386 per month to maintain dependants at the poverty line.

Could the South African state increase its expenditure to elevate the thresholds of either or both the minimum wage and social grants? One crucial consideration in analysing the super-exploitation in South Africa is the rate of corporate profit (see Figure 1). In the mid- to late 2010s, South Africa was ranked among the top three countries, both in the high- and middle-income categories, for the profits of non-financial corporations, alongside high-profit jurisdictions such as Indonesia and India (see Figure 3). Additionally, it ranked third for the profits of financial institutions, following Argentina and Brazil, in surveys conducted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2016; 2018). This suggests that had class power been more equitably distributed, some of the super-exploitation could have been mitigated, for example, through the imposition of a higher corporate tax rate. However, due to the neoliberal policy regime, the corporate tax rate was reduced from 52.5% in 1992 to 27% by 2023.

Furthermore, to address the issue of super-exploitation, the social share of South Africa's fiscal commitment could have been increased; in 2016, the latest year for comparative analysis for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, it constituted a mere 8% of the GDP, ranking as the fifth least generous among the world's 50 largest economies (see Figure 2). It is important to note that these indicators of super-exploitation provide only a rudimentary understanding of the mechanisms by which South African ruling-class managers perpetuate conditions that Luxemburg would likely find familiar, particularly given her awareness of crisis conditions and the fluctuating nature of capital across geographical spaces.

Since the late 1990s, a significant segment of English-speaking corporate South Africa – Anglo American, De Beers, South African Breweries, Old Mutual, Investec, Liberty Life, DiData, Gencor and others – engaged in substantial capital flight, relocating financial headquarters from Johannesburg to London and other overseas locations in pursuit of higher profits. Meanwhile, the main source of stock market valuation growth for more "patriotic" Afrikaner capital came not from the Rupert family and Sanlam sites of traditional accumulation, which also partly globalised, but from an extraordinary $34 million gamble by Koos Bekker of Naspers who bought 46.5% of Tencent

Holdings in 2001, the luckiest bet in global corporate history. The Chinese tech firm's value soared to nearly $1 trillion by early 2021, although Bekker arranged a vast outflow of Naspers' Tencent wealth to Amsterdam's Euronext stock market that year. As a consequence of corporate capital flight and a fixed-capital investment strike, the temporal dimensions of capitalist crisis formation have been evident in the increasing proportions of financial assets relative to real assets.

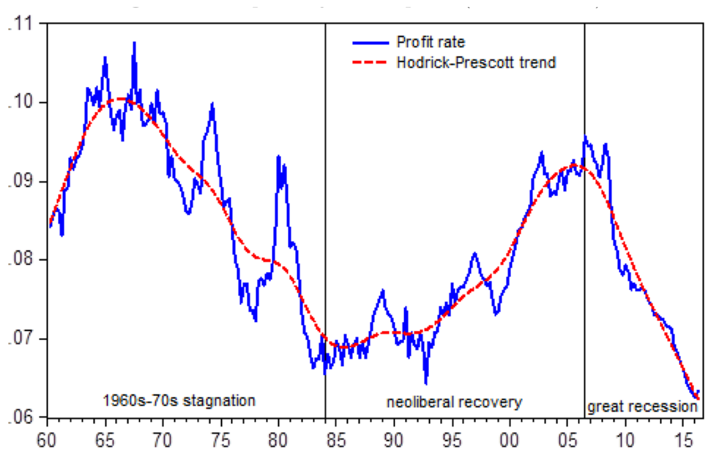


Figure 1: South African Corporate Profit Rate (Purchasing Power Parity), in Percentage, 1960 to 2017. Source: Malikane (2017)

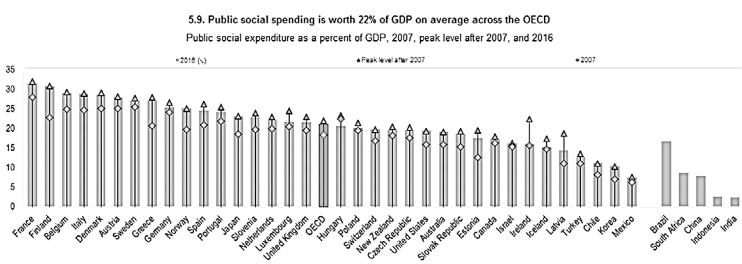


Figure 2: Public Social Spending as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP): 2007, Peak Level After 2007, and 2016. Source: OECD (2017)

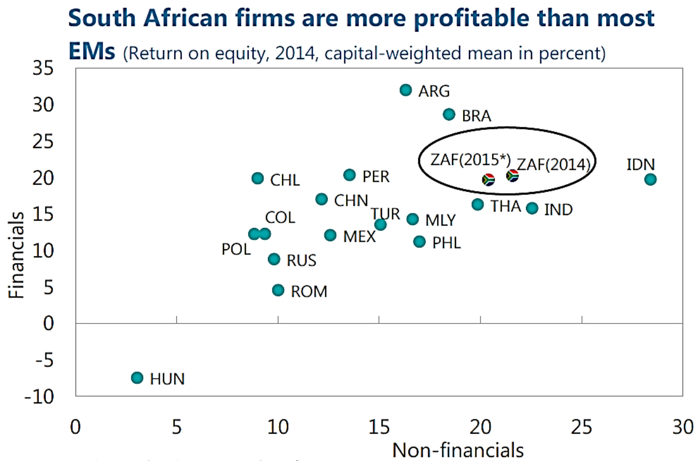


Figure 3: South African Financial and Non-Financial Firm Profitability Compared to Peers: 2014. Source: IMF (2016)

Contemporary Super-Exploitative Tendencies in Financial Markets and Resource Extraction

For corporations, the peak of the commodity super-cycle from 2009 to 2014 coincided with the apex of post-apartheid profitability (see Figure 1). Furthermore, since that period, the number of unemployed South Africans in the formally measured economy increased to 8.2 million by the first quarter of 2024, with the narrowly defined unemployment rate (not including those who gave up looking for work) soaring from 22.5% in 2008 to 34% by 2020 (see Figure 4). This figure may represent a significant undercount, owing to Stats SA's ongoing difficulties in accurately measuring individuals who have ceased seeking employment (which adds 10% to the unemployment rate). Concurrently, the average income per South African derived from the economy's output of goods and services (not including depletion, pollution, or unpaid labour) – GDP per capita (utilising purchasing power parity for comparison with other economies) – rose by only 15% from 2011-2023, compared to the global rate of 70% (see Figure 5).

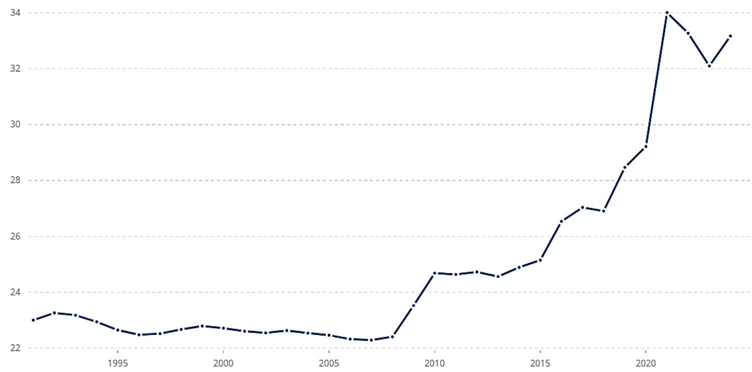


Figure 4: Unemployment Rate (Narrow Definition), South Africa: 1990 to 2024. Source: World Bank (2025a)

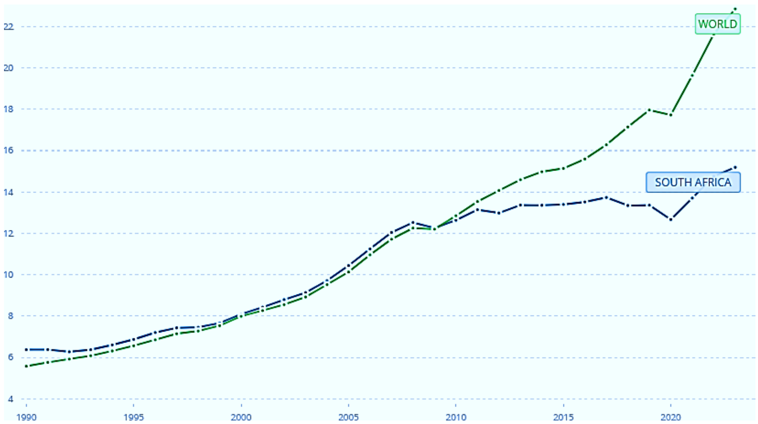


Figure 5: Per Capita GDP (United States Dollar [US$] Purchasing Power Parity): 1990 to 2023. Source: World Bank (2025b)

One characteristic of the overaccumulation crisis, as identified by Marxist theorists, is what is termed the "devalorization" of capital. The sectors most susceptible to this phenomenon were labour-intensive manufacturing industries, including clothing, textiles, footwear, appliances, and electronics. In part, this vulnerability can be attributed to subsequent crises in the extractive industries, which began with the significant share price collapse of major mining corporations in 2015. This situation led to a renewed overaccumulation of capital. The overproduction of raw materials for the global market during the mid-2010s resulted in commodity prices peaking in 2011, followed by a plateau and a subsequent crash after 2015. Consequently, the desperation engendered by these developments gave rise to increasingly extreme manifestations of accumulation by dispossession, which were further exacerbated by neoliberal public policy in South Africa (Bond & Malikane, 2019).

A notable aspect of this desperation was the process of financialization; despite the pronounced deindustrialisation that has been evident since the 1990s, the ratios of stock market capitalisation to GDP – the "Buffett Indicator" named after investor Warren Buffett – soared during the 2000s. From 105% in 2000, the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) Buffett Indicator rose to 288% by 2022, compared to the world average, rising from 95% to 105% in the same period (see Figure 6).

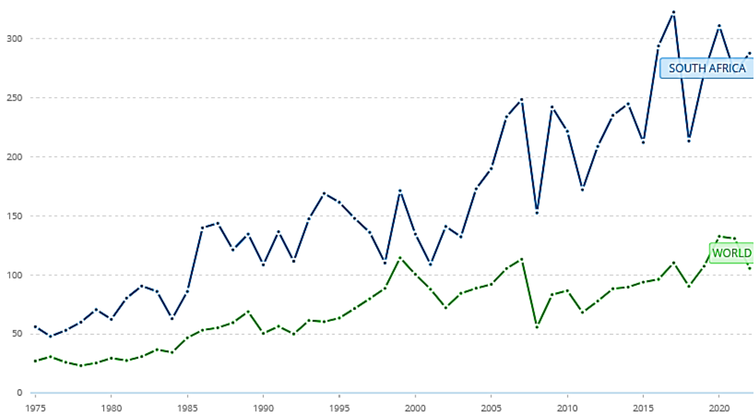


Figure 6: South African and World Stock Market Prices/GDP: 1975 to 2022. Source: World Bank (2025c)

Specific features of the contemporary period reflect the degeneracy of capital accumulation in the stock market:

The stagnant period of 2018 to 2019, during which the initial optimism associated with Ramaphosa's ascent to power rapidly diminished (having raised the index from 51 000 to 62 000 as the new presidency was anticipated and attained, following the ousting of Ramaphosa's corrupt predecessor, Jacob Zuma, in February 2018).

The 2018 crash and subsequent recovery of the Chinese Big Data firm Tencent, in which the Afrikaans media corporation Naspers once held a near-majority stake due to a fortuitous venture investment by its chief executive officer, Koos Bekker, in 2001. This investment accounted for a substantial share – at its peak, more than 30% – of JSE market capitalisation, albeit with extreme volatility arising from Xi Jinping's periodic clampdowns on the firm's practices.

The COVID-19 lockdown-induced crash of the JSE (from 60 000 to 40 000) followed by a post-COVID recovery as mineral commodity prices soared in 2021 to 2022.

A slowdown from 2022 to 2024 characterised by debilitating Eskom load shedding and a retreat in mineral prices from historical peaks.

However, a more enduring understanding of South African capitalism can be discerned not in the fluctuating JSE index, but in two more sobering indicators: business confidence and fixed investment, both of which are influenced by the interest rate that measures the cost of funding for expansion.

The South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry Business Confidence Index plummeted during the COVID-19 pandemic but made a significant recovery as the Reserve Bank lowered interest rates in 2020. Nevertheless, even at that point, the index remained exceptionally low, compared to periods such as 2005 to 2007, 1987, and the late 1970s (see Figure 7).

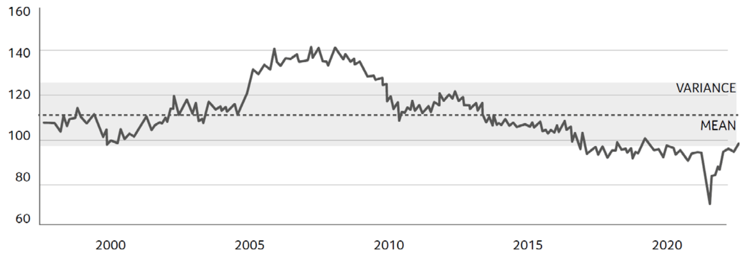


Figure 7: South African Business Confidence Index: 1997 to 2023. Source: South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2025)

Similarly, total gross fixed capital investment remains exceptionally weak (see Figure 8). Furthermore, since mid-2019, following a period of optimism regarding President Ramaphosa's leadership, the economy's Consumer Confidence Index has consistently registered negative values, even in the aftermath of the tapering off of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 9).

Figure 8: South African Gross Fixed Capital Formation (Percentage of GDP): 1960 to 2023. Source: World Bank (2023)

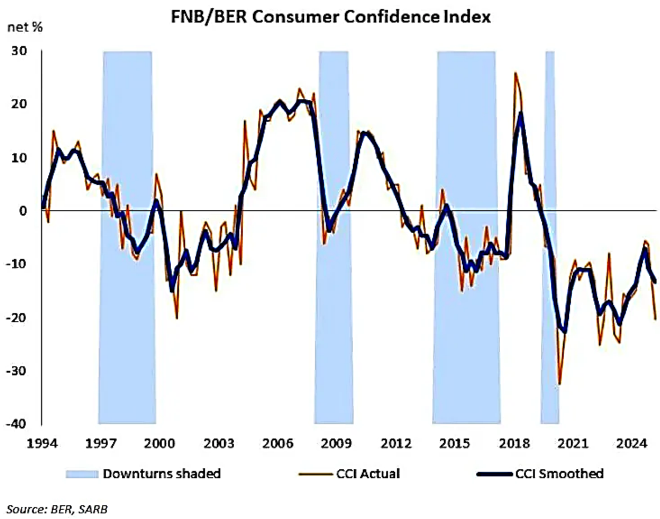


Figure 9: Consumer Confidence Index: 1994 to 2025. Source: Stoddard (2025)

In this context, it is straightforward to correlate these indicators with interest rates, particularly for those in the mainstream economy who have access to credit, as well as for individuals who are dependent on informal microfinance, a sector that is also highly susceptible to fluctuations in interest rates. As one illustration, taken over a 70-year period, consider the interest rates that the government was compelled by financial markets to pay for issuing 10-year bonds (see Figure 10). The rates were low during the apartheid boom of 1955 to 1970 but were in the high 7.5% to 17.5% range during the 1970s to 1990s turbulence of political transition, especially during inflationary bouts and when, from 1979, the United States Federal Reserve raised its rates. After a respite in the early 2000s, from 2014 onwards the state again paid high rates – in the 7.5% to 12.5% range – over the subsequent decade.

Figure 10: Long-Term South African Government Bond Yields: 1955 to 2025. Source: St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank (2025)

A final indicator of the extent of the "capital strike" by businesses is the degree to which they reinvest relatively high profits (albeit declining over time) in the South African economy, as opposed to extracting surplus value from workers and natural value from the country's mineral resources and exporting the proceeds without reinvestment. To illustrate this problem, note how a trade surplus that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, when imports significantly decreased, persisted through the early 2020s as commodity prices briefly soared. Nevertheless, there remains an ongoing outflow of profits, dividends, and interest that undermines the trade surplus and drives the current account into a substantial deficit. Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana was questioned in February 2024 regarding the relaxation of exchange controls implemented two years earlier, which involved a significant reduction in the requirement for institutional investors' local asset holdings from 70% to 55%. He admitted, "We are agreed that it was a grave mistake. If you ask me, it was a grave mistake. But the question is, is it easy to undo? The answer is no… Look, we accept in my view it was a grave mistake" (Magubane, 2024). This relaxation facilitated "a marked increase in domestic investors' foreign asset allocation, with a sharp increase in exposure to foreign equities at the expense of domestic equities and exposure to domestic property portfolios", as noted in the South African Reserve Bank's Financial Stability Review of mid-2024. South Africans' offshore asset allocation as a percentage of GDP surged from 84% to 106% in 2022 alone, compared to 46% in 2012.

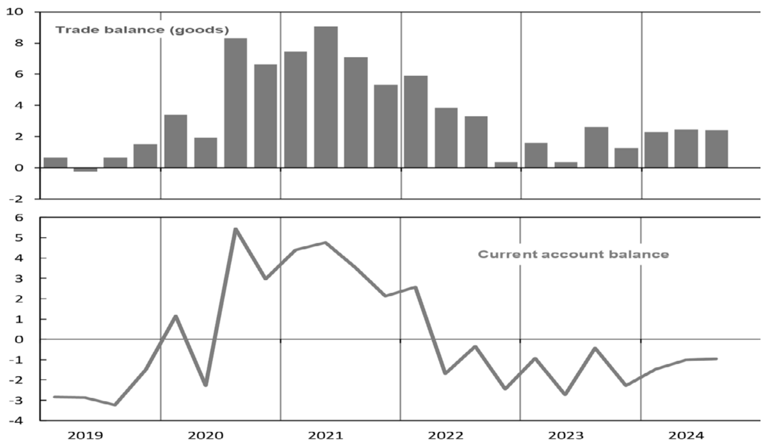


Figure 11: Trade Balance and Current Account of the Balance of Payments as a Percentage of GDP: South Africa: 2019 to 2024. Source: South African Reserve Bank (2024)

Such dramatic levels of capital flight should be deemed unacceptable by financial managers and ought to necessitate the imposition of stricter exchange controls. However, the Financial Action Task Force, a Paris-based regulatory body for international banking managers, has acknowledged the significant weaknesses within the South African Reserve Bank, the National Treasury, and the National Prosecuting Authority in managing capital outflows. Consequently, South Africa was placed on its "grey list" of unreliable financial authorities in early 2023.

Super-Exploitation of South African Wealth Through Depletion, Pollution, and Emissions

These socio-economic indicators reflect an economy that is in deep trouble, particularly in light of the rapid decline in the mineral price index for South African coal, iron ore, platinum, and manganese, which are key extractive industry exports, which has fallen sharply since mid-2022. This index has fluctuated throughout the 21st century, reaching a low in 2001 and experiencing several record highs in 2008, 2011 to 2014, and 2020 to 2022. One indication of the decline in South Africa's mineral export valuation is the somewhat lower persistent wastage of natural resources than might otherwise have been the case. Another reflection is that, from April 2024 onwards, Eskom's load shedding was significantly reduced due to the crash in smelted metal prices that resulted in lower demand for electricity, which is a factor estimated by former Reserve Bank official Kuben Naidoo to account for at least half the reduction in load shedding.

The greenhouse gas emissions from South Africa's highly carbon-intensive economy also decreased, either as load shedding increased or as emissions from major production systems diminished. However, the impact of climate change persisted, as Southern Africa faced the severe consequences of ecological destruction attributed to fossil fuel abuse, which manifested in debilitating droughts, cyclones, and floods linked to greenhouse gas emissions; i.e., anthropogenic causes (Fitchett, 2019). For instance, in mid-2024, the region faced its worst recorded drought, while near-record rains displaced tens of thousands in Cape Town's low-income areas. Additionally, extreme rainfall events in April to May 2022 caused devastation in Durban, South Africa's third-largest city. Droughts and locust plagues appeared to intensify at the trough of each cycle.

Luxemburg (2003, p. 349) expressed profound concern for the environment: "land, game in primeval forests, minerals, precious stones and ores, products of exotic flora such as rubber, etc." Luxemburg (2003, p. 350) argued that for "the communist peasant community no less than the feudal corvee farm … the most important of these productive forces is of course the land, its hidden mineral treasure, and its meadows, woods and water, and further the flocks of the primitive shepherd tribes".

Similarly, Samir Amin analysed the ecological implications of super-exploitation. He asserted that these emerged from differential rates of surplus value extraction, most famously encapsulated in his 1971 work, Accumulation on a World Scale, as well as from capitalism's exploitative interaction with non-capitalist relations: "Luxemburg is right: capitalism expanded by destroying pre-capitalist modes of production both within the societies of the dominant centers and the dominated peripheries" (Amin, 2016).

Amin (2018, pp. 86, 159) elucidated unequal ecological exchange as part of his value-transfer schema:

> Capitalist accumulation is founded on the destruction of the bases of all wealth: human beings and their natural environment historical Marxisms had largely passed an eraser over the analyses advanced by Marx on this subject and taken the point of view of the bourgeoisie – equated to an atemporal 'rational' point of view – in regard to the exploitation of natural resources.

The super-exploitative market-environment nexus in resource extraction is also controversially referred to as the depletion of "natural capital", as it occurs in Africa without foreign or local corporations making compensatory reinvestments or paying adequate taxes and royalties (unlike, for instance, in resource-rich nations such as Norway, Canada, or Australia). Africa's net resource losses have amounted to approximately $150 billion annually since the early 2000s (Bond, 2018). Even within the World Bank, influenced by environmental economists Herman Daly (1996) and Robert Goodland, various reports over the past quarter-century have addressed what is termed The Changing Wealth of Nations. These reports calculate a notional shift in a country's wealth over time, termed "Adjusted Net Savings" (ANS).

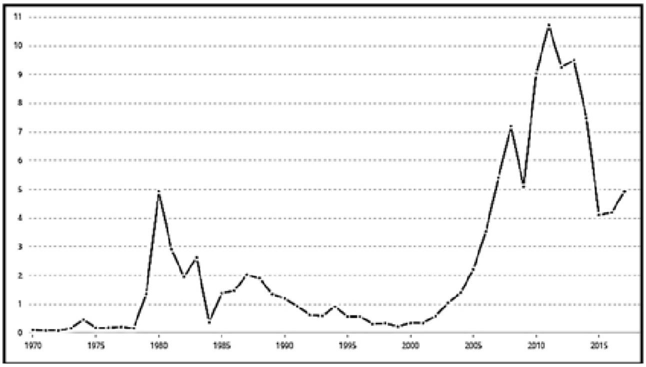
The ANS incorporates four factors that reformulate the variable gross national income (GNI) to approximate "genuine savings": the depreciation of physical capital, the damage caused by pollution, and the depletion of natural resources (all considered debits from GNI), alongside educational expenditure (investment in "human capital", considered an additional credit to GNI). These data allow for at least an attempt to establish the magnitude of uncompensated exploitation of natural resources. Excluding the depreciation of physical capital and the appreciation of human capital, the environmental calculations are significant.

Since the commodity super-cycle commenced in the early 2000s, South Africa's carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions have averaged approximately 9.0 tonnes per person, ranking 11th highest globally among countries with populations exceeding 10 million, and third highest behind Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic when measured per person per unit of economic output. In addition to damages from CO_2, which the World Bank estimates at 4.6% of GNI using a minimalist social cost of carbon (deemed at least 20 times too low), the primary negative features of the environmental accounts are Luxemburg's "hidden mineral treasure": unlike land (meadows), forests (woods), water, and livestock, these resources are non-renewable; once depleted, they are lost forever. The World Bank's 2019 definition of mineral depletion is "the ratio of the value of the stock of mineral resources to the remaining reserve lifetime. It covers tin, gold, lead, zinc, iron, copper, nickel, silver, bauxite, and phosphate" – notably excluding diamonds and platinum group metals, as well as palladium, rhodium, iridium, osmium, and ruthenium.

To derive profits from South Africa's four leading mineral exports – coal (25% in 2017), platinum group metals (21%), gold (15%), and iron ore (11%) – requires the extraction, smelting, refining, and shipment of non-renewable minerals (ores) and metals, along with the disposal of waste residue. It is essential to acknowledge that all these activities generate value within the commodity form, from which capital extracts surplus value from labour at the point of production. Furthermore, the extraction of what Marx referred to as "free gifts of nature" can be effectively integrated into the critique of capital's super-exploitation of the natural economy.

Cyclical dynamics are evident in the World Bank's (2019) assessment of mineral and fossil fuel wealth loss in South Africa. The dollar-denominated depletion of these minerals intensified in 1980 due to the exceptionally high gold price arising from American stagflation, which was subsequently reversed dramatically in 1981 as a result of significantly higher American interest rates, known as the "Volcker Shock".

The subsequent surge in depletion occurred between 2010 and 2013, coinciding with the peak of the commodity super-cycle (see Figure 12). In 2011, non-coal minerals were depleted by $11.7 billion, an increase from a previous high of $7.2 billion in 2008. That year, coal depletion was measured at $12.3 billion, and in 2011, it reached $9.2 billion. In 2008, these combined resource outflows totalled $19.5 billion, increasing to $20.9 billion in 2011 (World Bank, 2019). As a proportion of GNI, this was considerably lower than in other African economies that were skewed towards primary production (such as Mauritania, Togo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Zambia), particularly those with oil sectors (such as Angola, the Republic of the Congo, and Equatorial Guinea) (Bond & Basu, 2021).



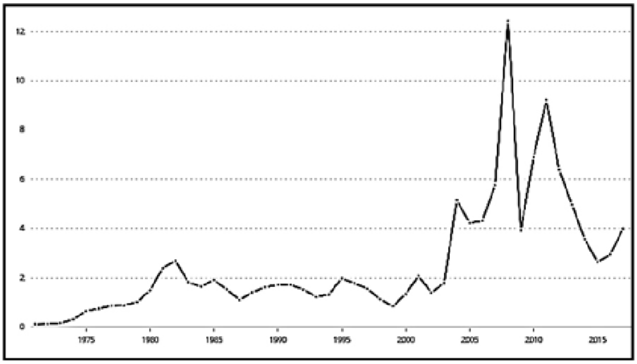


Figure 12: South Africa's Accounts of Mineral (Partial) and Fossil Fuel Depletion: 1970 to 2017 (US$ Billion) Source: World Bank (2019)

Non-coal minerals Coal, oil, and gas

Luxemburg (and, more recently, Amin) would not be surprised by the temporally dynamic unequal ecological exchange and environmental degradation reflected in these World Bank accounting exercises. However, significant debates must be engaged regarding whether the provisional natural capital accounting is unduly favourable to the corporations involved in extraction. For instance, the World Bank values South Africa's subsoil assets at merely $400 billion, which is substantially lower than the IMF's (2018) estimate of $800 billion, as well as the $2.5 trillion frequently cited based on a CitiGroup projection (Bloomberg News, 2010). This latter figure has been dismissed as overly optimistic, particularly since the majority pertains to platinum group metals that are currently unfeasible to extract (Seccombe, 2019).

Even if the World Bank's analyses of South African wealth and depletion processes are significantly flawed due to various exclusions, the World Bank nonetheless offers a foundational point for discourse on natural resource exploitation. In 2014, South Africa's population was 54.1 million. By dividing the various types of wealth in the country by the number of residents, an estimated $77 348 in per capita wealth is derived. Of this total, 17.8% comprises the nation's natural capital, with just over half (9.2%) accounted for in "subsoil assets", which include the subcategories of minerals and "energy" (coal and a small quantity of gas). The remaining components of nature's wealth – pastureland, cropland, forests, and protected areas – accounted for 8.5% of total wealth in 2014. By far, the largest portion of South Africa's wealth that year (58.1%) was reportedly in human capital, while 24.9% was attributed to produced capital stock.

Table 1: South Africa's per Capita Wealth: 2014 (in US$). Source: World Bank (2017)

Total wealth	Produced capital	Natural capital	*Forest*		*Protected areas*	*Cropland*	*Pastureland*	*Subsoil assets*	Human capital	Net foreign assets
			Timber	*Nontimber*						
77,348	19,263	13,743	*898*	*320*	*370*	*2,115*	*2,892*	*7,149*	44,921	–579

What insights can be gained from examining these accounts, in which GNI is adjusted to account for natural capital and human capital? The five primary categories in which annual output should be adjusted downwards are: (1) consumption of fixed capital in the form of wear-and-tear depreciation (14.3% of South Africa's GNI), (2) CO_2 damage (4.6%), (3) mineral depletion (1.1%), (4) energy depletion (0.7%), and (5) air pollution (0.4%). The (controversial) upward adjustment for education spending is 6% of the GNI, resulting in a total ANS of 1.5%. In absolute terms, the ANS for an average South African attributable to depleted mineral wealth (including coal) amounted to $129 in 2014 (notably, platinum and diamonds are excluded from this calculation). The snapshot capital accounts provided by the World Bank (2017) in its Little Green Databook also facilitate further contemplation of the degradation of South Africa's natural economy.

However, a significant limitation of a snapshot is that it fails to capture the extreme dynamism associated with mineral demand and supply. A dynamic graph detailing the volumes of South African minerals sold from 2014 to 2017 reveals that the 2015 crash was predominantly driven by coal, iron ore, and manganese; of critical importance during this period was also the impact of the five-month platinum mineworker strike in 2014 (see Figures 13 and 14).

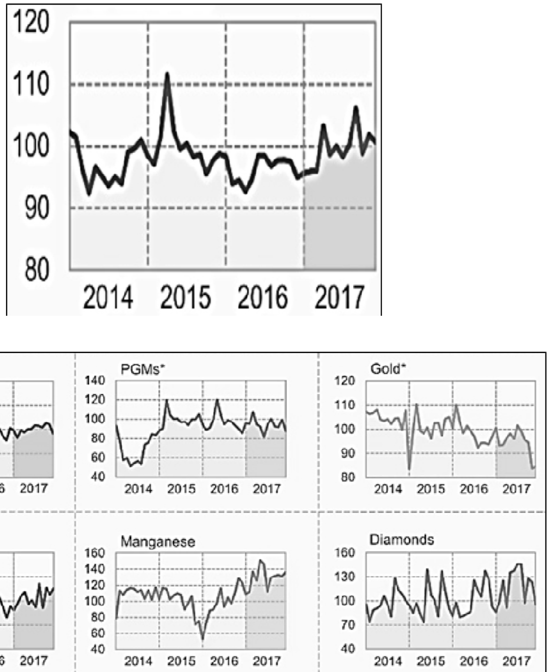


Figure 13: South Africa's Mineral Depletion: 2014 to 2017 (Volume Index, 2015=100). Source: Stats SA (2019b)

All minerals, and coal, platinum group metals, gold, iron ore, manganese, and diamonds

Population (millions) **55.0** Land area (1,000 sq. km) **1,213** GDP ($ billions) **314.6**

South Africa	Country data	Sub-Saharan Africa group	Upper middle-income group
GNI per capita, *World Bank Atlas* method ($)	6,080	1,631	8,263
Adjusted net national income per capita ($)	4,671	1,239	6,302
Urban population (% of total)	64.8	37.7	64.1
Agriculture			
Agricultural land (% land area)	80	42	35
Agricultural irrigated land (% of total agricultural land)	*1.7*	..	..
Agricultural productivity, value added per worker (2010 $)	9,451	1,219	2,208
Cereal yield (kg per hectare)	4,894	1,452	4,104
Forests and biodiversity			
Forest area (% land area)	7.6	25.7	34.9
Deforestation (avg. annual %, 2000–15)	0.0	0.5	0.0
Terrestrial protected areas (% of total land area)	8.9	15.3	15.2
Threatened species, mammals	26	918	1,056
Threatened species, birds	46	876	1,511
Threatened species, fish	107	2,023	2,315
Threatened species, higher plants	116	3,740	6,808
Oceans			
Total fisheries production (thousand metric tons)	578	7,416	103,240
Capture fisheries growth (avg. annual %, 2000–15)	-1.0	1.8	-0.5
Aquaculture growth (avg. annual %, 2000–15)	5.6	17.0	5.3
Marine protected areas (% of territorial waters)	13.4	6.1	9.9
Coral reef area (sq. km)	..	17,980	48,880
Mangroves area (sq. km)	30.5	28,061	50,774
Energy and emissions			
Energy use per capita (kg oil equivalent)	2,715	701	2,192
Energy from biomass products and waste (% of total)	10.5	57.4	7.3
Electric power consumption per capita (kWh)	4,229	497	3,495
Electricity generated using fossil fuel (% of total)	93.1	64.3	71.1
Electricity generated by hydropower (% of total)	0.4	21.2	21.0
CO_2 emissions per capita (metric tons)	8.8	0.8	6.6

	Country data	Sub-Saharan Africa group	Upper middle-income group
Water and sanitation			
Internal freshwater resources per capita (cu. m)	827	3,986	8,261
Total freshwater withdrawal (% of internal resources)	34.6	3.2	6.3
Agriculture (% of total freshwater withdrawal)	63	81	68
Access to improved water source (% of total population)	93	68	95
Rural (% of rural population)	81	56	91
Urban (% of urban population)	100	87	97
Access to improved sanitation (% of total population)	66	30	80
Rural (% of rural population)	61	23	67
Urban (% of urban population)	70	40	87
Environment and health			
$PM_{2.5}$ pollution, mean annual exposure (µg/cu. m)	30	36	42
$PM_{2.5}$ exposure (% pop. exceeding WHO guideline level)	100	99	95
Acute resp. infection prevalence (% of children under five)	..	5	..
Diarrhea prevalence (% of children under five)	..	14	..
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	41	83	19
National accounting aggregates—savings, depletion and degradation			
Gross savings (% of GNI)	16.8	14.4	36.6
Consumption of fixed capital (% of GNI)	14.3	13.8	18.0
Education expenditure (% of GNI)	6.0	3.3	3.0
Energy depletion (% of GNI)	0.7	1.7	1.1
Mineral depletion (% of GNI)	1.1	0.9	0.4
Net forest depletion (% of GNI)	0.0	2.3	0.0
CO_2 damage (% of GNI)	4.6	1.6	2.6
Air pollution damage (% of GNI)	0.4	1.2	0.3
Adjusted net savings (% of GNI)	1.5	-3.9	17.2

Figure 14: Breakdown of South Africa's per Capita Wealth: 2014 (in US$). Source: World Bank (2017)

The initial two concerns pertain to greenhouse gas emissions and local pollution. The emissions predominantly originate from electricity generation at coal-fired power plants, but are also significant during the extraction, smelting, and processing of minerals, as well as the production of petrochemicals, most notably at Sasol's Secunda site, which is recognised as the world's single worst point source of CO_2 emissions. Furthermore, industries that are highly reliant on electricity and produce substantial gas emissions, such as ArcelorMittal in the steel sector, contribute to this issue. For instance, BHP Billiton's South32 operates a single aluminium smelter in Richards Bay, which consumes 7% of the national grid yet pays only $0.015 per kilowatt hour (kWh), in contrast to an average household, which incurs a cost of $2/kWh. Additionally, transnational fossil fuel corporations, particularly TotalEnergies and Shell, are focused on extracting offshore gas and oil resources.

As a highly influential lobbying entity, the Energy Intensive Users Group (EIUG) comprises approximately two dozen multinational corporations that account for 42% of national electricity consumption, while employing only 650 000 individuals, equating to 4% of the total national workforce. The aggregate greenhouse gas emissions produced by these major users, along with other smaller industries, households, government agencies, and parastatal entities, reached a peak of 535 megatons (Mt) in 2014 (see Figure 15). This peak coincided with the zenith of the commodity super-cycle and was subsequently impacted by the constraints of the 2020-2021 COVID-19 lockdowns and ongoing supply issues, which culminated in the load-shedding crisis of 2022 to 2024. It is anticipated that total emissions will stabilise at approximately 450 mt in the forthcoming years, with emissions from energy, transport, and cement sectors having declined most rapidly, partly as a result of load-shedding measures.

The South African Department of Environment's census of greenhouse gases conducted in August 2021 revealed significantly lower estimates of emissions for 2017 from the energy, industrial processes and product use (IPPU), agriculture, forestry and other land use (AFOLU), and waste sectors (see Table 2). From a gross emissions figure of 513 mt, sequestration associated with the AFOLU sector (approximately 30.5 mt) results in a net total of 482 mt. However, it should be noted that emissions of sulphur hexafluoride are still not included in the census, which highlights another relatively basic oversight.

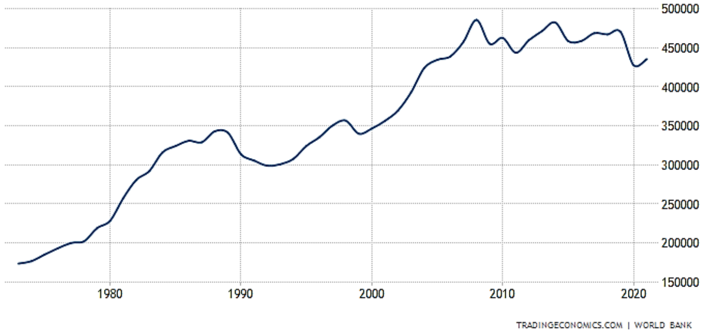


Figure 15: South Africa's Energy-Transport-Cement Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) Emissions, Million Tonnes/Year: 1990 to 2021. Source: Trading Economics (2021)

Table 2: South Africa's 2000 to 2017 National Greenhouse Gas Inventory. Source: Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (2021)

Sector	2000 emissions (Gg CO_2e)	2000% contribution by sector	2017 emissions (Gg CO_2e)	2017 % contribution by sector	Change Gg CO_2e	% change 2000 to 2017
Energy	349 099.70	78%	410 685.30	80.1%	61 585.60	17.6%
IPPU	32 987.30	7%	32 084.60	6.3%	-902,70	-2.7%
AFOLU (excluding. FOLU)	53 229.40	12%	48 641.80	9.5%	-4 587.60	-8.6%
AFOLU (incl. FOLU)	41 088.7011	-	17 997.50	-	-23 091.20	-56.2%
Waste	13 557.80	3%	21 249.00	4.1%	7 691.10	56.7%
Total (excluding. FOLU)	448 874.20	-	512 660.70	-	63 786.50	14.2%
Total (incl. FOLU)	436 733.50	-	482 016.40	-	45 282.90	10.4%

FOLU = **forestry and other land use; Gg CO_2e = gigagrams of CO_2 emissions**

A number of updates regarding depletion, pollution, and emissions data became available in the early 2020s. Even without accounting for several valuable minerals, South Africa has been identified as a major net loser of non-renewable resource wealth (World Bank, 2021a, p. 204). In a 2021 World Bank study, only three African countries exhibited a higher level of depleted metals and minerals wealth than South Africa, namely, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and the Central African Republic.

Uncompensated depletion is not only a significant source of multinational corporate exploitation, but it is also associated with pollution and greenhouse gas emissions resulting from extractive industries. This situation represents uncompensated income derived from local communities that suffer from toxic emissions, as well as from future generations who will inherit a degraded environment due to the climate crisis. The magnitude of these issues is illustrated in a series of four World Bank charts that utilise (partial) natural capital accounts over time.

It is important to emphasise that these measures are exceptionally conservative when applied to South Africa, as depletion is considerably worse when missing minerals are taken into account. Additionally, the CO_2 damage assessed by the

World Bank was valued at only $60 per tonne in 2020, whereas more recent estimates provided by environmental economists range from $1500 to $3000 per tonne (Bilal & Känzig, 2024; Kikstra et al., 2021). For instance, a snapshot of the depletion and pollution wealth-draining process for 2020 (see Table 3) indicates that four of the measures, namely depletion of energy (coal) and minerals (partial), as well as CO_2 and particulate emission damages, would conservatively reduce South Africa's GDP by a substantial 7.6%.

Table 3: Depletion and Pollution Damage in South Africa, Africa, and the World, Percentage of GDP: 2020. Source: African Natural Resources Management and Investment Centre (2022)

Country	Energy depletion	Mineral depletion	CO_2 damage	Particulate emission
South Africa	1.08	1.01	5.09	0.4
Africa	1.93	0.46	2.38	1.0
World outside Africa	0.56	0.18	1.95	0.3

The first chart (see Figure 16) illustrates "natural resource rents" as a share of GDP, indicating the fluctuations in income derived from sources of wealth in South Africa, which are predominantly depleting.

Secondly, in contrast to the global context, natural resources in other regions – characterised by a significantly larger share of renewable components (such as agricultural, marine, and timber products) – exhibit a recovery rate that is markedly higher. In South Africa, however, the current-dollar measure of mineral depletion (associated with ANS) is considerable, albeit variable due to the volatility in commodity prices (see Figure 17).

Thirdly, specific coal resource rents, expressed as a percentage of GDP, highlight the South African economy's comparative reliance on fossil fuels, both for combustion in Eskom's coal-fired power plants and for export purposes (see Figure 18). Nevertheless, such rents do not account for the adverse effects of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Finally, when combining natural capital depletion, pollution, and emissions with positive educational funding (representing human capital investment) and the net negative depreciation of physical capital, the World Bank's comprehensive ANS measure indicates that the South African economy has experienced dis-saving, particularly over the past decade – a period during which the rest of the world documented relatively high rates of positive saving (ranging from 9% to 11% of GDP) (see Figure 19).

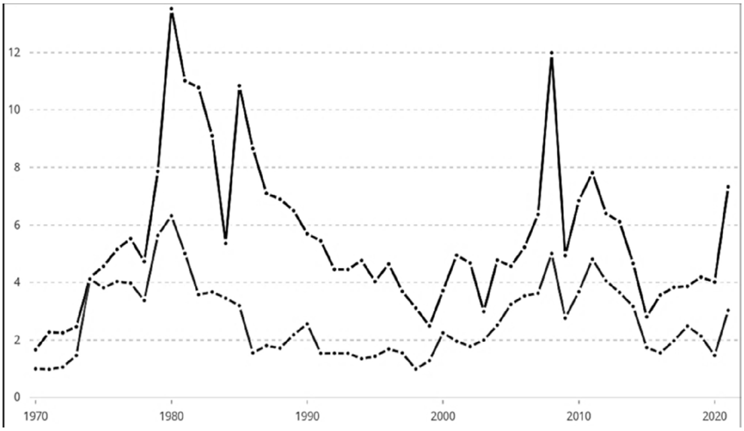


Figure 16: Natural Resource Rents (Percentage of GDP), 1970 to 2021: South Africa (Top) and the World (Bottom). Source: World Bank (2022)

Figure 17: South African (Partial) Mineral Depletion (Current US$ Billions): 1970 to 2020. Source: World Bank (2021b)

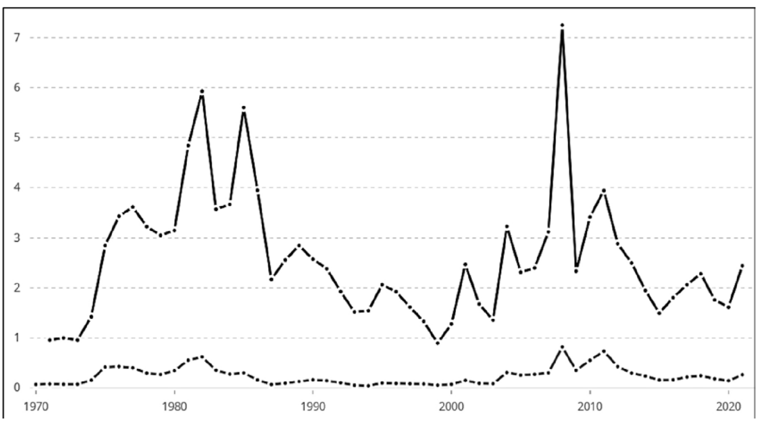


Figure 18: Coal Resource Rents (Percentage of GDP), 1970 to 2021: South Africa (Top) and the World (Bottom). Source: World Bank (2021c)

Figure 19: Adjusted Net Savings (ANS) (Percentage of Gross National Income [GNI]), 1970 to 2021: World (Top) and South Africa (Bottom). Source: World Bank (2021d)

Conclusion: Ending Super-Exploitation and Exploitation

South Africa's intellectual history has been characterised by extensive debates concerning race and class, particularly regarding the extent to which capitalism necessitated the super-profiteering associated with apartheid. There have also been discussions regarding whether the application of market principles can lead to a more gender-equitable political economy, particularly in efforts to mitigate workplace discrimination. Additionally, there are ongoing contestations surrounding instruments such as carbon taxation, emissions trading, and offsets, which aim to leverage market power against ecological destruction by not only recognising the value of nature but also assigning a price to it. Existing literature generally posits that it is preferable to transition from a state of super-exploitative relations, wherein race, gender, and ecological power dynamics are prevalent, towards a scenario where markets can rationally allocate human and natural resources.

The information reviewed suggests that the application of neoliberal logic in addressing racism, sexism, and ecocide since the 1990s has been largely ineffective in eradicating extreme super-exploitative relations and facilitating equitable development. On the social front, while a nascent welfare state exists, it is predominantly "tokenistic" (Bond, 2014), because the subsidisation of social reproduction has not significantly improved the living conditions of the vast majority of South Africans, who continue to live below the poverty line. The only notable instance of resistance against the declining real (inflation-adjusted) levels of social grants, particularly since the implementation of IMF austerity measures in late 2020, was the mid-2021 surge of chaotic rioting, looting, and arson, which ultimately prompted the reintroduction of the $20/month Social Relief of Distress Grant. The Universal Basic Income Grant promised by President Ramaphosa, although the specific amount has yet to be disclosed, prior to the 2024 election is unlikely to be accounted for in the budget, particularly given Minister Godongwana's insistence on maintaining a primary budget surplus (i.e., generating more revenue than is expended on all items excluding interest repayments). The same applies to the long-promised National Health Insurance, which exists on paper but not in the National Treasury's medium-term budgeting. In summary, a period characterised by neoliberal consolidation and escalating pressures on social reproduction appears to be on the horizon.

The environmental landscape is similarly discouraging. While there are legal precedents for challenging uncompensated resource depletion, pollution, and emissions in other contexts, such as in Goa, India, where mining prohibitions have been enacted due to inadequate compensation for resource depletion (Bond & Basu, 2021), the South African context remains fraught. In 1993, the Pacific Island nation of Nauru successfully compelled Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, and Britain to provide compensation for similar exploitation (of phosphate), as summarised by Ramon Reyes (1996, p. 53), who noted that "accelerated mining in the face of eminent depletion and inevitable rehabilitation provides evidence of the breach of the duty of diligence and prudence". Extending this jurisprudence remains a significant challenge, particularly given the constraints imposed by South African constitutional property rights.

On the other hand, social movements, especially those led by communities, feminists, and environmentalists, are emerging to demand accountability for extraction and pollution, as well as for the misuse of electricity in South Africa's often unnecessary and invariably super-exploitative mining, smelting, petrochemical, and other high-carbon industries (Bond, 2025). These movements address the patriarchal-extractivist exploitation of energy, particularly within the EIUG membership, at a time when women, reliant on households, small businesses, and labour-intensive industries, desperately require reliable and affordable electricity, often resorting to polluting fuels, such as paraffin, kerosene, charcoal, and wood, for essential energy supplies.

Another facet of feminist resistance involves women drawing upon their historical intergenerational experiences of eco-social stewardship, as their responsibilities have often arisen from the short-term irresponsibility of men in a patriarchal capitalist framework. This perspective frequently embodies anti-extractivist principles of sustainable development. As articulated by Gro Harlem Brundtland's 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development in Our Common Future, we need "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and the management of human, natural and financial assets to increase long term economic wellbeing".

If taken seriously, this approach would imply the prevention of unequal ecological exchange, wherein minerals and fossil fuels are extracted by Western/BRICS+ corporations without adequate reinvestment, and the cessation of abusive hydrocarbon extraction. This is crucial not only to avert climate catastrophe, given that oil, gas, and coal are predominantly combusted, but also because future generations will require hydrocarbons for non-combustible uses such as lubricants, synthetic materials, and pharmaceutical products. It is reasonable to assert that, in these struggles, women possess a greater intrinsic and learned inclination to consider the survival needs of their children compared to men. Indeed, the non-governmental organisation Women in Mining has pioneered the application of critiques against GDP to emphasise the need for polluters to account for the local pollution, global greenhouse gas emissions, non-renewable resource depletion, and the exploitation of inexpensive migrant labour entailed by extractive industries, all of which impose far greater social reproduction responsibilities (Bond, 2025). These factors are often overlooked by conventional economists, regardless of gender, who neglect to measure, let alone consider, these as "externalities" that necessitate corrections, taxation, bans, and socio-ecological reparations.

In all these respects, the struggles against super-exploitation manifest through enduring forms of racial capitalism, gendered social reproduction, and ecocidal extraction, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions, collectively echo Rosa Luxemburg's famous proclamation: "Socialism or Barbarism!"

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