8 Conclusion

A Transnational Theory of Academic Freedom and the Production of Inclusive Knowledge

This book has sought to build the case for a transnational theoretical framework for the understanding of academic freedom and the production of knowledge drawing on original empirical data from Lebanon, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and the United States, in order to take into account the complexities of globalisation and the geographical and historical interconnectivities. Through a critical examination of the various contested constructions of academic freedom and knowledge at different sites in different contexts beyond the dominant Global North frame, the case is argued for academic freedom premised on inclusivity, and in turn inclusive knowledge premised on an inclusive conception of academic freedom. Examining the structures and processes within higher education and society more widely illustrates the challenging dynamics in the production of knowledge and the methodological implications for the very structure, content, and form of learning and knowledge itself.

8.1 SHIFTING CONCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

In Chapter 2, constructions of academic freedom were critically interrogated across the different national contexts of Lebanon, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Yet, the transnational reality of the production of knowledge challenges the dominant methodologically nationalist framings of constructions of academic freedom. On examining key legal and policy statements at the international level, there is no explicit protection

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for academic freedom in the two United Nations Human Rights Covenants. The 1997 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) statement focuses on the status of higher education teaching personnel explicitly noting the importance of academic freedom as a pre-requisite that affirms the right to education, teaching, and research and 'provides the strongest guarantee of the accuracy and objectivity of scholarship and research'.

The American conception of academic freedom is codified in the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) 1915 Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure. This contrasts with the UK context where at the elite universities of Oxford and Cambridge, academic freedom could be attributed to a de facto rather de jure construct of academic freedom based on historical privilege. Of note, the United Kingdom does not have a written constitution with a form of protection for freedom of speech. A statement of the University and College Union in 2009 invokes the 1988 Education Reform Act as having established the legal rights and protections of UK academics to 'test received wisdom and put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions', also making reference to the 1997 UNESCO statement. In the Middle East post-colonial context, 'imported internationalisation' is evident in initiatives such as Dubai's Knowledge Park, where there has been an expansion of branch universities partnered with US and UK universities. In Lebanon, the American University of Beirut (AUB), established by foreign missionaries in 1866, based on a US liberal arts model of education, has a US charter and is bound by the AAUP Principles of academic freedom; all these different contextual examples raise the relevance and importance of contextualising academic freedom in transnational perspective.

There are ongoing polemical debates that principles of academic freedom sit in tension with principles of diversity of inclusion. Philosophers of education Callan (2016) and Ben-Porath (2016, 2017) have proposed that inclusivity is a threshold condition for academic freedom or, in effect, a 'precondition' for academic freedom. Using the concept of 'dignity safety', Callan (2016) argues that this is a necessary precondition for the inclusive practice of academic freedom. Without the condition of dignity safety, academic freedom is not upheld. Without such an inclusive context, research cannot be conducted with academic freedom, which in turn undermines the inclusive production of knowledge. The notion of a hierarchy of rights is also invoked where academic freedom is contextualised in relation to other rights necessary for the inclusive production of knowledge. For example, the

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nationalistic lens can also obscure how academic freedom is undermined for those in legal precarity, such as refugee scholars or academics working under occupation. Dominant constructions of academic freedom implicitly require legal citizenship as a prerequisite to practice academic freedom. Butler argues for a broader notion of academic freedom, where freedom from violence, freedom from hunger, and freedom of movement both internally and across borders are recognised as an integral precondition for academic freedom, clearly invoking a transnational frame. She argues that academic freedom cannot be separated – logically or in practice – from the 'conditions of its exercise' (Butler, 2015, p. 293). As such, the defence of academic freedom necessitates a defence of the conditions that enable its practice. Conversely, if these conditions are not met, the practice of academic freedom is not possible. The preconditions for academic freedom that include the right to free movement illustrate the necessary transnational nature of academic freedom.

Five thematic discourses relating to academic freedom are identified, the first relating to ***'free speech, responsibility, and expertise'***. Responsibility is conceived in various ways by interviewees, including notions of 'expertise' and 'evidence-based' research, as well as invoking 'legitimate' disciplinary methods. Responsibility is also contrasted with traditional notions of privilege and also linked to the conception of the university as a privileged space. Therefore, it has been argued that there should be an emphasis on responsibility that comes with their status in society, in the context of academic freedom. This is especially the case with extramural speech and the issue of academics not speaking outside their spheres of expertise, which, it is argued would be an abuse of their position (Shahvisi, 2018). Hence, we see the notion of privilege as a geopolitical project in such understandings of academic freedom. The elasticity of the conception of responsibility also entails notions of its performance as 'civilised', 'reasonable', and 'rational' in its delivery.

The interrelationship between constructions of academic freedom and knowledge emerges in discussions of the notions of 'truth' and 'public good'. These ideas underpin a second discourse of academic freedom in terms of ***power, knowledge, and morality***. The positionality of the academic within society and in relation to their research is highlighted as significant, both in terms of the construction of knowledge and in terms of the academic freedom accorded to the individual; this positionality affects the perceived 'truth' and 'legitimacy' of the knowledge as well as the freedom to seek such knowledge. Despite the hegemony of knowledge from the Global North, examples of reconstructions of fields of knowledge, for instance, the case of American

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Studies at AUB, Lebanon, illustrates the transnational turn in various fields and disciplines. Rather than these knowledges being anchored as 'local' subjective knowledge, the transnational turn has illustrated how disciplines 'at the centre' have been affected. The position of Palestine in American Studies is no longer an 'absent present' in American Studies (Lubin, 2016).

The relationship between seniority, or job security, and academic freedom illustrates the relevance of positionality in understanding the relativity of academic freedom in practice. This issue is particularly emphasised in the US context. In addition, the coupling of moral responsibility with seniority is normatively held up as an ideal particularly in the US and UK contexts. This takes the form of supporting and advocating for those academic colleagues in more vulnerable positions with respect to job security – those who are 'untenured' in the US context or on temporary contracts. However, it is often minoritised senior academics with respect to gender and race who take on this supporting role. In the UAE context, vulnerability also comes in the form of legal status, where academics enter into both a legal and a 'psychological' contract, invoking personal responsibility with regard to academic freedom as an 'expat'.

A third discourse relates to the ***context of the university*** as the space within which academics practice their academic freedom, which varies across the different national contexts depending on different constructions of the mission of the university. With the discourse of the 'civic university', the development of the critical citizen is based on the construction of the university as a public space where controversial ideas can be explored and authority can be challenged (Giroux, 2002). It is argued that this model is increasingly undermined by the neoliberal logic and the marketisation of higher education. In the Arab world, few universities constitute such a critical public space, with the exception of AUB in Lebanon, which has a long history of academics engaging with the public on social and political issues of the day (Hanafi, 2011; Kiwan, 2017b).

A fourth discourse relates to ***individualisation and psychologisation***, where it is argued that the 'infantilisation' of society and, in particular, students can be located within a therapeutic turn in the UK and US contexts (Furedi, 2017). This therapeutic turn is evident in the protection of legal and market-oriented interests of higher education institutions. However, rejecting the measures of inclusion required to meet the needs of a wide range of students invoked in such discourses dismisses calls for dignity safety as prerequisite conditions for academic freedom as argued by Callan (2016) and Ben-Porath (2017).

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The fifth discourse relates to the ways of delivering knowledge. Discourses of ***civility*** are linked to notions of literally being 'uncivilised', being 'over-emotional'/'too sensitive', and, therefore, lacking rationality. Moral virtue is also invoked from the manner of expression which is critiqued; however, moral virtue of those acting in the name of social justice and inclusion is also highlighted as problematic in that 'truth' is fixed through belief, and either legitimised or delegitimised, as was critically examined in Chapter 7.

8.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND CONCEPTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

Chapter 3 examined a range of contested constructions of knowledge with regard to the implications for academic freedom. Two contrasting constructions of knowledge are considered: first, where knowledge is conceived as separate from its producer, which describes reality, and the second, where knowledge is conceived as constructed, negotiated, and embedded in geographical and historical contexts and in relationships of power. Contemporary Western constructions of knowledge have been significantly influenced by the Humboldtian nineteenth-century tradition of teaching as embedded in research, where knowledge is co-constructed by students and teachers. This model conceives of knowledge as subjective and fluid, in contrast to traditional models of knowledge as reflecting entry into a disciplinary field through the mastery of a body of knowledge and methods.

Different conceptions of knowledge underpin different expectations of who the knowledge is for and its purposes. The global neoliberal marketisation of higher education and its implications in constructing the purposes of knowledge is evident across the different national contexts of Lebanon, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This is reflected in the language of 'capital', 'value', 'entrepreneurship', 'marketability', 'skills', 'impact', and 'employment' used by academic interviewees across all four contexts. This constellation of concepts illustrates a conception of external knowledge to be discovered, with research positioned in the service of policy and practice. As a result, the funding of research prioritises research questions deemed to be policy relevant and, as a consequence, favours certain methodologies. As such, the scope of knowledge is curtailed, and academic freedom is limited by certain constructions of knowledge. The humanities and social sciences, as reflected in their funding, have been particularly

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affected, with their status being particularly low in the Arab world. This, in turn, affects curriculum and programmes offered, as well as research.

Examining constructions of knowledge in a transnational frame raises the question of whether the political economy of knowledge has been sufficiently recognised. Positionality with respect to the production of knowledge is increasingly being recognised as relevant, in contrast to the assumed objectivity of 'scientific' evidence-based knowledge. Not only has this challenged the assumed elevated status of the Canon, but this has also challenged the 'epistemic injustices' (Fricker, 2009) evident in Enlightenment theories of natural rights that denied women and colonial subjects rights and a voice on the premise of their lacking rationality.

The temporal and spatial situatedness of knowledge is brought into view by calls for the decolonisation of knowledge. It challenges both the content of knowledge and its methods and ways of thinking. Yet, the recognition of the relationality of power is important to consider in understanding the colonisation and decolonisation of knowledge. Whilst some more radical theories of 'colonising the mind' (Dascal, 2007) construct power as directly hierarchical, Foucauldian understandings of power as relational open up possibilities to understand the complexities of knowledge production and its legitimisation beyond polemical binaries of colonial or decolonial knowledges. Indeed, Connell (2014, p. 527) notes that in the field of gender, some of the most creative work in the Global South arises from the 'critical appropriation of Northern ideas, in combination with ideas that come from radically different experiences'. However, there is, nevertheless, a tension between agentically resisting hegemony and concomitantly experiencing powerlessness in interviewees' accounts.

That temporal and geographical positionality of knowledge as a necessary contextualisation is increasingly recognised in scholarship on knowledge production. There have also been calls to recognise diachronic models in place of a synchronic model of knowledge to replace the premise of European coloniser where colonial is seen as a pedagogic mission towards the same destination but at a slower pace (Nandy and Darby, 2018). The geographical positionality of academic freedom can be clearly witnessed in the accounts, where the production of certain areas of knowledge has differential political and ethical values ascribed to them. For example, the production of knowledge on Palestine in the US and UK contexts attests to experiences of a hostile working environment and constraints on academic freedom in several interviewee accounts. Some researchers with experience of conducting research at institutions in both the United Kingdom/the United States and

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Lebanon recount very contrasting environments for conducting their research on Palestine. Producing knowledge on Whiteness/race and gender/masculinity is also commented on in the UK and US contexts, in particular. For those conducting research in the UAE, the internalised 'red lines' are frequently referred to in relation to producing 'sensitive' knowledge relating to gender and sexuality, security, and sectarian politics. The transnational politics of knowledge is also evident in restrictions on the production of knowledge at AUB, Lebanon, as a result of US compliance regulations, where research on certain groups designated as 'terrorist' is banned.

The production of academic knowledge has traditionally been organised through the disciplines. Disciplines denote both a practice and a policing of non-conformity. The rise of interdisciplinarity speaks to the contestations around disciplinarity, arising from contestations around different conceptions of knowledge. It has been argued that disciplines risk the reification and legitimation of unchallenged knowledge. A number of interviewee accounts raise this issue, challenging the acceptance of an objective canon. Yet, interdisciplinarity is also contested, with different forms of interdisciplinarity conceived in relation to different conceptions of knowledge and the aims of such knowledge production. Whilst a form of 'market' interdisciplinarity is promoted through funding for large-scale international impact-oriented research, this contrasts with the guiding logic of an 'intellectual' interdisciplinarity which works across disciplines to critically reconstruct them, illustrated by examples of feminism and decolonising research movements. The promotion of interdisciplinarity by funding councils has been accused of a 'banal' instrumentalisation, which is conservative and takes the approach of bringing together disciplines to deal with a complex multifaceted problem.

Drawing together Chapters 2 and 3, which examined conceptions of academic freedom and conceptions of knowledge, what emerges is that there are different implications for academic freedom arising from different conceptions of knowledge. In the United Kingdom and the United States, challenges to the canon and disciplinarity have shaken conceptions of how knowledge is understood, as well as related conceptions of 'truth' and 'evidence'. This debate has become politicised between right-wing conservative and liberal left-wing positions. Right-wing conservative responses to challenges to the Canon lament the 'death of knowledge' (Williams, 2016), whilst left-wing responses perceive such arguments as disingenuous attempts to weaponise academic freedom against inclusive knowledge. The recognition of the positionality of the knowledge producer located in geographical, historical, and sociopolitical context challenges the view of knowledge as

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external, to be discovered, and value-free. Rather, it calls for the recognition of the knowledge as relational, contextualised, and positioned within the politics of power relations, beyond national boundaries. Rather than being perceived as a posteriori infringements of academic freedom, Butler and others propose that there are preconditions for the practice of academic freedom entailing an a priori commitment to inclusion and social justice.

8.3 THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY

The role of the university in producing knowledge is discussed in Chapter 4. The literature on the role of the university in producing critical citizens informs the intellectual history of academic freedom and its contemporary and contested constructions. Yet, it is important to recognise this theoretical framing assumes a democratic and national context. The emerging field of critical university studies locates the university as an institution with historically embedded structures of inequality, exploitation, and marginalisation. The case is made for interrogating the role of the university transnationally, examining the post-colonial legacies and nation-building projects of the higher education institutions of Beirut and Dubai. The transnational positioning of the university will necessarily have implications for academic freedom and the production of knowledge. Three key themes are examined in the chapter, which include contestation over the ***mission of the university***, the ***internationalisation of higher education***, and the role of ***governance and funding***.

The mission of the university continues to be a contested one, ranging from the idea that universities are producers of 'true' knowledge to the idea that universities exist to serve the economic growth of the nation, to the idea that the university is an agent of change in a globalised world (Bogelund, 2015). These different missions are underpinned by different constructions of knowledge. The construction of the university as a producer of 'pure knowledge' conceives of knowledge production and knowledge as truth as central to this mission, whilst the application of knowledge for social and economic purposes underpins university missions centred around creating economic growth. The third model of the university as a change agent is informed by an emphasis on social and political contextualisation of knowledge. A traditional US liberal arts education is seen as supporting a mission of promoting democracy through the production of critically informed citizens. This model is also evident at AUB, Lebanon, as well as at the US branch campuses in the

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UAE. As an American model, it is accorded status. Yet, this liberal education approach is not a widespread model in the Arab world, where there is a focus on professional education, premised on a mission of educating students to meet the needs of the market. This can be understood, given the region has the highest levels of youth unemployment in the world, coupled with political instability (Campante and Chor, 2013). However, the humanities and social sciences are also seen to be potentially controversial, where issues of academic freedom are most tested. The university is also conceived of as the protector of knowledge and its production, particularly in the case of humanities and social sciences, which are perceived to be more vulnerable to infringement (Scott, 2019).

The mission of the university has also been linked to discourses of a nation's imagined futures. As noted in the US context, the mission of the university has been linked to a discourse of upholding democracy. In the Arab world, colonial rule used education policy as a means of 'soft' power, and post-independence, education has played an important role in nation building, where the national university is seen as a symbol of national identity. The massification of higher education in the last few decades has witnessed an exponential increase in the number of universities in the region, where this massification is also linked to privatisation and internationalisation. These nationalising projects, however, were preceded by a long history of knowledge production in the region.

The nationalising projects in the Arab region have been superseded by the internationalisation of higher education globally. Global enrolment rates continue to rise, with rates in the Arab world having more than doubled since 2000 (UNESCO, 2018). This is coupled with the rapid expansion of private higher education, where education is constructed instrumentally as a means to enable access to the global economy. Lebanon's higher education system is largely decentralised with most of the sector being private, as is the case with AUB. In the UAE, the concept of establishing a 'knowledge economy' drives the 'imported internationalisation' of branch universities in concentrated 'cities' or 'parks' such as Dubai's Knowledge Park. There have been a range of critiques of these branch universities, with some characterising such ventures as 'imperialist'. However, such characterisations do not take account of the agency of the host countries of these branch universities. For example, in the UAE, there has been a strong local drive to establish a knowledge economy, with the initiative for branch campuses instigated from within. In addition, imperialist narratives fail to recognise the relational transnational power dynamics reflected in the UAE being

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recognised as one of the leading transnational education hubs in the world, with very high rates of outward bound and inward bound student mobility leading to a highly diverse student body (World Education News and Reviews, 2018).

There have also been concerns that the branch campus lacks a coherence in mission with the home institution. As such, this nation-bound conception of higher education institutions is being challenged by a shift in conception of not only the mobilities of people and policies but also the mobility of academic institutions and the development of transnational education and the transnational production of knowledge through teaching and research. As illustrated in Chapter 3's consideration of the geographical positionality of knowledge production, knowledge is constructed differently based on the geopolitics of the context. This is illustrated in the transnational framing of the field of American Studies in Lebanon's AUB, which has challenged and influenced the field within the United States.

The role of the university is also exercised through its governance and funding. Its link to academic freedom can be traced historically in the US context to addressing the conflict arising between power and knowledge (Scott, 2019). We also witness the growth in managerial and accountability discourses, as evident through research assessment evaluations, such as the Research Excellence Framework in the United Kingdom. This shift has been described as the 'hollowed out' university where governance is top-down hierarchical, rather than the self-government of an academic community (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2013). Such managerial shifts have implications for academic freedom, in part arising from the neoliberal framing of the student as customer and also in governing what research is legitimated. These dynamics are increasingly transnational, as evidenced through both funding arrangements of branch universities and funding of international research collaborations. The institution of the university union plays an important role across all four contexts, in terms of both the practice of academic freedom within the local bounds of the university and also transnationally raising issues arising in the context of branch campuses in the UAE, and in relation to issues of legal compliance in the case of AUB in Lebanon.

The governance of legitimate research is mediated through systems of tenure in the US context and the issue of job security in part-time contracts in both US and UK contexts. Furthermore, these forms of vulnerabilities are gendered and racialised, where statistically more women and ethnic minorities work under more precarious work conditions. In addition, funding of

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certain areas of knowledge, for example, research on race and gender, is not prioritised by research councils.

As can been seen, the university has a multivalent spatial positionality – at the same time, both embedded in its local and national contexts and positioned within transnational dynamics. As such, the argument that the university is a separate decontextualised space, an 'ivory tower' to produce objective knowledge unfettered by the dynamics of political, economic, and religious relationships in society, is undermined. McGreevy (2018) describes this as the paradox of universities being both a 'place of closure' and a 'place of openness'.

Examining the role of the university in contextualising practices of academic freedom illustrates how university governance and funding practices are mechanisms that constrain academic freedom. Chapter 5 further examines such constraints, extending this to an interrogation of both 'internal' and 'external' restrictions. The transnational positionality of academic freedom and knowledge production is further elucidated by the contextualisation of such constraints through the lens of the geographical and sociopolitical contexts, as well as individual positionality.

8.4 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RESTRICTIONS

Neoliberalism is a framing discourse globally within which we can understand internal and external restrictions on academic freedom. The marketisation of higher education results in competition, where marketing and communication of the university brand take precedence over individual academic autonomy. Ball (2012) also refers to neoliberalism as a way of being, affecting even the ways in which academics think and relate to others. This framing discourse of neoliberalism is the context of various university-level restrictions, including ethics committees, university procedures, students, and pedagogical dynamics and self-censorship. The role of ***ethics committees*** in acting as gatekeeper for the production of knowledge has been critiqued by some as an infringement on academic freedom (Hammersley, 2009; Hedgecoe, 2016; Holmswood, 2010), as well raising the issue of legitimacy with respect to curtailing the academic freedom of university academics. The basis for determining legitimacy can be contested in terms of, for example, whether the aims for such restrictions are deemed legitimate. This issue has been contested where it has been argued that the university is primarily concerned with the protection of its 'brand', rather than the protection of

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the human participants involved in the research. The evaluation of 'risk' is also contested in research conducted internationally, in particular in the Global South, which can unfold to unmask inequalities in power between collaborating partnerships between institutions in the Global North and Global South.

Procedural regulations were also discussed by interviewees as a means by which universities maintain control, with the example of Steven Salaita's reappointment process at AUB, Lebanon. His application for a more permanent position following his one-year visiting position was blocked citing 'significant procedural violations'. Another area of university restrictions is raised in relation to the marketised construction of the ***student as client/customer*** and their role as potential censor and gatekeeper of the curriculum. As a result of this power dynamic, academics report that the ensuing emotional and practical work can lead to ***self-censorship***. Concerns relating to curriculum are also evident in branch universities in the UAE, although the restriction primarily operates from the main campus in the Western context. Self-censorship and personal responsibilisation in branch campus contexts operate in tandem with the main campus curriculum constraints.

Self-censorship is a feature that emerged as an issue across all four contexts – Lebanon, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Commenting on the UK and US contexts, the issues of bullying and harassment in higher education were raised. Following from the premise that there are necessary preconditions for the practice of academic freedom, academic freedom is undermined in such contexts where there is a hostile or non-inclusive environment for minorities by gender, ethnicity, religion, race, class, and disability. A hostile environment may also take the form of job insecurity, short-term contracts, and the tenure system. Such vulnerability leads to self-imposed censorship as a preservation mechanism and, thus, undermines academic freedom. This is especially evident around topics deemed to be controversial, heightened by incremental micro-messages from within the university environment including colleagues and managers.

Restraints on academic freedom also operate at ***state and international*** levels, and there is an intersectionality of the different levels of restrictions. In addition to variations in national and legal protections of international freedom, there are also a range of national mechanisms, as evidenced by such examples as the UK Research Evaluation Framework (REF), the Requirement for US Compliance at American universities in the Middle East, and mobility restrictions into the United Kingdom, the United States, and the UAE. With the example of the UK REF, its market logic framed in terms of impact

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determines what research is legitimated and affects the nature of disciplines themselves, as was illustrated examining the trends over time within the discipline of Sociology. It has also been argued that the REF, through reinforcing disciplines, can suppress risk-taking and creativity (Stanonis, 2016). At AUB, Lebanon, the role of US compliance has a significant effect on academic freedom, where operating through university governance structures such as the Board of Trustees and senior management, research is restricted based on political ideology, with the banning of research on those organisations listed as terrorist by the US administration. Initially operationalised in relation to US-funded projects, this has been expanded to all forms of interaction. Mobility restrictions have been high profile in the media, in particular relating to the cases of US-based New York University (NYU) professors visiting the UAE and NYU Abu Dhabi, whilst mobility restrictions into the United States do not gain the same level of coverage, with a significant number of cases being of academics travelling from the Middle East.

8.5 FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

Internal and external restrictions on academic freedom in part act as gatekeeper mechanisms in the production of knowledge deemed permissible. Chapter 6, in its focus on 'forbidden' knowledge, examines this construct, elucidating different facets to this 'knowable unknown', as knowledge that is deemed to be 'too sensitive, dangerous or taboo to produce' (Kempner et al., 2011, p. 476) and knowing what knowledge not to produce (Cetina, 1999). As such, forbidden knowledge entails not only content but also the structural and sociopolitical processes that operate in policing this sensitive/taboo knowledge. I propose three dominant discourses of forbidden knowledge, which include, first, concerns relating to the misapplication of research findings, second, 'uncomfortable truths', and third, taboo topics. Furthermore, four areas of forbidden knowledge were highlighted by interviewees.

The first area relates to ***'bioethics', psychology, and 'controversial' science.*** In particular, in UK and US contexts, research on abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, and behavioural genetics were highlighted and also positioned in relation to religious and political perspectives. The temporal and spatial fluidity of the construct 'controversiality' is illustrated by how its associated content is not fixed but rather shows change over time and by geographical

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location. Disciplinary norms change over time, as do sociopolitical priorities and sensitivities, also reflected in state funding priorities.

A second controversial area relates to conducting research on Palestine and Israel, particularly in the UK and US contexts. A range of societal and institutional restrictions, pressures, and exclusions make doing such work precarious, with some researchers leaving the field to work on less controversial topics. Some scholars' concerns about job security, in particular those without tenure in the US system, perceived there to be significant risk in pursuing such research. This sense of vulnerability can be compounded by being blocked from leadership positions within the university, difficulties in getting funding, and being listed on such websites as Canary Mission and Campus Watch. The positionality of the scholar mediates the extent and nature of the exclusion with those of Palestinian, Muslim, or Arab heritage experiencing the highest levels of exclusion. The geopolitical positionality also mediates the experience and nature of restrictions, as illustrated in the case of the study of Palestine through American Studies at the Centre for American Studies and Research at AUB, Lebanon.

Gender and sexuality is another area deemed to be controversial across the four examined contexts, although nuanced with respect to context. The United Kingdom and the United States have seen controversy relating to research on sexuality and transgender, with restrictions often coming from fellow colleagues presented in terms of a critique of the 'quality' of the research. Ensuing bullying and self-censorship is reported to make this knowledge non-knowable. There is also considerable controversy surrounding gender and sexuality knowledge in the curriculum, evident, in particular, in the UAE context. In some instances, the main campus takes pre-emptive measures to avoid any controversy, resulting in gaps in curriculum on this topic. This stands in contrast to reports from UAE lecturers of the perceived relative freedom to teach on this topic, although the issue of self-regulated censorship and knowing what is contextually appropriate is commented on. In the Lebanese context, whilst there is research on gender, the field is typically constructed relatively conservatively, where sexuality is not part of the construct of the field. More innovative approaches within the field do exist, but sit outside higher education institutions, and are funded by international funders, as in the case of *Kohl*, the journal for Body and Gender Research.

The fourth area of controversial research highlighted relates to 'race, religion, security, and extremism'. Again, this area is seen across the four

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contexts, as well as constructed transnationally. Academics working in the field of 'race' and 'gender' in the United Kingdom comment on the institutional mechanisms and initiatives that can potentially undermine or neutralise their work by occupying the space and defining the terms of 'diversity' work. Funding priorities can also redirect critical work on race and gender into more 'acceptable' forms. Constraints relating to work on extremism in the UK context face similar pressures and can sit uncomfortably in relation to government initiatives such as Prevent – whose aim is to tackle extremism – and the co-opting of higher education institutions into this policy work. The difficulties in conducting research on security in the Middle East were seen with the case of a UK Ph.D. Student, Matthew Hedges, in Dubai in 2018. Funding priorities also present certain constructs of security, directing research within these constructs.

The processes of forbidding knowledge also act through the transnational processes of publishing and dissemination. This occurs at the level of the individual researcher trying to publish their work and/or being blocked from giving guest lectures and is also evidenced by initiatives such as the establishment of the anonymous peer-refereed *Journal of Controversial Ideas*. The rationale is that such a forum enables both the publication and the dissemination of unpopular or controversial ideas, as well as providing a level of protection to individuals who feel vulnerable, having suffered hostility to their work in the past.

In contrast to forbidden knowledge, Chapter 7 examined the conception of 'legitimate' knowledge, where legitimacy is constructed in terms of the 'right to authority' and its public acceptance. Legitimate knowledge is not merely the opposite of forbidden knowledge, rather, it has a wider remit. Delegitimation not only may be a process used to block forbidden knowledge, but it may also be used to drown out alternative sources of knowledge, for example, of formerly marginalised groups with less relational power, nationally or transnationally. Legitimation entails social, cognitive, and normative dimensions and has a complex and dynamic interrelationship with the related concepts of belief, truth, and justification (Goldman, 2002). The literature on the sociology of knowledge has highlighted various types of factors complicit in the formulation of knowledge, including class, political interests, gender, and so on. It has been argued further that it is not only the social context within which the research takes place, but also that this context is embedded in the epistemic nature of the research. Kitcher (1993), for example, highlights how research is organised through practices of consensus, a social practice.

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Highlighting the notion of the 'right' to 'authority' and the public acceptance of this authority, I interrogated a number of factors and processes implicated in the legitimation (or delegitimation) of knowledge. These include, for example, positionality; university diversity initiatives; discourses of civility; disciplinary constructs of methodology, 'quality', and the 'Canon'; skills, employment, and research assessment; funding and international partnerships; and university world rankings and publications.

Legitimate knowledge depends on the positionality of the knowledge producer and where that knowledge is being produced. Positionality is also invoked with respect to perceptions of who can legitimately do what research, as given in examples of race research in the United Kingdom. In addition, positionality affects self-censorship, due to hyper-consciousness of positionality, which is often the case for ethnic minority academics. This stands in stark contrast to the assumed universality of knowledge produced by White researchers. Notions of expertise are also important in relation to the production of legitimate knowledge, as previously mentioned. The notion of expertise invokes a particular construct of 'knowable' externalised knowledge, standing in opposition to subjective or experiential forms of knowledge, critiqued as the elision between belief and knowledge. Contestations over legitimate knowledge arise in debates relating to indigenous knowledge. Global North knowledge is associated with legitimacy, objectivity, and rationality, in contrast to Global South knowledge and marginalised indigenous knowledge associated with affect and subjectivity.

Diversity initiatives have become a common feature in universities, especially in the UK and US contexts. In the United Kingdom, Athena SWAN is one example where it has the stated purpose to effect structural and cultural changes in higher education for women. Similarly, the UK Race Equality Charter focuses on race equality and, in particular, representation of students and staff in higher education institutions. However, these initiatives, whilst lauded for raising these issues and having some success, have been critiqued for the marketised construction of individual competitiveness, as well as the burden of this work typically falling on those marginalised groups. It is also argued that these 'reasonable' initiatives neutralise a more radical and emotive bottom-up advocacy.

The construct of quality is used to delegitimise different forms of knowledge production, which operates through disciplinary and methodological constructions of quality, as raised in Chapter 3. Returning to the construct of legitimacy as 'right' to authority, and its public acceptance, we see that the concept of a self-regulating disciplinary community based on recognised

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expertise enacts this legitimacy of the shared norms of the discipline. If these norms are transgressed, there is the risk of exclusion from the disciplinary community. Academics whose work challenge disciplinary norms typically recount the reaction of academic colleagues as one of the greatest concerns, exacerbated by career stage, where the threat of exclusion is a greater risk for those at earlier career stages. Contestation relating to methodological quality also features strongly in relation to legitimisation of research findings evident in debates relating to quantitative and qualitative research, and in particular, the power of statistics (Gillborn, 2010). These debates of disciplinary quality are also central to discourses on the 'Canon', assumed to be a universal, objective recognition of works of quality. Again, we see the invocation of legitimacy through the notions of right to authority and its public acceptance. With the rise of feminist, critical, and post-colonial theory, the legitimacy of the Canon has been challenged, with calls to recognise its sociopolitical and historical positionality and the political nature of knowledge (Arday and Mirza, 2018; Banks, 1993; Giroux, 1983; Habermas, 1971).

The effect of neoliberal discourses of skills, impact, and employment has been examined through the book, in relation to the production of knowledge, the role of the university, and as a form of restriction of academic freedom. This restriction is operationalised through the legitimisation of knowledge within the neoliberal discourses of skills and impact. Research that is deemed outside this frame is delegitimised. This is not only a discourse in the United Kingdom and the United States but is also evidenced in the UAE and Lebanon and indeed is a global discourse with the internationalisation and massification of higher education. This discourse, in turn, affects the status, in particular, of the humanities and social sciences and its funding by legitimating or delegitimating what research is conducted. There has been a shift to legitimating more applied constructions of disciplines, often related to policy. This effect is particularly exacerbated in the UAE and Lebanon, where many universities do not have liberal arts–based requirements, and professional degree programmes dominate.

Impact agendas also dominate in the funding for large-scale international partnerships, where often North–South partnerships are a requirement of funding. These initiatives have raised the issue of the nature of such partnerships, with calls for more inclusive and equitable partnerships. Yet, there is a legacy of the Global South producing the data, rather than setting the theoretical or research agendas, central to the larger social processes of knowledge production (Connell, 2014). There is a significant challenge in overcoming structural constraints and historical power relations,

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inadvertently reifying the inequalities between the Global North and the Global South (Landau, 2012). Whilst there have been efforts to respond to critiques of unequal partnerships, the focus has been relatively more on the implementation and dissemination of research, rather than interrogating processes of agenda setting and research governance and epistemological conceptions and the political economy of knowledge (Fransman and Newman, 2019).

For example, the political economy of knowledge production operates in the delegitimising of research on 'neglected diseases' – defined as neglected in terms of the relative disease burden. The lack of funding illustrates the delegitimisation of this knowledge, which can be understood in terms of the political economy of knowledge production. Funding decisions relating to research to develop effective treatments of certain diseases in the Global South are made on the basis that these disadvantaged populations would not be able to afford the treatments. As a result, this marketisation of the application of such research delegitimises the perceived need to undertake this research.

Delegitimation of knowledge also operates through critiques of the 'way' in which information is delivered. The discourse of civility illustrates how critique of the content of knowledge production is deflected by a focus on the nature of the manner of critique. It has been argued that the history of the discourse of incivility has operated as a form of 'racial and class denouncement' in the United States and Europe (Massad, 2014) and is a reformulation of an 'openly colonial' cultured/uncultured binary (Salaita, 2015). A premise underlying such discourses contrasts 'legitimate' knowledge constructed in terms of rationality and objectivity in contrast to non-legitimate subjective and affective knowledge. There is a disingenuous abstraction of knowledge from the existing power relations between groups and the sociopolitical and historical contexts.

Global systems such as university rankings, publications, and citations all play an important role in the legitimation of knowledge. Yet, there has been contestation over the methodology of university rankings and its implications for shaping what constitutes a 'good university'. In addition, there is contestation surrounding the use of such rankings, with concerns pertaining to the reification of the marketised logic of the student as customer. Furthermore, the rankings do not take account of the significant inequalities in resources between universities in the Global North and the Global South. This is also illustrated in global publication practices where publication in the English language dominates. In addition, international division of knowledge labour

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between the Global North and the Global South often results in Northern scholars in North–South collaborations having outcomes of publishable knowledge, whilst Southern scholars play more of a role of 'sub-contractors' (Kreimer and Zabala, 2008). Citation practices also diverge, with the Global North showing patterns of self-citation, with rare citation of Southern scholars by Northern scholars (Collyer, 2018). In contrast, Southern scholars are outward looking in their citation practices. Such differences in publication and citation practices reify and consolidate the inequalities in transnational knowledge production. However, new knowledge hubs are emerging, for example, in Brazil, South Korea, Taiwan, and China, challenging the hegemony and legitimacy of dominant global systems, with a shift towards a multi-polar model of knowledge production (Hanafi and Arvanitis, 2015).

8.6 FINAL THOUGHTS

Understandings of academic freedom have been defined predominantly through the methodological nationalism of the field. Much of the literature has situated the study of academic freedom in the Global North, in particular, in US and UK contexts. In contrast, this book has made the case for a transnational theoretical framework for academic freedom in recognition of the transnational production of knowledge and the internationalisation and massification of higher education globally. In addition, this book interrogates the interrelationship of academic freedom and the production of knowledge in transnational perspective across and between the four national contexts of Lebanon, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The relationship between academic freedom and production of knowledge has been relatively under-researched, and so this book has aimed to theorise their inter-connectivity, drawing on original empirical data from interviews with academics in the four national contexts, whose own positioning in relation to their research interests is often transnational. Interrogating the conceptions of knowledge and the mission of the university, I have illustrated how different conceptions of knowledge have differing implications for academic freedom.

Arguing for a contextualised approach to understanding academic freedom, I also call for consideration of a broader concept of academic freedom – one that entails its preconditions, as outlined by Butler and others. I argue that a construct of academic freedom that also necessarily entails the

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'conditions of its exercise' (Butler, 2015, p. 293) concomitantly enables an accommodation between the principles of academic freedom and the principles of inclusion – often portrayed to be in tension with one another. As such, there need be no theoretical dissonance between freedom and diversity/inclusion. Future work may focus on the practical dichotomy between these polarised positions, with further empirical data, especially from the Global South and its emerging knowledge hubs.

Finally, the book also considers the issue of the hegemony of knowledge, its forms of legitimation, and the politics of forbidden knowledge, situated within a transnational framework, illustrating, on the one hand, qualitative similarities between the different national contexts with respect to the operationalisation of legitimacy through internal and external restrictions; on the other hand, however, the transnational framework highlights the political economy of knowledge in the legitimation of knowledge, often consolidating the hegemony of the Global North. Future work on emerging knowledge hubs in the Global South will enable our understanding of how to address these historic and ongoing epistemic injustices (Fricker, 2009), thereby shifting knowledge production to a multi-polar model with its ensuing implications for academic freedom.

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