

ALTERNATION CALL FOR PAPERS

Theme: *Narratives of Social Cohesion and Academic Identities in Higher Education*

Issue Guest Editors:

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Social cohesion is a contested term and has multiple definitions across disciplinary boundaries (Bruhn, 2009). Nonetheless, social cohesion is fundamentally about the quality of human relationships. It is often metaphorically referred to as the glue that holds people together (Capshaw, 2005). In this context, social cohesion can be understood as “building shared values and communities of interpretation, ...generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and are members of the same community” (Maxwell, 1998, p. ix).

As a historical consequence of the traumatising colonial and apartheid regimes, South Africa is burdened with a legacy of social fragmentation, marginalization, exclusion, and inequality. And, pervasive residues of social separateness and discrimination persist in the contemporary South African public higher education landscape (Soudien et al., 2008). Higher education institutions “can act to increase social cohesion, or they can act in ways that exacerbate the cleavages of class, race, religion, national origin, and culture, hence pulling society apart” (Capshaw, 2005, p. 53). Unfortunately, as indicated in the report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (Soudien et al., 2008), and the subsequent response from the CHE (2009), the latter appears to be more prevalent in South African institutions.

Social cohesion has, therefore, been identified as a national priority for South African higher education (CHE, 2013). Higher education institutions are expected to “effect social cohesion by promoting the culture of academic integrity [through] facilitating a sense of community ... and by creating a diverse environment” (Moiseyenko, 2005, p. 94). And, academics within public higher education institutions are tasked with fostering social cohesion by cultivating mutually nourishing connections between people with diverse histories and positionings. Thus, studying the intersections between social cohesion and academic identities is a priority for higher education research in contemporary South Africa, as it is elsewhere for researchers who are committed to taking up critical issues of self and social change.

Many studies on academics’ everyday lives and teaching experiences in higher education settings are from a macro and structural perspective, and their views and experiences are represented quantitatively (Hernández et al., 2010). As powerful as the statistics might be, these need to be complemented by complex narratives that reveal the “intersecting messiness” of the everyday lives and practices of the academics who traverse the “in/visible borderlands of Higher Education” (Belluigi et al., 2019, p. 5). Narratives can provide essential insights into how academics in higher education can (or cannot) renegotiate their identities and values as moments of possibility and hope for the disruption of social and historical hierarchies and divides.

This themed issue of *Alternation* aims to facilitate understandings of academic identities as fluid and open to processes of becoming, in relation to ongoing shifts in culture, history, and power. The issue will bring into dialogue multiple perspectives and experiences of academics in varied higher education settings within and beyond South Africa. It will explore how and why academics position themselves in the way they do, concerning social cohesion, in their everyday lives and educational practices. The themed issue will highlight diverse, innovative modes and lenses for representing, interpreting, and theorising academic’s lived experiences relational and in response to pressing social cohesion-related challenges and dilemmas in higher education.

Emerging and experienced scholars from multiple knowledge fields are invited to inquire into academics' daily experiences and situations of social separateness and social cohesion within higher education, locally and internationally. The collection of articles will open up conversations about the possibilities and intricacies of facilitating complex understandings of social cohesion and academic selves.

For the themed issue, focused on narrative theory and method, what counts as narrative research can be interpreted in multiple ways. Therefore, studies might draw on a range of research methods and data sources, including (but not limited to) collage, field notes, film, drawing, objects, performance, poetry, photography, and storytelling. Researchers are encouraged to experiment with innovative approaches that push the boundaries of what counts as evidence in educational research for generating new and different knowledge on social cohesion and academic identities.

Questions addressed might include:

- *How might narrative accounts of lived experiences make evident the interrelated meanings of social cohesion and academic identities?*
- *How can narratives of social cohesion and academic identities be theorized in new ways?*
- *What might be made visible through researching social cohesion and academic identities with innovative narrative methods?*
- *What ethical imperatives and problems underlie narrative research into social cohesion and academic identities?*
- *How can narrative explorations of social cohesion and academic identities connect with broader social, cultural, and political discourses?*
- *How can narratives of social cohesion and academic identities contribute to educational and social change?*

Each article should be between 6000 and 8000 words.

INTERESTED CONTRIBUTORS

Interested contributors are encouraged to submit their abstracts to the *Alternation* corresponding editor of this special edition, Prof. Daisy Pillay, at: pillaygv@ukzn.ac.za

Online submissions: <http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/submissions.aspx>

The SUBJECT line of the email should read: Academic Identities and Social Cohesion Abstract by... (Name of the corresponding author/s).

ABSTRACTS SUBMISSIONS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- A succinct title
- A brief abstract (\pm 200 words), which could address these elements:
- the focus and purpose of the study
- the researcher/s and research context/s
- methodology and methods
- most exciting discoveries and implications
- Author/s name/s
- Author/s institutional affiliation
- Contact details

TIME FRAMES: 25 September 2020 - 29 October 2021

- 25 September 2020: Deadline for submission of abstracts
- 15 October 2020: Final date for invitations to selected authors
- 15 January 2021: Final date for submission of full manuscripts
- 15 May 2021: Feedback from peer review process
- 15 July 2021: Final date for submission of revised manuscripts
- 29 October 2021: Approximate publication date

ALTERNATION Journal Publications

The *Alternation* journal is a fully accredited, peer-reviewed South African Department of Higher Education and Training journal. It is edited by Prof J.A. Smit, former Dean and Head of School, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, and published at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, on Open Access platforms at:

<https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/soa>, and

<http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx>

It is also available on the EBSCO Humanities Source platform.

All articles are subject to peer-review by at least two independent peer reviewers. All articles that pass the review process, and that are accepted for publication, are published online, at:

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The *Alternation* OJS archive is at: <https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/soa/issue/archive>

(Please note that the OJS archive is in the process of development, and will in future host all published issues of *Alternation*, dating from 1994.)

ALTERNATION GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS, AND ALTERNATION STYLE

Full author guidelines are available at:

<http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/submissions.aspx>

For any comments or questions, please contact the Corresponding Editor of this issue at:

pillaygv@ukzn.ac.za, or the Editor-in-Chief, at: SMITJ@ukzn.ac.za

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