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# **COMMON-SENSE TO ACADEMIC-SENSE**

**Epistemological explorations  
into the study and processes of  
the act of coming to know**

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requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
at  
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# DEDICATION

For the creative dialecticians in my life

MICHAEL JOHN  
Yorkshireman  
my great grandfather

SAMUEL JOHN                      &                      LAURA ISOBEL  
Cornishman    Yorkshirewoman  
1881-1962    1892-1961  
my grandparents

and for the physician  
who instructed my father  
(when I was very young) :  
*'get her to interrogate her own questions;  
ask her 'Why?'*

But most of all for  
FRANCIS HENRY  
1917-1963  
Tirau citizen, my father, inventor and innovator.  
A person who explored possibilities and  
who taught me to do the same.

I am the product of their labours,  
and this thesis is a product of their questioning.

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a mighty big hug  
and

THANK YOU  
- from the bottom of my heart

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## Abstract

This study takes a sociological look at how different ways of knowing are educationally determined. It explores this complex praxis by engaging in two intellectual journeys.

First, (in Part I) it exposes my own moves from common-sense to academic-sense, as the topic of this thesis is formed in my personal history, but I find the methods to study it require innovative reconstruction. This realisation effects the move from psychology and Identificatory positivism to critical sociology, epistemology and a standpoint in 'the negatives'. When I realised the topic might be more authentically studied by methodologically conceding that knowledge is subject to change, difference and social determinisms, the original subject altered from a search to normatively understand 'how adults learn', to a social inquiry into how some radicalised ways of knowing are educationally mediated. Then an empirical study with epistemological underpinnings is outlined. The study is one which is critically contextualised prior to investigation, and one which negates the foregrounding and dominance of a search for truth by replacing this with the possibilities of exploring meanings.

Part II reflects the intellectual journey of several selected people as they move from common-sense to academic-sense. The first chapter in this section identifies the educational histories of three typified and radicalised ways of knowing, illustrating the habituation of personal epistemic views. The second (and major) section, analyses the year-long journey of these people, by collapsing the time-frame into the single sequence of one knowledge-act. It follows their first year of study, by correspondence, in the social science faculty of a university. During this journey, the adults begin from different epistemological preferences ('standpoints' which include language, personal epistemology and social contact) and they seek different forms of knowledge from within the institution (these 'touchstones' include the conventions of scholarly conduct, course-content itself and knowledge of evaluation strategies). For each typified way of knowing, the preferred standpoint and touchstone form a critical educational relation. In the third section of Part II, the social mediation of these three educational relations is explored.

What is found is that although two educational relations ('personal epistemology to course content', and 'language' to 'the conventions of scholarly conduct') are concerned with invoking either a subjectified or objectified understanding about academic ways of knowing, these knowledge-constitutive preferences were not, in the main, addressed by these university educators in their teaching practices. Instead a social-constitutive bonding (between staff and students) dominates the educators concerns. Rather than focus upon the epistemological aspects of ways of knowing, (such as 'how to be critical' or 'how to theorise'), these educators focussed upon the teaching of 'presentation protocols' (e.g. the need to prepare a bibliography) and outlining matters of evaluation (e.g. grammar, spelling, due dates, and word lengths). When this particular educational relation (between 'social contact' and 'evaluation') was radically politicised by deliberate negation of knowledge-constitutivity, it provided the framework of 'the academic game' - a minimalist approach to academic-sense effected by replacing the essence of knowledge-constitutivity with the appearances of knowing.

It is suggested that should an educational institution wish to allay or negate this ideology of success which is based in the mythologies of 'the game', then it would need to focus attentions upon epistemologically defining its knowledge-constitutive understandings of 'academic-sense', and reflect these examined understandings in the mediations of its social-constitutive practices.

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