UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Title: Exploring Students' understandings of a Decolonised Psychology Curriculum at a South African University

Student Name: Qhawe Agyapong Plaatjie

Student Number: 4000083

Type of Thesis: Mini thesis

Degree: MA Clinical Psychology (MPsych)

Department: Psychology

Supervisor: Dr. Wilhelmina Human

Date: September 2021

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree MPsych at the University of the Western Cape.

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this present body of work; Exploring Students' understandings of a Decolonised Psychology Curriculum at a South African University, has not been previously submitted in whole or in part, for any degree or examination to any university, and is solely my own work. If any text passages or diagrams from books, papers, the Web or other sources have been copied or in any other way used, all references – including those found in electronic media have been acknowledged and fully cited in the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition referencing style.

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

ABSTRACT

Discussions about decolonisation of the curriculum resurfaced after the #FeesMustFall movement in South African universities. Despite its long history, there's little to no change in its implication. Decolonisation is regaining popularity in academia; however little room is afforded to students to express their understanding of what the decolonisation of the curriculum entails. A gap within the literature was identified, which was the little consideration given to student voices. Thus, the primary aim of this research project was to explore students understanding of a decolonised Psychology curriculum in South Africa. The study's objectives were to explore what current understandings of decoloniality exist amongst Psychology students; this included identifying what opportunities are provided for students to engage with the process of decolonising the curriculum as well as explore students' perceptions of their involvement in the decolonisation of the Psychology curriculum to make it more applicable in the South African context. Through a qualitative exploratory research design, this study sought to gather insights from undergraduate and post-graduate Psychology students registered at a South African university. Participants were purposively sampled, and two focus group discussions consisting of 6 postgraduate and 5 undergraduate students were facilitated. The study received ethics approval, adhered to good ethical principles, and was conducted with permission from the university's registrar. Thematic content analysis was used following Braun and Clarkes (2013) analytical steps. Several themes emerged which included students' interpretations of decolonisation, Afrocentric pedagogy, power structures and individual and institutional interventions. The significance of this study is that it highlights the crucial opinion of students regarding curriculum and how their views can aid transformation.

Keywords: Curriculum, Decolonisation, Psychology, Student, Theory of Justice

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank God whom without His guidance and protection, this thesis may have not come to fruition. It was a challenging, yet exciting and enriching journey, made possible through faith and prayer. I would also like to thank my supervisor Dr. Wilhelmina Human for her guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this journey. I truly value your contribution, not only this thesis but my professional growth and development as a scholar and therapist. I would also like to thank my master's lecturers, who have also guided and supported me.

To my parents, Paul Agyapong-Mensah and Bukiwe Plaatjie, nothing could ever express the gratitude I have for both of you. Thank you for your love, encouragement, and prayers. Thank you for my upbringing and planting the seeds which have now come to bear fruit. Thank you for believing in me and seeing potential even in times I doubted myself. May God continue to bless and keep you both.

My sisters; Nabo Plaatjie and Kayakazi Plaatjie, thank you for your endless love and support throughout my academic journey. I will forever be grateful for your belief in me and the trust you have placed in me as your brother to make you proud. To my niblings, Liyema, Abenathi, Mivuyo and Olwenkosi thank you all for consistently believing in me and making me your inspiration, I truly value the role that you guys play in my life.

To my grandmother, Ida Plaatjie, thank you for your prayers and love. As you bestowed upon me the name Qhawe meaning Victor or Hero; a person admired for their courage, nobleness, and outstanding achievements. This achievement represents a victory for the entire family, all of which would not have been possible without you. To all my friends, thank you for all the support you have shown me. From the day I first entered university to now, thank you for everything.

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late aunt, Feziwe Qaqamba Plaatjie, who sadly passed on May 2020.

Your wisdom will forever be in my heart and mind. You will forever be loved and remembered

by all of us.

Thank you for being my number one fan.

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

LIST OF TABLES

x

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter serves to introduce as well as set the contextual background of this study. It includes the contextual and historical context that informs the study. It further includes the rationale and problem statement of the study. It goes further to then include the significance of the study followed by the aim, research question and objectives of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and guide the reader about what this study entailed and serves as a point of departure for the entire study.

1.2 Contextual Background

When considering the historical context of South Africa, the mention of colonisation becomes synonymous. Colonisation not only included the colonisation of culture, religion, and ways of being, but also that of knowledge and learning (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Meda 2019; Carolissen et al., 2015; Mawere, 2015; Mbembe, 2016). The imprinting of Western praxis has led to the neglect of African ways of knowing and being (Mawere, 2015). This neglect has been noted as a great contributor to the conversations aimed at changing the status quo. Amongst the potential areas of change that are being considered, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the curriculum have become the focus.

South Africa has a rich history of activism, including student activism extending as far back as the marches of the Soweto uprising in 1976 (Glanvill, 2012). This activism is largely motivated by a culture of striving to do better in all respects of society. Often, in South Africa, dissatisfaction is met with the unity of minds and action that strive to achieve certain goals (Lodge & Mottiar, 2015). For example, in 2015, students held protests in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), to communicate the existing dissatisfaction about the curriculum and call

1

for its decolonisation. Thus, decolonisation of the curriculum regained momentum in South African HEIs, particularly after the #FeesMustFall strikes which commenced in mid-October 2015 (Pillay, 2016). Although this movement extends as far back as the apartheid era, moderate changes have occurred in various disciplines since then (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012; Carolissen et al., 2015; Pillay, 2016; Fataar, 2018). Whilst progress is made through critical perspectives, such as community Psychology, the slow rate of this process has warranted the re-emergence of this topic (Fataar, 2018; Carolissen et al., 2018). This is especially true for the country's Psychology, as it can be argued that lack in transformation is a factor that leads to extremely high incidence of mental illness in the country (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Matlala et al., 2018). Since the curriculum's primarily responsibility is to educate and train future psychologists, a transformed curriculum capable of adequately equipping students to work in the South African context is necessary. Therefore, change in the country's demographic issues such as mental illness, also has roots in the curriculum and its transformation. According to Mahabeer (2020) and Kessi (2016), the decolonisation of the curriculum could be one of the ways in which several societal issues may be addressed. Whilst these issues can be approached using multiple perspectives, one of the angles that can be used for understanding and solving them is decolonised Psychology curriculum (Heleta, 2016; Barnes & Siswana, 2018; Mawere, 2015; Mbembe, 2016). Even though a modest amount of literature has been published regarding the decolonisation of the South African curriculum in HEIs, little consideration has been given to students and their views regarding what this process might mean for them (Meda, 2019). Meda (2019) explains that "students are just given content to study as it existed during colonial and apartheid periods. They are not involved in the curriculum design, which is why they are viewed as mere consumers of knowledge, who are not consulted during planning and designing phases" (p. 26). Similar to the Psychology curriculum (Kessi, 2017). Meda (2019) also identifies this process as problematic, as students are expected to solve problems in their

2

contexts, and the grooming of their problem-solving skills was developed elsewhere and most concerning, without their involvement.

Psychology is one of the most important disciplines within the Social Sciences (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). In addition to it being a popular field amongst students, it is the most widespread course across various higher education qualifications (Cooper & Nicholas), making it likely for many students may encounter it. Moreover, as the demand for psychologists in the country increases, with various socio-economic and political changes which affect the wellbeing of citizens, a Psychology aimed at equipping students with this specialised skill set is crucial. Equipping these skills through the transformed curriculum will hone and aid the integration of these skills. To truly understand the intricacies and complexities of this topic, differentiations will be made between various terms such as colonisation, decolonisation and decoloniality. These terms, colonisation, decolonisation, and decoloniality have been differentiated and explained in-depth in the literature review in order to provide their context and relevance to this study. Important to note is that there is no universally agreed upon definitions for these terms, however decolonisation has been tentatively defined in this study, as its purpose was to also gather what definitions and understandings students developed.

An important school of thought that was used in this study was African Psychology (Makhubela, 2019). The reason for this was that it represents a movement that has already begun to occur within Psychology and found useful as a lens of understanding various elements of decolonising the Psychology curriculum. This school of thought was closely intertwined with the overarching paradigm, Rawls' Theory of Justice, which was utilised as the theoretical framework which assisted in the understanding and conceptualisation of the data gathered.

1.3 Rationale

According to Meda (2019), decolonisation has been written about at length, however these writing have seldom included the views of students. Students are considered as crucial

role players in conversations relating to the curriculum; and their involvement needs to occur more frequently, and on influential platforms such as those of research (Meda, 2019). In relation to the Psychology curriculum, an additional rationale for this study is its skewed professional demographic representativity. Even though undergraduate Psychology students constitute mostly Black young adults, there are few Black psychologists (Turpin & Coleman, 2010; Carolissen et al., 2015). Thus, through engaging in research that seeks to aid transformation, this study anticipated to achieve a greater sense of equality by re-shifting these demographics to be representative of the population. It is therefore important to consider and glean students' different perspectives about the decolonialisation of the curriculum.

1.4 Problem Statement

Decolonial research has been conducted for decades, with the South African Context being more involved in recent years. However, despite this progress in researching such an important phenomenon, little consideration has been given to students regarding their views (Meda, 2019). As students are important stakeholders in matters regarding the curriculum, it is imperative that their views are considered (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Meda, 2019; Carolissen, et al., 2015; Kessi, 2017; Wen Su, 2012). Thus, this research project sought to address this issue within the literature by providing a platform for students to engage with their understandings about decoloniality.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Given that there are not any South African studies that specifically focuses attention on the understandings students have about decolonised Psychology curriculum, and the role of students' involvement in decolonising the Psychology curriculum, this study is considered important. The current study sought to provide depth of understanding derived from the students, and that their perspectives may one day help facilitate effective and beneficial

curriculum changes, particularly that of the Psychology curriculum. Subsequently, these changes may instigate the change of ineffective policies, paving means of producing graduates better suited to tackle relevant Psychology related contextual issues (Carolissen, et al., 2015).

1.6 Aim

The primary aim of this research project was to explore students understanding of a decolonised Psychology curriculum in South Africa.

1.7 Research Question

This study sought to answer the following research question informed by the aim of this study:

What understandings do students have regarding a decolonised psychology curriculum?

1.8 Objectives

The following objectives were formulated for the study based on the aim and research question of the study:

- To explore current understandings of decoloniality that exist amongst both undergraduate and postgraduate Psychology students
- To identify opportunities that have been provided for students to engage with the process of decolonising the curriculum
- To explore students' perceptions of their involvement in the decolonisation of the Psychology curriculum to make it more applicable in the South African context

1.9 Chapter Layout

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter one presents the background information on the history regarding the colonisation of education in South Africa. It further speaks about the dissatisfaction that has been expressed by students regarding the curriculum, as well as the conversations that have since ensued. Also, highlighting how the curriculum is not relevant to the context of most students hence the need for its transformation through decolonisation. Additional information is presented by indicating the importance of the study as well as the aim and objectives set out by the researcher. This chapter ultimately aims to provide the reader with an understanding of the history of the South African Psychology curriculum and how conversations about decolonisation has emerged. The following chapters are a build on the introductory chapter.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two consists of a literature review focused on existing literature about decolonisation of the curriculum and the limit of student voices within this literature. More than reviewing the currently existing literature, this chapter credits the contribution that previous research has made in the conceptualisation of this study. Furthermore, highlighting the existing gap in literature and how this study intended on filling in that gap. Lastly, it explains the framework underpinning this study and its relevance.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Chapter three discusses the methodological framework that was used in this study, which outlines the research design, research setting, study participants and sampling, data collection and procedure, data analysis and ethics considered for the study. It also, saliently

highlights the procedures followed in this study to ensure its trustworthiness, whilst linking these steps with the aim and objectives of the study.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussions

Chapter four presents the findings and discussion of the study. This chapter presents the findings of the study as related to the themes and subthemes that emerged from the focus group discussions. These findings were analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis. The themes that were generated from the analysis of the transcripts are discussed in relation to the literature review.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study based on the findings and discussion   illustrated in the previous chapter. It further presents the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.
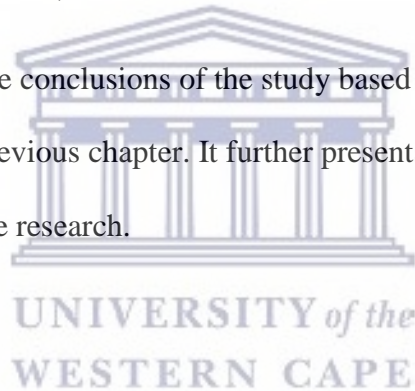
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

To fully engage and understand the complexities that arise from engaging with decolonisation, it is important to distinguish between the different terms namely, decoloniality and decolonisation. However, it is noted, while this distinction may be important, the exploration of this falls outside the scope of this research study. Furthermore, one of the objectives of this study is to understand from a student's perspective what decolonisation is, this term will not be defined but rather will be operationalised to provide the context for this study. The search for the relevant literature was done using the University of the Western Cape library database such as PsycARTICLES, EbscoHost, JSTOR, and PubMed, which granted access to several different and reliable academic journal websites. Multiple searches were ran using keywords such as decoloniality, decolonisation, Psychology, curriculum, and South Africa. The definitions explained were obtained from articles within these databases.

Decoloniality can be understood as a school of thought primarily focused on untangling production of knowledge from a primarily Eurocentric epistemic (Quijano, 2007). Coined initially in Latin America, its focus was to primarily debunk the notion of Western culture being superior to others (Quijano, 2007). Decolonisation in the context of this research, can be understood as the idea or practice of undoing and unlearning praxis that continue to maintain an oppressive and limiting status quo in terms of the curriculum (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). This perspective is also influenced by Ngugi's (1981) understanding of decolonisation as the "quest for relevance" by Africans and with the goal being Africans "being seen clearly in relationship with ourselves and other selves in the universe" (p.87). It is about centralising Africa within the curriculum, to ensure that the curriculum "speaks to and from an African

context" (Pillay & Swanepoel, 2019, p.120). It further includes the merging and incorporation of different ways of thinking, viewing, understanding and being together with current existing perspective (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Thus, decolonisation, for the argument presented here, is understood as a complex process that does not entail the removal of Western notions and their pioneers in the curriculum but rather shifting the focus to the environment and its people to draw relevant, contextually based insights, ideologies, knowledge, and praxis (Higgs, 2012; Adebisi, 2016; Higgs, 2016; Stein, & Andreotti, 2016; Mampane, Omidire & Aluko 2018). This broad framework of how decolonisation is thought about, may not necessarily be all-encompassing for potential research participants, but is still relevant.

This working understanding is informed by various concurrent and ongoing conversations regarding the decolonisation of the curriculum within literature (Higgs, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Adebisi, 2016; Higgs, 2016; Stein & Andreotti, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Pillay & Swanepoel, 2019). This understanding serves only as a lens of viewing and not the only one that exists, nor should it be considered as hegemonic view (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). As the students in the focus group discussions for the study share their own understandings, this view may be challenged or opposed completely based on what they deem and understand to be the decolonisation of the curriculum.

2.2 Decolonisation: A brief history

Decolonisation has been extensively written about since the late 60s and 70s, to draw attention to the vital questions surrounding the imposition of Western knowledge within curriculums of the Global South (refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania) (wa Thiong'o,1986; Higgs, 2012; Adebisi, 2016; Higgs, 2016; Stein, & Andreotti, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Mampane, Omidire & Aluko, 2018). Whilst this proved to be a crucial undertaking in terms of the consideration of other forms of knowing, this practice has also had its shortcomings. The primary shortcoming identified in this instance is

the little, if any, inclusion of student voices regarding these various curricula. This may be argued to be problematic given the concession that multiple academics and scholars have made, that students are not merely passive recipients of knowledge, but co-constructors and active participants (Kaur, Awang-Hashim & Kaur, 2018). When considering the triad of education – the teacher, learner and content, a change in one part of the system should be considered in terms of its effect in the other parts (Vandeyar, 2019). This means, as educators move towards decolonisation of the curriculum, they should not only consider the content that is to change but the students who are to be involved and how the change is to affect them. This then would warrant those students be active dialoguers in discussions regarding the curriculum. However, through exploring the literature, a scant amount has considered this view (Meda, 2019). Thus, reiterating the need for this research. This gap identified through the literature is what warranted the research question; *"What understandings do students have regarding a decolonised psychology curriculum?"* for this study.

2.3 The Curriculum and Colonisation

Before we understand what decolonisation can do for the curriculum and those who receive it, it is important to acknowledge how colonisation shaped it and contributed to its current state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). This shall start by defining and operationalising colonisation and decolonisation. Although, Western definitions of colonisation may view it as a process of disseminating Western ideologies with purposes of enlightenment and the advancement of knowledge of other cultures (Imbruglia, 2015), recipients of this colonisation have felt otherwise. No standard definition of colonisation is agreed on, a central theme entails invasion, oppression, and coercion (Sommer, 2011). For this study, colonisation shall be best understood as "an ideology and process of expansion and evasion driven by the 'intellectual yoke' that one group feels compelled to impose on another, its culture, norms, beliefs, and behaviours based on perceived incompetency and ignorance" (Sommer, 2011, p.188). This

definition was chosen because common definitions often depict this process as linear in the sense of only happening between Western to Global South whilst inherently positioning the West as superior. Additionally, this definition considers how colonisation can happen on a smaller scale and that the evasion may not only happen territorially but spiritually, psychologically, and intellectually (Sommer, 2011). Thus, by drawing on this definition, one can have an overall sense of what colonisation is and how it may affect institutions of knowledge production and how that translates to a colonised curriculum.

In terms of a colonised curriculum, this entails the invasion of knowledge sources of production, which affect what forms of knowledge are disseminated (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Carolissen et al., 2015). This may be understood broadly as the invasion of a native people's forms of knowledge, knowledge creation, knowledge transmission and how knowledge is assessed (Fanon, 1964; Cooper & Nicholas, 2012; Meda, 2019). One of the most prominent modes of transmission of knowledge in Africa was through orating knowledge from one individual to another, one family to another and from one generation to another (Mawere, 2015; Makhubela, 2016). However, due to Western influence, this form of knowledge has been illegitimated such that it has devalued information that is essential to the identity of Africans. This includes the lessons that they deem important and cannot be passed by other means (Makhubela, 2016). This speaks to the larger issue of knowledge in HEIs, not speaking to the context and people who are recipients of it. According to Cooper and Nicholas (2012), this is also the case for Psychology and its curriculum within the South African context, hence the need for decolonisation within Psychology.

2.4 The Curriculum and Decolonisation

In evaluating the necessity of exploring the role of Psychology within the context of decolonial scholarship, Maldonado-Torres (2017) highlights the transitioning of the discipline from solely viewing the human mind as the subject of scientific study, to viewing it as an object

of study as key. Whilst this may have had the advantage of bettering the understanding of human beings, it also brought about the effect of having "Western methodic knowledge acquiring normative status and thus the rejection of other forms of knowing" (Maldonado-Torres, 2017, p.433). According to Maldonado-Torres (2017) this is what became the dawn of epistemic colonisation; the global appropriation of ways of knowing and thinking by the West. Although, this was initially true of the discipline at large, it translated into the praxis and content of learning which is what we now understand as the curriculum (Wen Su, 2012).

Like most definitions in the Social Science, the definition of curriculum is also contested (Carolissen et al., 2015). The English dictionary (Oxford Dictionary, 2021) defines curriculum as the collection of subjects comprising a course of study in a school or college. It identifies the curriculum as what is learnt to obtain a qualification or complete a grade. Pinar (2012) on the other hand, goes further and broadly identifies the curriculum, as consisting of three main elements, the content, process, and context of learning between teachers and their students. The curriculum as what is taught to students, how it is taught as well as the moral and ethical praxis that teachers undertake when working with students (Pinar, 2012). Furthermore, it is a holistic non-linear process whereby learning is the content itself as well as the process of transmitting that content between student and teacher. The choosing of this definition for this study is largely motivated by recognising the positionality of students within the curriculum (Pinar, 2012). Carolissen et al., (2015), expand on this definition by explaining that the curriculum is "a symbolic process whereby reality is reproduced, repaired and transformed in historical and social context and through which both students and educators may articulate their experience in the world" (p.9). The viewing of students as merely recipients and passive participants in the curriculum is highlighted as erroneous and limiting by these scholars. They furthermore operationalise the curriculum as a process rather than a set phenomenon, signifying a consistent communication between different stakeholders, for example students and

educators. Furthermore, Wen Su's (2012) understanding, and description of what curriculum is, one better understands the importance and positionality of students in their experience of knowledge creation, receipt, and engagement. Wen Su's (2012) describes the curriculum as a broad assortment of questions and decisions that educators must ask and make regarding what content to present and how to present it and how students receive, engage, and contribute back to this content. In simple terms, it is what teachers are going to teach and what learners are going to learn and teach back to their educators actively and critically. Wen Su (2012) further describes it as the experience of epistemological and pedagogical interactions that serve as the blueprint of learning and knowing and learning how to know, all with the pursuit of bettering individuals' lives and their experience of their environment. Given the crucial role that the curriculum plays in the lives of students, it is indisputable that they should be involved in stakeholder dialogues about the dawn of an expanding epoch of decolonisation in South Africa. Essentially, Social Sciences can play a role in advocating for decolonisation with psychology being the voices that will add to this understanding.

2.5 Decolonising the South African Psychology Curriculum

Psychology as a module and course major, is amongst the most chosen subject in HEIs, especially within undergraduate programmes (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Within the Humanities and other Social Science-related fields, Psychology is surpassed only by law in the number of students who have registered for the course (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). This means that most students who register for their Social Science degree are most likely to encounter Psychology as part of their academic journey. Thus, regardless of what these students may end up majoring in, the Psychology curriculum would have played a role in shaping their thinking and understanding of the world around them (Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAF), 2011). Therefore, a curriculum which is sensitive to the needs of its recipients in the form of the vast number of students who are likely to encounter it, is necessary. Essentially, one of the

13

reasons the Psychology curriculum warrants being part of the decolonisation project is the number of students who experience it in their higher education experience.

Another rationale to decolonising the current South African Psychology curriculum is its skewed professional demographic representativity. Whilst undergraduate Psychology students constitute mostly Black young adults, the number of Black psychologists is quite contrary to these numbers (Carolissen et al., 2015; Turpin & Coleman, 2010). This is not only true for South Africa alone but is also the case globally including the United Kingdom (UK) (Carolissen et al., 2015). Studies have suggested that the reason for this as expressed by students is primarily that "Psychology in its current form is not addressing the needs and contexts of the majority of the population, nor preparing them for working with diverse communities or engaging with issues of 'race' and racism in their interactions with others" (Carolissen et al, 2015, p.13). This is particularly damaging within the South African context, as these dynamics are unavoidable and are encountered daily. Moreover, Carolissen at el. (2015), further postulates that this "lack of representation of their own communities and lived realities in the curriculum leads to further alienation of students of colour from their studies" (p. 14). Thus, the curriculum at its current state, is not fully representative of most individuals who engage with it, thus the need for transformation in the form of decolonising it.

An additional factor that adds to the feelings of alienation to Psychology as a course and subsequently feelings of inadequacy amongst most of its students, is the social antagonisms facilitated by the curriculum (Mhambi, 2012; Carolissen et al., 2015). By having a curriculum that favours Western Eurocentric notions as well the Middle and Upper-Middle class, an inevitable culture of exclusion and exclusion emanates. Students from more privileged backgrounds (a minority in the South African context) are often better able to engage with the foreign complex theoretical bases of the curriculum (Nair, 2008; Carolissen et al., 2015). This may be influenced by several factors such as better access to resources, better foundations

through better formative schooling, and better familiarity with concepts as they are taught in English (Nair, 2008; Carolissen et al., 2015). Currently, the curriculum is more inclusive of students with this demographic than those who are not, which inadvertently antagonises the different groups of students (Nair, 2008). Carolissen et al., (2015), concludes by arguing that a curriculum which perpetuates a culture of excluding the majority whilst favouring the minority is one in dire need of transformation. This is the case with the Psychology curriculum, hence the call for its decolonisation (Carolissen et al., 2015), particularly a decolonisation that students postulate and understand. This approach is also aligned with the objectives of this study, exploring how students understand decolonisation, even prior to its implementation.

Decolonial scholarship in South Africa is a phenomenon that has been resuscitated by unavoidable pleas by students who had reached the pinnacle of dissatisfaction and alienation towards their curriculum, institutions, and social environment (Assie-Lumumba, 2017; Meda, 2019). Although the #FeesMustFall protests began in response to educational financial strain throughout the country, they became symbolic of the multitude of issues brought about by colonisation in South Africa (Pillay, 2016; Assie-Lumumba, 2017; Meda, 2019). Although colonisation infiltrates a variety of areas in the lives of South Africans, the curriculum became a focal point for students due to its rifeness in their higher education experiences (Meda, 2019). The recognition of the potential and influence students have, became more apparent as it did in the 1974 student protests (Pillay 2016). This recognition was most saliently expressed through the #FeesMustFall protests in 2015 (Pillay, 2016). This recognition might be hypothesised to be a feasible change, hence the proclivity to act upon it by students (Meda, 2019). In comparison to much more complicated constructs such as capitalism, which would involve the demolishing and complete reconstruction of countries and their economies, for example, decolonisation of the curriculum, for the most part, is not a process of entirely disregarding existing knowledge, but rather involves the integration of other forms of knowing

with the forms of knowing that currently exist (Heleta, 2016). This by no means suggests the decolonisation of the curriculum as a minute task, but rather highlights how, despite it being a complex issue, work contributing to it, including the views of students could lead to progress that could have an impact (Higgs, 2012; Adebisi, 2016; Higgs, 2016; Mbembe, 2016; Stein, & Andreotti, 2016; Mampane, Omidire & Aluko, 2018; Meda, 2019). This is how the literature has informed part of the significance of this study.

2.6 Students' Perspectives on Decolonising the Curriculum

Through extensive reading of the literature within possible means, key issues worthy of discussion were identified. The first was that the majority of the articles regarding the decolonisation of the curriculum were written from professional or supposed expert (e.g. lecturers) point of view, with very few paying attention to the possible and important contribution of students (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Grosfogel, Hernandez & Velasquez, 2016; Makhubela, 2016; Carolissen et al., 2017; Fomunyam, 2017a; Fomunyam, 2017b; Barnes & Siswana, 2018; Fataar, 2018; Karioris, 2018; Kaur et al., 2018; Knight, 2018; Ratele et al., 2018; Meda, Swart & Mashiyi, 2019; Meda, 2019; Pillay & Swanepoel 2019; Vandeyar, 2019). The above-mentioned articles all shed insight into how the country and HEIs should think and could proceed in terms of decolonising the country's Psychology curriculum. These articles emphasise a dire need for scholars to consider the necessary transformation that needs to occur in the existing curriculum. Through transforming this curriculum, students will be empowered to navigate contextually relevant problems in the country. However, the theme of giving little or no consideration to students is one that has emerged. Similar to Vandeyar's (2019) argument, that change in one part of the education triad is insufficient, but rather an overhaul in which major stakeholders such as students and academics, co-construct a revised and decolonised curriculum is necessary. Kessi (2017), offers an alternative to this common and conventional approach of exclusion in the literature, by mentioning participatory research where the youth

16

is at the fore. Although it does not speak to the plight of students as the research potentially could, nonetheless it serves a vital deviation. This is further accounted for and elaborated upon by Tavara and Moodley (2017), who position themselves as students rather than academics. This can be understood as a metaphorical display of the power and importance students play in important discussions and mobilisation. Madden and McGregor (2013) propose duo ethnography as means for student voices to be expressed. Assie-Lumumba (2017, p.5) further adds that student protests are a call by students for their involvement in the "decolonisation of the mind". Even though these authors acknowledgement was limited, it drew the necessary attention to the pertinent role students play in curriculum-linked discussions and that their inclusion is indispensable.

The second issue identified in the literature was the articles relevant to this study, a small number referred specifically to the decolonisation of Psychology, Psychology curriculum, and positionality of the affected students in South Africa (Makhubela, 2016; Carolissen et al., 2017; Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Segalo & Cakata, 2017; Barnes & Siswana, 2018; Oyedemi, 2018; Ratele et al., 2018; Meda, 2019). Given the important role the discipline plays in the country, this may be viewed as a shortcoming that could be addressed by relevant research necessary to contribute to this important body of knowledge (Barnes & Siswana, 2018). This reiterates the importance of having students being part of discussions that concern their knowledge content, which in turn will inform problem-solving abilities in an African context that resonates with African Psychology.

Of the few articles that did touch on students' perspectives, a negligible number of papers fully explored and actively incorporated these views into publications (Wen Su, 2012; Madden, & McGregor, 2013; Chetty & Knaus, 2016; Assie-Lumumba, 2017; Kessi, 2017; Tavara & Moodley, 2017; Kaur et al., 2018; Meda, 2019; Vandeyar, 2019). Lastly, although few articles did incorporate these views, almost no articles were found reporting the use of

17

student views to inform institutional or departmental policy in any way (Meda, 2019). It is for these reasons that this study's topic was chosen, and needed to be researched, so that it contributes to a body of knowledge and can have practical benefits in informing policy.

Whilst a concession must be made regarding the implausibility of students writing about such topics on a publication level, perhaps a compilation of reflective essays written by students regarding their views could be a beginning (Meda, 2019). Meaning students are not only subjects of research but researchers who may provide different forms of knowing in this co-construction process (Tavara & Moodley, 2017). This, in a psychological context, will also speak and contribute to African Psychology, that allows an impoverished yet important group of Africans (students) to conceptualise and make meaning of their own experiences and understanding of Psychology, in their context and own terms. According to Makhubela (2016), this is an inseparable part of African Psychology.

Essentially, through critical analysis of these various publications, a prominent theme appeared regarding the decolonisation of the curriculum, the importance of multiplicity of voices, more specifically, the inclusion of students' voices in that multiplicity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Fomunyam, 2017a; Fomunyam, 2017b; Meda, 2019). Although some existing literature highlighted this importance, they to a certain extent, failed to put into practice this multiplicity by extensively incorporating students' views into discussion. This oversight speaks directly to the problem that this research will try to explore and possibly alleviate – the absence of students' voices within conversations of curriculum decolonisation in Psychology. Despite the decolonisation of the curriculum being considered as just a movement, parity is lost when minority groups and, in this case, students, are not considered. Defeating one of the main purposes of decoloniality, which is to empower those previously disempowered (Makhubela, 2016). Thus, the research question of this project has remained largely unanswered due to a lack of efforts to address it.

2.7 African Psychology as a lens of Understanding

This research was positioned within the African Psychology context. The intention was to glean on the tenets of this school of thought as a means of understanding, and was also used in interpreting, analysing and understanding the results. According to Makhubela (2016), African Psychology may be understood as an indigenous area of study characterised by distinctive worldviews and lived experiences of the continent and its people. African Psychology is also considered as a universal disciplinary practise, predicated on, and concerned with psychological affairs of Africans, postulating traverse cultures and race (Nwoye, 2015; Makhubela, 2016). This entails understanding ways Africans make sense of Psychology, as well as the understanding of their psychological experiences in relation to their culture, race, spirituality (Makhubela, 2016). It also considers ways the rest of the world understand Psychology, given the diverse multifaceted experiences of Africans (Nwoye, 2015; Makhubela, 2016; Ratele, 2019). An assumption is, by understanding the thoughts and meanings that inform Psychology and experienced in an African context, one can better understand the insights of important stakeholders such as students and whether their experiences are mirrored by the curricular content (Carolissen et al., 2015; Mawere, 2015; Nwoye, 2015; Makhubela, 2016; Ratele, 2019). Thus, the literature that was consulted for building the foundation of knowledge dictating this project were selected with this ideology in mind.

African Psychology is closely related to Higgs (2016) description of an African epistemic. It is the incorporation of African indigenous knowledge into the current curriculum, as a means of socio-educational transformation that the continent desperately needs (Higgs, 2016). Further to this, the renaissance in African education should be aimed at making indigenous knowledge available as a resource of cultural and societal transformation that can be politically and economically liberating (Higgs, 2016). Essentially, Higgs (2016) posits that

19

little transformation can occur on the societal level if transformation has not occurred on the curricular level. This stance also reiterates that the transformation of the curriculum is not merely a process of making changes in the content consumed by students but is also a political and social statement that will have implications for society overall. The literature is thus suggesting that this transformation can happen primarily through the decolonisation of the curriculum (Higgs, 2012; Adebisi, 2016; Higgs, 2016; Stein & Andreotti, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Pillay & Swanepoel, 2019). Hence, the transformation of the curriculum that will realise the tenets of an African Psychology, adopting an African epistemic is one of the ways decolonisation can occur.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that was utilised in conjunction with the teachings of African Psychology was Rawls' Theory of Justice. African Psychology was used as a concurrent lens of understandings whilst Rawls' Theory of Justice was utilised to make sense of the findings within the teachings of African Psychology. According to various scholars, this theory focuses on the socially just distribution of goods within society (Gollwitzer & van Prooijen, 2016; Lucca-Silveira, 2016; Meda, 2019). It is built on two principles:

Firstly, every individual in society should have equal rights to liberty (Rawls, 1999; Meda, 2019). This principle ensures that everyone in each system has equal rights. This framework was relevant for this study because the curriculum debate involves two important stakeholders; students and academics (Meda, 2019). However, the liberation of rights has been skewed towards academics, with less consideration given to students and their views. As this theory advocates for equality in all systems, it was considered an apt framework, which promotes the practice of allowing students perceive and understand the curriculum using their own liberated minds (Fanon, 1964; wa Thiong'o, 1986; Meda, 2019). By doing this, this

theoretical framework constitutes a tool that would enable decolonisation as it allows for thinking beyond colonial models (wa Thiong'o, 1986), hence its selection.

The second principle states that "social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all" (Rawls 1971, p.213). This principle was also relevant to this study as it argues for the re-arranging of social and economic equalities in a way that benefits disadvantaged people, which can potentially be done through curriculum transformation. This principle also raises the question of fair and equal representation within various fields (Meda, 2019). As the literature indicated earlier, although a vast number of Psychology undergraduate students are people of colour, few represent this demographic on the professional level (Nair, 2008; Mhambi, 2012; Carolissen et al., 2015). This framework also allowed the questioning of "*how has the curriculum facilitated this skewed representation, whilst possibly offering an antidote via the transformation of the current curriculum*?". Mawere (2015), adds that a transition from a largely Western way of thinking is necessary and can also happen through the incorporation of African Indigenous Knowledge systems into the curriculum. This will essentially lead to students valuing and treasuring their ways of knowing and thinking within the African context (Mawere, 2015; Mbembe, 2016). Through using social justice theory, a reconsideration of the current Psychology curriculum and its underrepresentation of contextually relevant praxis, knowledge and ideas becomes possible; hence it was selected for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides comprehensive information regarding the methodology followed in this research study; that sought to explore students' understandings of what a decolonised Psychology curriculum entails. This chapter includes discussions of the research design employed, research setting as well as selection and profile of the participants in this study. Data collection and analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the current study are also elaborated.

3.2 Research Question

As Creswell (2007) explains, in social research, studies are conducted to answer specific research questions, which are developed from their stated purposes. Research questions set boundaries, guide the developing of research designs, and control the directions which individual studies take (Creswell, 2011). The research question for this study was: "*What understandings do students have regarding a decolonised psychology curriculum*".

3.3 Recapitulating the Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research study was to gain insight on what understanding students have regarding a decolonised Psychology curriculum in South Africa**.**

Objectives

The following were the objectives of the study:

- To explore current understandings of decoloniality that exist amongst both undergraduate and postgraduate Psychology students

- To identify opportunities that have been provided for students to engage with the process of decolonising the curriculum

- To explore students' perceptions of their involvement in the decolonisation of the Psychology curriculum to make it more applicable in the South African context

3.4 Research Approach

A qualitative research methodology was utilised to seek an in-depth understanding of the participants' own understanding of what the decolonisation of the curriculum means to them. The ability for qualitative research to explore the students' understanding of this concept made it ideal for this study (Fischer, 2006; Cibangu, 2012; Mohajan, 2018). The use of qualitative research methodology allowed the researcher to gain insights into each participant's personal knowledge and experience (Yin, 2016; Bailey & Burch, 2017). Since there is active seeking of finding, understanding, and interpreting meanings, themes and perspectives, this research design is most ideal in highlighting these aspects.

3.5 Research Design

Consequently, within the qualitative approach, a research design that is exploratory in nature was used. Explorative studies are open, reflexive, and curious by nature (Stebbins, 2001). They are most typically done to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding (Babbie, 2014). The research study is exploratory, as it aimed to gain insight on what understanding students have regarding a decolonised Psychology curriculum in South Africa**.** Exploratory research is conducted to investigate an issue or topic in order to develop insight and ideas about its underlying nature (McNab, 2010). This was considered suitable in fulfilling the objectives of this study, which were; to explore current understandings of decoloniality that exist amongst both undergraduate and postgraduate Psychology students; to identify opportunities that have been provided for students to engage with the process of

decolonising the curriculum; and explore students' perceptions of their involvement in the

decolonisation of the Psychology curriculum to make it more applicable in the South African

context. The exploratory research design method was used to determine what the participants

meanings and expressions using their own understanding (Stebbins, 2001).

3.6 Research Setting

This study took place within the University of the Western Cape, and the participants

were Psychology undergraduate and postgraduate students. Given the long history of

challenging the norm and roles biasedly ascribed to it in the past, it was also befitting to have

this study conducted at such a university (Africa & Mutizwa-Mangiza, 2017). Due to the

COVID-19 lockdown restrictions that were in place at the time of the study, the data collection

of the study took place using online platforms, such as Zoom, Google Meets, Microsoft Teams

or Skype.

3.7 Participants and Sampling

For this study single focus group discussions were implemented. The key feature of a

single focus group is the interactive discussion of a topic by a collection of all participants and

a facilitator as one group in one place (Nyumba et al., 2018). Two single focus groups were

conducted, each consisting of 6 participants. One focus group discussion was comprised of

undergraduate students, and the other consisted of postgraduate students. For the undergraduate

group, one participant withdrew from the study on the day of data collection due to personal

reasons. This was done because the different groups might have different levels of experience

and postgraduate students might influence the novice undergraduate students. Another reason

for this separation was that the data obtained from these two groups might yield different

results. Upon the conclusion of the study, the opposite was true, with both groups yielding very

similar results.
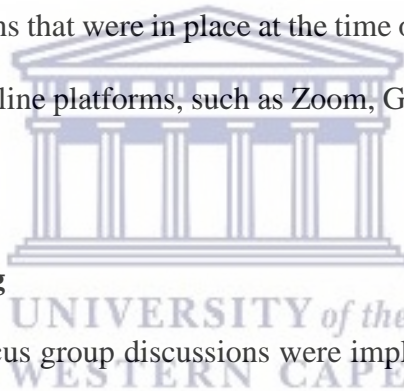
The participants were purposively sampled, after completing the pre-screening questionnaire (attached as appendix D). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to recruit participants with specific criteria (Emmel, 2013). The selection criterion allows the researcher to focus on the scope of the study and choose information rich cases (Bailey & Burch, 2017). The inclusion criteria for this research were undergraduate and postgraduate Psychology students with an interest in decolonisation and decolonisation of the curriculum. Thus, participants were recruited from the Department of Psychology. The participants in this study were chosen to participate in this study because this research sought to explore the ideas of students who have thoughts, perspectives and ideologies regarding decolonial scholarship. The reason for choosing Psychology was due to the large number of students who choose Psychology as a module (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). Secondly, scholars have spoken about the need for Psychology to be decolonised due to its influence and eminence within society (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). Lastly, the is a dire need for the transformation of the Psychology curriculum as it is responsible for the training of psychologist to serve within the South African Context. Carolissen et al, (2015) suggests that the current curriculum does not fully address the contextual needs of South Africans and change needs to begin even at a curriculum level.

The participants were required to meet the researcher online and virtually, and open to sharing the desired information (Yin, 2016). Participants in this study were willing to meet and share their insights via online platforms. This inclusion criterion served to protect the aim of the study; to explore students understanding of what a decolonised Psychology curriculum means to them. The exclusion criteria were participants that were undergraduate and postgraduate students who have had formal exposure to decolonial scholarship in the form of a module, course, or thesis. This exclusion criteria also served to protect the aim of the study as it sought students' own understanding of what the decolonisation of a Psychology curriculum entails.

3.8 Data Collection and Procedure

The research process commenced upon receiving ethics approval from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee [HS20/10/19] and Registrar. Upon the participants jointly agreeing to a convenient time, the data was collected through two online focus group discussions, which comprised of undergraduate and postgraduate students, respectively. The students were invited for the study via email after their contact information had been shared by the registrar upon the presentation of the ethics approval letter. They were then sent information sheets (attached as appendix A), along with a pre-screening questionnaire (attached as appendix D). Following that, the sample of students was chosen using the specified inclusion criteria stated in the section above. The students who qualified to be part of the study were then forwarded both the informed consent sheet (attached as appendix B) and focus group discussion consent sheet (attached as appendix C). The focus group consent sheet was included for the purposes of informing the participants of the limitations of confidentiality in a focus group setting. The first 12 students who met the inclusion criteria for both groups as per the pre-screening questionnaire, were selected and divided into the two groups accordingly. The first six undergraduate students who showed their interest in the study after being contacted the second time, post meeting the inclusion criteria, were selected. The same was done for the post-graduate students.

Participants were informed that participation is voluntary and optional, and they could withdraw from the study at any given time without any negative consequences. Data was collected by means of focus group discussions. Focus groups consist of group discussions which allow for the exploring of specific phenomena by stimulating conversation and has the potential to produce information that is seldom obtained from individual interviews (Guest et al., 2017). Permission was granted through consensus for the focus groups to be audio-recorded. The focus group discussions were audio-recorded for transcription, and for double

checking purposes; making sure no data was misinterpreted and or omitted but presented accurately. There was a total of two focus groups, each with six undergraduates and postgraduate students respectively. For the undergraduate group, one participant withdrew from the study on the day of data collection due to personal reasons. Thus, the undergraduate focus group consisted of five participants. The focus groups were facilitated in English. The rationale for using English in the study was due to the limited capacity the researcher had, as well as the limited resources to conduct the research. The researcher did not have the means to hire multiple translators for the study. Additionally, the researcher is fluent in English, thus for a fair representation and ensuring that no participants were excluded in the research study. English was considered a suitable medium of communication in the study. Furthermore, the researcher did not have available funds to hire an interpreter for the study. A reasonable assumption was made that since students are taught in English, they will be able to understand the content of that what was discussed. Participants in the study did not have any challenges in terms of understanding English, nor had difficulty expressing themselves clearly in using the language. This, however, is acknowledged as a limitation for the study and may be explored in further studies. The focus groups consisted of theoretically based open-ended questions intended to obtain rich data (Galletta, 2013; Wilson, 2014). These questions were also intended to encourage participants to take an active role in the discussion (Wilson, 2014). The focus group discussions were facilitated by the researcher.

Qualitative design's key instrument in collecting data through examining documents, observing behaviour and interviewing participants, is the researcher (De Vos et al, 2011). The decolonisation of the curriculum was explored in the context of the research questions. The openness and flexibility of the semi-structured questions allowed for rapport to be established (Yin, 2016). The structured aspect of the questions also allowed the researcher to gather the necessary experiential knowledge from the participants whilst the openness that this

questioning format also allowed the researcher to follow his participants' lead (Stebbins, 2001; Guest et al., 2017).

The online platform, Zoom, used for data collection had end-to-end encryption to ensure confidentiality, although this was limited in this study as the means of collection occurred via focus groups. Each focus group discussion was approximately 90 minutes in length. Theoretically informed open-ended questions were used whilst conducting focus groups. These open-ended questions were pre-tested on three participants who were identical to the sample prior to the focus groups being conducted. Questions were restructured and rephrased based upon to the feedback received during the pre-test discussions. At the commencement of the focus groups, some of the participants initially seemed anxious whilst others were more comfortable and forthcoming with sharing their experiences and thoughts. However, for the duration of the focus group discussions, the researcher reassured participants about their autonomy and confidentiality, and that there was no right or wrong answer. Participants became comfortable to share their understandings. Participants were also informed that should they require counselling, a counsellor through the University's Centre for Student Support Services (CSSS) would be provided at no cost. However, none of the participants requested counselling services after the focus groups were conducted. After the focus groups, the researcher held debriefing sessions with the participants. The audio-recordings of the focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The transcripts and recordings were all stored on highly encrypted secured online platforms including Dropbox, Google Drive and iCloud. They have been safely secured and can also be accessed via facial recognition and fingerprints from the researcher. Copies of these were also made available for the supervisor of this project who also safely stored them.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data collected from the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. According to Clarke and Braun (2013), thematic analysis entails the identification of codes and recognition of common themes within the data. From these themes, conclusions can be made about the findings (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). One of the main benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility which makes it an accessible analytic method which may also be used by amateur qualitative researchers (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis is useful for exploratory research, as it allows the researcher to be guided by the data for broad themes rather than searching for predetermined ideas from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This explorative study was viewing the participants as the experts of their own experiences, it was imperative that the researcher approaches the data with little bias and no predetermined agenda. Therefore, using an explorative, open ended tool of analysis is most appropriate. Before beginning data analysis, researchers must consider three levels of thematic analysis and determine which is most appropriate for their study. These levels of decision are inductive or theoretical, semantic, or latent, and epistemology (Patton, 1990; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Only the inductive and theoretical levels are discussed as they were relevant to this study.

Inductive thematic analysis is data driven and is not conducted to fit into the researcher's analytic preconceptions (Nowell et al.,2017). This is fully informed by the data collected by the researcher.

Theoretical or deductive thematic analysis in contrast, is guided by the researcher's theoretical interest and is analyst driven rather than data driven (Guest et al., 2011; Nowell et al.,2017). This form of thematic analysis generally provides a more detailed analysis of certain aspects of the data as opposed to a broad overall description as in the case of the inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al.,2017).

For this study, an inductive approach was chosen, because the objective of this study was to understand what constructions of the word decolonisation students have. As such the analysis was driven entirely by the data generated by the participants and not preconceived notions held by the researcher (Guest et al., 2011; Nowell et al.,2017). This ensured that the analysis of data was fully representative of the students' views, which in essence helped answer the research question. The themes identified in this study are strongly linked to the data (Nowell et al.,2017). According to Nowell et al., (2017), a thick description of the data analysis process contributes greatly towards the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Hence, the data analysis process for this study is described in detail below. Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps were followed:

Familiarising Yourself with the data

The first step involves the processes aimed at helping the researcher become familiar with data. This includes, transcribing, repeated reading of the data, and noting down initial ideas. Maguire and Delahunt (2017), posit that it is impossible to proceed with thematic analysis before the researcher is thoroughly familiar with the data. For this process, the researcher familiarised himself with the data by repeatedly reading transcripts. The researcher replayed the audio recordings of the focus group discussions multiple times, and cross referenced the audio recordings with the transcripts in efforts of being familiar with the data. The audio recording was replayed multiple times to ensure that the transcribed data was an accurate reflection of the focus group discussions. Whilst reading transcripts, the researcher constantly made notes, with descriptions of the participants, researcher's thoughts and similarities or discrepancies within the focus group discussions. Similarities and differences between transcripts were also noted. Through this process, the researcher was able to be immersed in the data and get a good sense of the participants' experiences.

Generating Initial Codes

The second step involved working through the data set and coding interesting features in a systematic manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since this study used inductive thematic analysis, coding was solely based on the data generated from the participants in the focus group discussions. Every participant's phrase or sentence in the discussion was viewed as a potential code. Participants' own words were taken directly from the transcripts as the initial codes. The coded material was then further sorted and sifted.

Searching for Themes

The process of searching for themes enabled to sort the data into potential information, which was easy to read and comprehend. This was done to begin interpreting and analysing the codes that had been grouped together. A thematic table was designed (Please see Table 1), which demonstrates how the data was analysed in terms of the coded information and the themes that were identified in this step.

Reviewing Themes

This stage involved checking that the themes in relation to the coded extracts as well as the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once the relevant themes had been identified, they were all refined.

Defining and Naming Themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) stated this stage requires generating clear definitions and names for each theme. Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000), suggest that theme names should be concise and descriptive to give the reader an immediate sense of what the theme is about.

Producing the Report

Once the final themes were established and sorted into appropriate categories, the report was compiled (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

31
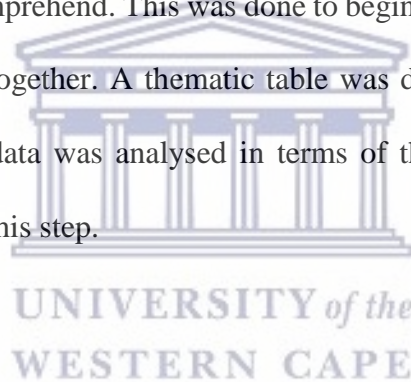
3.10 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness encompasses credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Polit & Beck, 2014). These are defined below in section along with an explanation of how they were achieved during this study.

Creditability is understood as the truth value of the findings which is also dependant on the environmental context of the participants (Mohajan, 2018). For this study, this was achieved through identifying participants who met the inclusion criteria of the study. Furthermore, it was emphasised to the participants, the role they played in the study and how their subjective truth, was what the study sought to obtain. They were consistently reminded to be truthful at all times and this was reiterated through the information sheets that they received.

Dependability is defined as the stability of the findings over time. It involves the evaluation of the findings by the participants and ensuring that the interpretations and evaluations made are supported by data findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As this study used thematic analysis, the data obtained had to speak directly to the recommendations and conclusion made on this study. Thus, direct quotes from the participants were used and not altered in any way. The confirmation of these findings by the research supervisor also aided the confirmation of dependability of the results of the study. Lastly, when the data collection was being conducted, the researcher reiterated the participants responses back to them to ensure they were understood clearly.

Confirmability is the degree to which the research findings can be confirmed by other researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It is ensuring that the findings are not subjective and biased to the researcher's own experiences. In this study, this was achieved through following the steps of thematic analysis. The process of reading the transcripts repeatedly, generating codes, searching for, and reviewing themes, and identifying themes ensured the confirmability of the findings. This process was aided by direct quotes from the transcripts without any

alternations, interpretations of the data were made using direct evidence from the participants. Furthermore, these transcripts were viewed, and the themes were also confirmed by the researcher supervising this study.

Lastly, transferability refers to the degree to which the research findings can be applied in other contexts and studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It also includes the detailed description of not only behaviours and experiences, but also the contexts in which they occur. This makes the findings valuable and meaningful to an outsider (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This process was achieved through a thick description of the context and its participants in a step-by-step manner. This process was also overseen by the researcher supervising this study.

3.11 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is paramount to a good audit trail (Nowell et al.,2017). Reflexivity involves keeping an introspective and critical account of the internal and external dialogue that occurs throughout the research process (Tobin & Begley, 2004). For this study, reflexivity was practiced in numerous ways. The first was keeping a virtual diary where the researcher documented their biases towards the research. This served as a reminder to remain as objective and critical as possible during the study. This included the consideration of data which may have been contrary to the findings of the study. It also included the unconditional acceptance of the views of the participants including those which may have challenged the ideologies and beliefs of the researcher. This reflexivity was also practiced during the data collection where the participants propelled the focus group discussion with the researcher allowing the process to occur without interfering. Furthermore, the researcher noted preconceptions held prior to the study and reflected on them following the conclusion of data collection. The researcher received regular supervision, where personal ideologies were reviewed and challenged in order to improve the quality of the findings of the study. Despite this praxis to ensure reflexivity, a number of challenges were experienced by the researcher. As this is a topic the researcher is
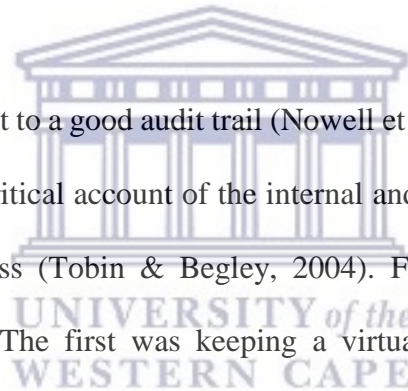
quite passionate about, refraining from engaging in a manner that assisted participants in

verbalising their thoughts was difficult due to some of the ideas being mutually shared and

understood. It was also a personal challenge for the researcher to adapt to having a participant

withdraw minutes before the second focus group discussion began. This entailed the researcher

having to contain themselves enough to conduct the discussion despite the inconvenience.

Despite the challenges, the researcher also experienced a few positives. The first was being

able to engage with individuals who are as interested in the topic as the researcher. This aided

the rapport between the participants and the researcher. Additionally, given such an interest by

students, it gave the researcher hope of this project being transformed into a reality practically

and incorporated into policy rather than remaining a mere research project. Lastly, the research

project felt like an empowering process for students as they shared vehemently how grateful

they were for the opportunity to contribute to a study that may have significant influence on

their experiences of the curriculum. This also retrospectively shed light on the researchers own

personal experiences as an African male who had undertaken the curriculum as a study. It aided

feelings of unity in sharing the dissatisfaction of an unrelatable curriculum.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research

Ethics Committee [HS20/10/19] of the University of the Western Cape. Permission to conduct

the study was also requested from the Registrar, and this permission was granted. The Ethics

Rules of Conduct under the University's Ethics committee were fully adhered to, specifically

anonymity and confidentiality. All raw data, including audio recordings and transcripts, were

stored on various online platforms. These included Dropbox, Google Drive and iCloud. All of

which required biometric security in the form of face recognition and fingerprints. Only the

researcher and supervisor had access to the raw data. The supervisor was able to access these

through encrypted emails. The focus group discussions were audio-recorded using my cell

phone and Dictaphone. All audio files were deleted from both devices after copying the files onto the above-mentioned online platforms. All participants received an information sheet clearly documenting all necessary information pertaining to the focus groups, reiterating that participation is voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw without fear of negative consequence or loss of perceived benefit. This was also explained verbally prior to beginning the focus group discussions, and it was further emphasised that if at any point during the interview participants wished to stop, they were able to do so without any consequences. Informed consent to participate and audio record the focus group discussions was obtained from participants. According to the university requirements, the data must be kept for five years before being destroyed. Participants were also informed about the on-site counselling services at UWC for debriefing, Centre for Student Support Services (CSSS) should it be necessary.

3.1.3 Summary

This chapter sought to provide comprehensive information regarding the methodology followed in this research study in order sufficiently explore students' understandings of what a decolonised Psychology curriculum entails. It included discussions of the research design employed, research setting as well as selection and profile of the participants in this study. A step by step recollection of the data collection, analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study were also elaborated. This was done in order to give a detailed account of how these key principles were followed to the best of the researcher's ability in order to produce an accurate, accountable, reflexive, valid and reliable study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study as related to the themes and subthemes that emerged from the focus group discussions. The findings are first presented in tabular form, after which they are explored narratively per theme and sub- themes. These themes will also be discussed in relation to the literature and theoretical framework.

4.2 Findings

This study explored the understandings students have regarding what a decolonised Psychology curriculum entails. This was achieved by exploring the perceptions of both undergraduate and postgraduate Psychology students at the University of Western Cape. The conclusions drawn in this study were obtained from data collected through two focus groups consisting of six postgraduate and five undergraduate students respectively. The first focus group consisting of the postgraduate students, included five females and one male. Whilst the sampling was intended to have an inclusive balance of both genders, the final sample closely resembled the demographic of postgraduate students at the university. The sample of six postgraduate students, three were clinical Psychology master's students, two were research Psychology master's students, as well as one honour's Psychology student. The second focus group consisted of five undergraduate students. The reason for this number was due to one participant withdrawing from the focus group on the day of data collection. The student alluded to personal reasons for withdrawal. Within the undergraduate students, one was a first-year student, with two students each being in second and third year respectively.

From the two focus groups that were conducted, data was coded, and the following themes emerged:

1. Students Interpretations of decolonisation

2. Afrocentric Pedagogy: Transformation of knowledge production

3. Power structures

4. Individual and institutional interventions

Table 4.3 lists the themes and sub themes. These themes emerged because of the analysed data. These themes were further supported by direct quotes derived from the transcriptions of both focus groups. The identified themes spoke to all three objectives of the study which were:

- To explore current understandings of decoloniality that exist amongst both undergraduate and postgraduate Psychology students

- To identify opportunities that have been provided for students to engage with the process of decolonising the curriculum

- To explore students' perceptions of their involvement in the decolonisation of the Psychology curriculum to make it more applicable in the South African context

The results below are followed by the discussion, which is presented with supporting and or opposing literature, aimed at further elaborating on the study's findings within the chosen theoretical framework.

4.3 Themes

The themes identified and discussed were obtained using Braun and Clark's thematic analysis. These themes contributed to answering and fulfilling the aim of the overall study, which was to explore what understandings students have regarding a decolonised Psychology curriculum in South Africa. The use of thematic analysis within the discipline of Psychology has been highly revered as it offers a flexible and accessible theoretical approach for qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It also offers a step-by-step approach which aids the

structural extraction of themes. These steps were followed for this research study, and they included: the researcher transcribing and familiarising themselves with the data; generating initial codes through systematically identifying noteworthy features within the data; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and finally producing the report.

Although this study employed two focus groups for the data collection, the findings of both groups were grouped and integrated together. The initial plan to separate these findings was informed by a preconceived misconception that the undergraduate and postgraduate students would have qualitatively different responses. However, upon data collection, identification of codes and development of themes, it became apparent that both these groups shared very similar experiences despite the differences in their year levels. Following this revelation, the data was also grouped together to avoid repetitiveness within the study which would have affected clarity and the logical flow of the study. Thirdly, this grouping was also made in response to another erroneous assumption that postgraduate students would know more and have more to say than the undergraduate students. Rather, the demographic of the students who volunteered for the study were students who were interested and invested in decolonisation. Thus, all participants were well informed about their views. The grouping of these two groups spoke to the overarching message that this study is attempting to communicate, that of equality. Despite the varying year levels, it was crucial for these participants to be considered based on their contribution to the study rather than their years of study or experience as this has been one of the reasons cited for the exclusion of students in research (Makhubela, 2018).

In order to conceptualise the various responses given by the participants, Table 4.1 and 4.2 below serve to reiterate to the reader the participants in the different groups and their varying demographics. Group one was the postgraduate group whilst group two was the undergraduate group.

Table 4.1: Demographics of Postgraduate Participants

Group	Participant No:	Degree Level	Year Level	Gender	Age	Race
1	1	Postgraduate	Masters	Female	26	African
1	2	Postgraduate	Masters	Female	26	Coloured
1	3	Postgraduate	Honours	Male	22	African
1	4	Postgraduate	Masters	Female	32	African
1	5	Postgraduate	Masters	Female	28	African
1	6	Postgraduate	Masters	Female	25	African

Table 4.2: Demographics of Undergraduate Participants

Group	Participant No:	Degree Level	Year Level	Gender	Age	Race
2	1	Undergraduate	3rd Year	Female	21	African
2	2	Undergraduate	3rd Year	Female	21	African
2	3	Undergraduate	1st year	Female	18	African
2	4	Undergraduate	2nd Year	Female	20	African
2	5	Undergraduate	2nd Year	Male	20	Coloured

Table 4.3: Classification of qualitative data into themes and subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
1. Students Interpretations of decolonisation	1.1. Dismantle: undoing and a move away from colonialism OR Western thought 1.2. Inclusion and promotion of indigenous voices 1.3. Restructure and reconstruct.
2. Afrocentric Pedagogy: Transformation of knowledge production	2.1 African Epistemology (Emphasis on African Indigenous Knowledge)
3. Power structures	3.1 Top-down approach 3.2. Students as change agents 3.3 Barriers to change (voices not loud enough, fear of the unknown, and ignorance is bliss)
4. Individual and institutional interventions	4.1 Focus on equal representation

4.3.1 Theme 1: Students Interpretations of Decolonisation

This theme highlights how students defined and thought of decolonisation and it encompasses three subthemes. The first is dismantling which entails undoing and moving away from colonialism and Western thought. The second subtheme is centred around restructuring and reconstructing and the third encompasses the inclusion and promotion of indigenous voices.

4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Dismantling: Undoing and a move away from colonialism or Western thought

The participants highlighted an important shift away from colonialism and dismantling knowledge and systems that currently reiterate the status quo of colonialism. Participants further emphasised a process of undoing and unlearning that needs to take place in order to open up avenues for decolonised knowledge. Thus, emphasis on carefully considering the structures in place and taking away what promotes the dissemination of what students consider as colonial knowledge is being called for by students. This was highlighted by participant four in focus group one who stated:

"I think, vaguely, when I hear about decolonisation, it is kind of like an undoing of any colonisation or anything to that effect that has taken place."

Participant four highlighted as crucial in defining decolonisation, the process of undoing and dismantling being important. Thus, the understanding inferred by participant four is that for decolonisation to happen, the removal of colonisation in the currently existing systems of knowledge is essential. This view was reiterated by participant two in focus group two who voiced:

"But I think, when you talk about decolonization, for me, what comes to mind is almost taking apart and deconstructing a kind of set of systems that have been used, or something like a structure that is in place."

Participant two reiterated that their understanding of the process of decolonisation entailed the undoing and deconstruction of existing knowledge systems to make way for contextually relevant knowledge and systems. This was further echoed by participant six in group one who reported that:

"Basically, it's all about dismantling all these systems that were put in place but were not inclusive of others or supportive, and what this means is that we are rebuilding, or restructuring what was put in place before, and replacing it with something that's more supportive and inclusive of all those included."

Essentially, these participants reported understanding decolonisation from a perspective of dismantling and doing away with what exists in current knowledge systems, including the curriculum. Whilst this was the case for the above listed participants, participant four in the first focus group coined dual definition of what decolonisation is for them which they augmented by further stating:

"So, really seeking to take out that, which is anything to do with the colonisation of whatever it is and then placing emphasis on that indigenous people, or that context, or something like that."

This response highlighted was that participant four understood the process of decolonisation not only as one that dismantles what exists but replacing that which has been dismantled with inclusion of indigenous and contextual voices. This narrative was supported by other participants in both groups which led to the subtheme of inclusion of indigenous voices which shall be explored next.

4.3.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Inclusion and promotion of indigenous voices

For this subtheme, students highlighted the inclusion of local and indigenous voices as crucial in the process of decolonisation, as they experience the current curriculum as largely foreign. Students further emphasised experiencing the curriculum as detached and isolated from the experiences of South Africans. Participant three in the first focus group shared their understanding by stating:

"So, for me, what it would look like [decolonisation] would be kind of having a voice. I do not know, it feels, sometimes it feels like you go into Psychology, and then you are supposed to find a voice for a person in the room with you who basically, you do not feel like the theory is speaking for them, so to speak."

Participant four in the first focus group highlighted in their definition how difficult it is to extrapolate the knowledge learning within the curriculum, to other environments. Thus, for them, amending the curriculum to be inclusive of voices and to be relevant to the experiences of those who contend with the knowledge is essential. Participant two in focus group one shared their understanding by stating:

"Okay so, from my very basic understanding of it, it is the inclusion of indigenous voices in any kind of like, literature or just information being taught at to academic institutions."

Participant two shared similar sentiments of understanding decolonisation as entailing the inclusion of indigenous voices which is currently scant within the curriculum according to the students. Participant six echoed these sentiments of inclusion but took on a slightly different stance as to how this could be achieved by stating:

"My initial thoughts about decoloniality of the curriculum, which is particularly based on doing away with Westernised schools of thought and developing a more African/Eastern understanding of certain aspects, particularly Psychology… I'm realizing that it's not necessarily doing away with it, it's more on making the space and creating the space for African thought to be more represented alongside the Western thought and integrated in a sense."

Participant six made eminent in their definition was the inclusion of indigenous voices, however they also pointed out the need for reconstructing rather than dismantling the

knowledge structures that do exist. This also coincided with the emergence of a third lens of understanding which is centred around restructuring and reconstructing the curriculum for decolonisation to be deemed as having happened.

4.3.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: Restructure and reconstruct.

This subtheme entailed the views of students which was centred around the restructuring of the curriculum as being essential in defining how they understand decolonisation. Participant five in focus group two highlighted this by sharing their sentiments.

"So, decolonisation, it is all about doing away with the norms that we were forced to follow by other foreigners and do it the way we feel like it's best for us."

Participant four in focus group one further adds to this sentiment by adding that:

"So, I think it's a move away from colonialism, and in looking at what would be specific to that particular nation or that particular group or something like that. So, really seeking to take out that, which is anything to do with the colonization of whatever it is…"

Participant two in focus group two succinctly shared what restructuring would entail for them by stating:

"…it's to say that make it [Psychology and its curriculum] almost personalized to South Africans."

These shared understandings highlight the need of restructuring the norms that currently exist in order to make way for ones which would be more applicable in the South African context. The participants who highlighted the notion of dismantling also placed emphasis on the need for and importance of restructuring in order for decolonisation to be achieved.

For the emergence of this theme and its subsequent subthemes, students were asked to define decolonisation for themselves. Following these definitions, a main theme of students' interpretation of what decolonisation entails emerged with its subsequent subthemes: 1) dismantling – undoing and a move away from colonialism, 2) restructure and reconstruct, and 3) inclusion and promotion of indigenous voices. The most important relevance of these themes is how they spoke directly to the aim of research which was to explore what understandings of decolonised Psychology curriculum exist for students. Students had ideologies of what decolonisation entails and how that decolonisation relates to Psychology curriculum. Furthermore, these themes highlighted that these views were detailed and had been thought about by students critically. Students identified three main factors which would comprise decolonisation. These were dismantling remnants of colonisation, restructuring and reconstructing sources of knowledge as well as the inclusion of indigenous voices in the production of knowledge for the curriculum. Thus, the question of whether students had understandings of decolonisation of the curriculum was answered and elaborated upon extensively by the participating students.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Afrocentric Pedagogy: Transformation of knowledge production

The second theme that emerged from the data was that of an Afrocentric pedagogy. When the participants were asked how they envisioned a transformed or decolonised Psychology curriculum, a pertinent pattern of African epistemology was highlighted. Students repeatedly emphasised the need for their curriculum to be largely informed by African sources of knowledge. The repeated mention of this need warranted the identification if this theme and subtheme, African Epistemology: Emphasis on African Indigenous Knowledge.

4.3.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: African Epistemology: Emphasis on African Indigenous Knowledge

It was evident when engaging with the participants regarding this subtheme that the importance of their own identities and those of the community needs to be reflected by the curriculum itself. The consideration of the uniqueness of the South African and African context at large was highlighted as crucial in how the participants thought curriculum decolonisation can be achieved. Participant three in focus group one initiated the narrative by stating:

"Kind of being introduced to that, introduced to our own voices to African voices, to a way of seeing, you know, an African person in the African context, and how they get affected by everyday life and how that might present psychologically, emotionally, and what kind of support they can get from you know, this whole world of Psychology."

Participant four in focus group one was also explicit in their view, strongly echoing how a stronger Afrocentric and African rooted epistemology would constitute decolonisation for themselves as a South African and African Psychology student.

"Placing more emphasis on the African context and on the languages and cultures and stuff like that that is more relevant to this African context, instead of Psychology relying so heavily on the information that we get from the West."

Participant two in focus group one also expanded on this view by further highlighting the limitations they have experienced and continue to experience.

"So yeah, I do feel limited because of that, particularly because of the fact that we are practicing in an African country, so it is quite ironic that we can't think through African problems with the use of African thought, we have to rely on Western thought to think through these problems. So yeah, it is quite limiting."

Participant two in focus group two echoed these sentiments, whilst highlighting their personal experience also being limited.

> *"The feel of being robbed, or not heard. And I think, the missed opportunity is that there is an opportunity for us to bring our personalized, I mean, kind of more African-focused series to the forefront, and you know, re-doing Psychology in a way that is meaningful for the people and the communities that we will hopefully get to serve one day."*

Participant six in focus group one reiterated that the curriculum should be transformed through transitioning away from Western thought and place emphasis on Eastern, African based contexts.

> *"My initial thoughts about decoloniality of the curriculum, which is particularly based on doing away with Westernised schools of thought and developing a more African/Eastern understanding of certain aspects, particularly Psychology."*

Participant six in focus group one continued to share that the current state of the curriculum poses potential practical problems within the Psychology discipline.

> *"...So, I think that is quite of a bit of an unfair way of looking or trying to understand mental illness; it would be more inclusive and supportive of the African context, of different views, of different beliefs, different explanations, outside of the biomedical model that is heavily emphasized in the curriculum."*

Participant two in focus group one elaborated on this, and stated:

> *"So basically, how I envision decolonisation, kind of enacted in the academic space, is like you know, for different kinds of frameworks, African or indigenous frameworks of*

understanding certain areas of what we learn, being taught to us as you know, part and

parcel of the curriculum."

Participant two in focus group one shared their perspective in a frustrated manner. In

sharing their rhetoric, it became clear how unsatisfied this participant was and this was also a

shared experienced for the participants, particularly those in the postgraduate group, who had

finished their undergraduate studies oblivious to these limitations. Participant two stated:

"However, it is like the things that we read in textbooks, it's like Westernised, so it's not

really in relation to that South Africa, it's like literally Westernised. And I would

probably like to see more of South African theories or rather African theorists that

would contribute to academia and sense of like Psychology and how it is supposed to

be done."

Participant one in the first focus group also shared their expectations of what they

would envision an Afrocentric curriculum. An underlying tone of disappointed that this has

not been the case thus far was also noted.

"So, I think it would consist of the same way they express the psychoanalytic views, the

psychosocial views, would be the same way they relay the African developmental

Psychology perspective, alongside with the Westernised Freudian angle, I think."

Lasty, participant five in focus group two highlighted that for them, embodying

Afrocentrism through recognising the uniqueness of the African and South African context is

crucial for the decolonisation of the curriculum.

"So, decolonising Psychology for me, is to look at South Africa and its uniqueness

and we find a way that we can relate to like South African lifestyle."

What became apparent within this theme and subtheme was how students valued indigenous knowledge. Emphasis was placed on the importance of having knowledge generated from the context in which it will be practised, as important. A shared need for a curriculum that is personally considerate and relevant to them was also repeatedly expressed. This sub- theme also highlighted that, students have not only thought about decolonisation, but also have a vision of what a decolonised curriculum would look like. The inclusion of Afrocentric views from contexts that reflect Psychology in South Africa emerged as well as how that would make their experience of the curriculum more empowering and relevant.

This theme exposed the limitations and subsequent frustrations that the students are sitting with. The constant rhetoric of students feeling swindled of an authentic and genuine experience during their own learning was brought to the fore. Whilst some of the participants were clearly aware of their frustrations, others were oblivious and became sensitised to these frustrations. This included an emotional depth to the research experience that the participants had not anticipated. For some of the postgraduate participants who have since completed their undergraduate studies, feelings of retrospective regret emerged. These students sat with feelings of disappointment of how their curriculums had failed them over the course of their degrees.
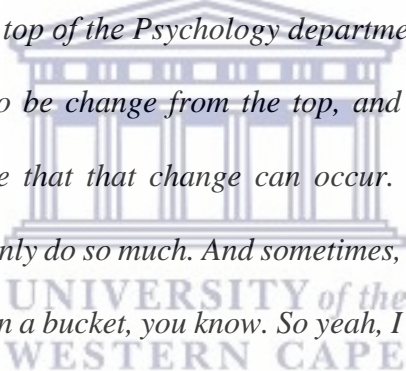
4.3.3 Theme 3: Power Structures

This theme is centred around what the participants thought needs to be done for this process of transformation to begin. They simultaneously highlighted what they thought posed as issues that continue to perpetuate what they deem as problematic within the university curriculum. The participants discussed at the length the power dynamics that they have identified as being at play and the difficulties of navigating them. They identified the role that students can possibly play and the lack of opportunities that students have in achieving change.

Within this theme, three subthemes were identified, namely: top-down approach, students as change agents and barriers to change.

4.3.3.1 Subtheme 3.1: Top-Down Approach

Within this subtheme, the students' narratives highlighted that although they recognise the need for change, they also understand the important roles of the different stakeholders. Some of the participants shared that even though students can be change agents that aid this transformation, a top-down approach is necessary. They believe that for the change to be truly effective change must come from the individuals in positions of power, who currently maintain the status quo. Participant one in the postgraduate group shared:

"So, I feel like, from the top of the Psychology department or just as a subject or field, I feel like there needs to be change from the top, and I guess by engaging in more dialogue and things like that that change can occur. But I feel like, you know, as students, we can really only do so much. And sometimes, it feels like what we are doing, we are just a little drop in a bucket, you know. So yeah, I think there needs to be radical change within the curriculum for the change that we want to see take place."

Participant three in the same postgraduate group also echoed these sentiments by similarly sharing that:

"So, I feel like it needs to start from the very top, and I think as students, we have power, you know, like the others mentioned with the course feedbacks and all of that stuff. The fact that we give feedback does not seem like it is really being taken seriously, because like I said, we are still learning the same things that we've been learning."

In sharing this statement, participant three echoed these sentiments whilst also highlighted the need for change beginning at the top. They make mention of course evaluations which they have experienced to be futile as they feel little to none of the feedback has been

incorporated to drive change in the curriculum. Participant three also highlights a sense of hopelessness that students feel with regards to evaluations and how those at the top essentially have the final say. This sentiment was echoed by participant five in focus group one who then shared:

> *"And honestly, like we are saying, that it needs to start from the top, going down, because if the top knows our problems, but they are still not doing anything about that, no matter what we say, no matter how hard we try to bring about change, nothing will happen."*

The consensus amongst some of the participants regarding this theme was the need of change from the top, funnelling down to the students. Whilst they recognise the important role they can play in the process of transformation; they are also aware of the limitations which then instil feelings of hopelessness. The students' recognition of their potential role also informed the subsequent subtheme, students as change agents.

4.3.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: Students as change agents

For this theme, what became eminent was that the participants understood that they have the potential to bring about change and transform the curriculum. However, this subtheme was important as it was the only theme where a discernible difference existed between the two focus groups. Whilst the postgraduate students were aware of their power and influence as a group through experiences such as co-facilitating learning sessions and choosing readings themselves, for example, they were attuned to their past influences and possible influence going forward. Contrastingly, the undergraduate students were unaware of their own influence and potential and marvelled at the idea of having an opinion and contribution to their own learning. Thus, when sharing their thoughts, the postgraduate students spoke in a realistic and retrospective manner. The undergraduate students spoke mostly from a hypothetical point of

view. Thus, the quotes that supported this subtheme were largely from the postgraduate
students.

> *"We come with different perspectives to university, we come with different goals, and
> we aim for different things when we come to university, sometimes we are not even
> aware of the power that we possess as students that can contribute to bring about
> change in in the curriculums that we find ourselves enrolled to."*

Participant three in focus group one echoed this by briefly stating:

> *"I think as students, we have power, you know, like the others mentioned with the
> course feedbacks and all of that stuff."*

What participant three highlights is how some of the praxis incorporated into the current
curriculum system such as feedback from students is one of the ways in which student can
become change agents. Participant three further elaborated and expressed the way students
have brought about by change, referring to history in the process.

> *"Change does come about after kind of force or protest action. And that's when
> student's kind of feel like that is the only way that they can be heard and get a voice,
> unfortunately."*

This participant highlighted how students over the years had to make means of
enforcing change within a system they have found ineffective, by showing their dissatisfaction
in such overt ways. Participant two in focus group one also added by stating:

> *"So, sometimes I've noticed that a lot of change in university settings unfortunately,
> seems to come about, kind of the use of force in a way, so protests I feel have been quite
> useful in bringing about the necessary changes that we've wanted to see. Even
> conversations about decolonisation I feel have kind of been centred and almost taken*

seriously only following such action. So, I think that could be something that students could rally behind you know, if they were that determined to see that change in what we're seeing in academic spaces."

Participant two in focus group two (undergraduate group) contributed to this narrative by stating how they as an undergraduate student thought students can be agents of change:

"I feel that perhaps our role as students is to start by just creating awareness you know, with peers, and starting the dialogue about decolonising the Psychology curriculum. So, I think it starts with creating broader awareness, perhaps just creating that need for the change and discussing and helping us, myself even, better understand the why, and then asking the right questions."

Participant one, in the undergraduate focus group also shared how students could be agents of change.

"So, in terms of like having to now have a role that we kind of play, it's going to be limited in a sense. However, it should start in writing. So, researchers, like this one that you're doing right now, are trying to explain, finding out opinions on decolonisation, and it just kind of encourages us to think of decolonising the mind basically, in terms of Psychology and how it's supposed to be looked at in our South African context or rather, African context. And it's not only about writing, but like writing is going to influence that, also, it's going to kind of reach a level where now, students are now starting to come up with theories, to which I believe have to be kind of approved in a sense, because we're looking at the South African context or rather the African context. And now, looking at that and trying to compare it with the Western one, but it's going to be rather difficult."

Unsurprisingly, in relation to a topic relating to transformation, an element of power dynamics was identified. This was the case within the literature review of this study and became apparent in the data collection phase that students too considered this dynamic. What students highlighted for this theme and its subsequent theme was their positionality in relation to their educators. The first is that students recognised and identified themselves as being important change agents in the discussion of decolonising the curriculum. However, despite this recognition, they also highlighted the difficulties they encounter and continue to encounter. In response to these difficulties, they suggested that a top-down approach where those in power begin the mobilisation process of transformation is crucial for students to become these change agents. Lastly, they identified barriers to change such as students being fearful to engage also posing as obstacles. Essentially, students displayed awareness of the important power dynamics at play, the obstacles at play and possible means of challenging these structures.

4.3.3.3 Subtheme 3.3: Barriers to change

Despite the identified ways in which students think that they can be change agents, they also highlighted several barriers which make this difficult. This included their views of a need of a top-down approach mentioned in the first subtheme within this overarching theme of power structures. What also became eminent is the emotional turmoil that students experience during their studies. This turmoil, according to them has been largely unknown by universities and constitutes an eminent barrier to change. Additionally, students also highlighted issues within the South African educational systems which permeates even at the Higher Education level. Participant five in focus group one shared:

"Like, if there is a problem in Psychology or there is something that we feel we need to
change, sometimes we become too scared to ask because we were raised to not be
critical thinkers but just to get things done; making sure that you graduate and get your

degree, instead of you trying to fix certain things that you may see as problematic in

the curriculum solved."

What participant five emphasised was the inherent fear that is instilled in student which

is perpetuated by the power structures. This fear of asking and expressing an opinion as a

student was highlighted as a barrier. The participant further highlighted a history of students

not being taught to be critical thinkers which maintains this fear, thus inhibiting change. This

fear and as well a lack of knowledge of where to begin were also identified as barriers with

participant six also in focus group one stating:

"So, how do we place this great emphasis, this huge turnaround, this huge 360-

turnaround, what is it going to look like? It feels like it is something to be feared, and

the known, how we're doing things now, it feels so normal because that's how we started

off with it and that is how we pretty much ending."

Participant three in focus group one shared their sentiment by also stating the lack of

student awareness which continues to pose as a barrier for them sharing that:

"Just to add on the argument that I had already started, like, the lady that just answered

is saying, it is like we are still testing the waters, because we were not aware of the

freedom that we may have as students that can bring about change in the curriculum

that we are introduced to."

The other identified barrier that the participants spoke of was the extent to which the

cries of students are heard. Whilst means of power for students such as course evaluations were

identified as an empowering tool, its influence was also brought to question by the participants

with one stating:

"And I could not help but feel like our hands are a bit tied unless we do drastic

measures. And I do not know, as much as I do acknowledge this idea of, you know,

55

reflecting on the evaluation forms at the end of the lesson and so on but my question is, how seriously do these lecturers take it?"

The rhetoric of change needing to start in a top-down approach was reiterated and framed as a barrier as well by the participants. What became eminent in this discussion of this theme was the awareness that students hold whilst fully acknowledging the limitations that remain, despite this awareness. The participants also acknowledged their shortcomings and lack of sufficient knowledge as a barrier to change. Lastly, fears were highlighted by the students as they discussed how it has been instilled within them, which limits the level of change that they can bring.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Individual and Institutional Interventions

Within this theme, students highlighted those interventions can be catalysts for the decolonisation of the curriculum, are to happen on two levels: on an institutional level as well as on an individual level. These two levels identified by the participants also seem to demarcate levels of responsibility with students believing that taking a proactive role and responsibility will bring them the transformation that they envision. These perspectives were highlighted through the only subtheme within this theme, focus on equal representation.

4.3.4.1 Subtheme 4.1: Focus on equal representation

The narrative that students highlighted within this subtheme is that for effective change to occur, equal representation in matter of the curriculum needs to happen. They further discuss that, interventions towards this change can be both institutional and individual, whilst carefully ensuring equal representation. Participant four in focus group two initiated the conversation on behalf of the students by stating:

"I think that we as students, need to participate in the efforts to revisit how we are taught, what we are taught, because we're also playing a huge role in producing knowledge to contribute to developing our country."

What is eminent in this statement is how students recognise that they are necessary for the process of change to occur. However, the also maintain that without being given an equal opportunity in terms of influence with regards to the curriculum, their role and contribution will constantly be negligible.

Participant one in focus group two gave a step-by-step process as to how they believe students being given a chance, may bring about change not only on a curricular level but also on a practical level. They also highlighted the potential that they believe students have. Lastly, they emphasised that with adequate support from those in position of power students may be more influential in the field of Psychology than they are now. Participant one stated:

"Essentially, it has to start with conversation, and then writing, research, and then from research, creating theories, because I believe, Participant five mentioned something about having to go to like townships and understanding languages and stuff like that, that's how you get to now understand the background of South African people. And, from the theories that we probably have in Psychology, they mentioned like cultures, like, they say it in the broadest sense, as to how American culture is, as opposed the African culture, which is in the context of like, with us, it's like we're thinking of more of a community, and then in their context, it's more of like, individuality is key."

This participant also highlighted that students may be equally represented by being guided and allowed to fully immerse themselves in research that may change the current status quo. Lastly, participant three succinctly shared that they believed that some conversations have

begun regarding the curriculum however a stalemate seems to be reached. Thus, elevating the conversation by better involving students in implementation is necessary.

> *"I feel like we are engaged in a dialogue and, you know, there is a growing consensus that this issue needs to be to be looked into. But I still feel like you know, the modules and the curriculum are still being taught in the same way."*

Under this subtheme, students highlighted that for any recognisable change to occur for them, equal representation needs to occur. The potential that student enter the academic space with was highlighted and they emphasised that, that potential alongside the correct guidance and fair representation would achieve the transformation that students are yearning for.

In concluding the findings section the overall findings suggest that participants have multiple thoughts about decolonisation and the curriculum. Students seem to have engaged on several occasional and have multitude views. Some of these views were shared whilst other differed slightly. The usefulness of thematic analysis in exploratory research helped in guiding the researcher to identify broader themes rather than search for predetermined ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The results indicated that students not only had their own perceptions of what decolonisation is, but also identified multiple approaches of how these transformative visions could be achieved. Various themes were identified from the data, with an emphasis being on the inclusion of different and indigenous perspectives in helping transform the curriculum. The participants also shared frustration regarding the lack of relatability between themselves, their lived experiences as well as their curriculum. Additionally, an emphasis was placed on the necessity of a top-down approach including the involvement of lecturers and other relevant stakeholders in achieving this transformation. Students also expressed a yearning for equal representation in matters that will aid this curriculum transformation, as they viewed themselves as competent change agents.

4.4 Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore what understanding university students have regarding a decolonised Psychology curriculum in South Africa**.** The first section in this chapter presented the findings of the study which were supported by quotations of the participants. The following section of this research thesis provides a discussion integrating the research findings with existing supporting literature. This is done within the scope of African Psychology using Rawl's theory of justice whilst being aligned and keeping with the objectives of this study. The discussion section is organised according to the four main themes identified in chapter four. These themes relate to the objectives and the aim of the study which was to explore what understandings students have regarding a decolonised Psychology curriculum in South Africa.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Students' interpretations of Decolonisation

One of the objectives of this study closely linked to the aim was to explore what understandings of decolonisation exists amongst Psychology students. Decolonisation has been studied for several years and no singular definition nor understanding has been termed (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Different understandings have placed different emphasis on varying parts of this umbrella term of decolonisation. This was also true in the case of the students who formed part of this research study. Whilst a shared understanding of decolonisation being centred around a practice of undoing, the process of undoing was understood differently by different students. For instance, some students shared ideas which were similar to Ngugi's (1981) understanding of decolonisation being a quest for relevance and Africans being seen in relationship with themselves. This view was accentuated by Pillay and Swanepoel (2019), who defined decolonisation particularly in relation to the curriculum as an effort to centralise Africa within the curriculum to ensure that it speaks to and from an African context. Many students shared that they understood decolonisation as an attempt to make it more relevant to their

experiences within Psychology. They understood it as an attempt to make what feels foreign to them more relatable and congruent with their lived experiences. Thus, a similar view of a crucial element of how students understand decolonisation is similar to how scholars have understood it in the field, as being inclusive of the African perspective and being made relevant for the context to which it serves.

Within this process of undoing, some participants placed emphasis on dismantling and moving away from Western ideologies and praxis. This view is of particular interest, as some of the student views contrasted quite differently to what the literature indicates. In attempting to achieve transformation through decolonisation, many scholars have emphasised the importance of integration. Steven and Andreotti (2016) have highlighted how decolonisation is a complex process which should caution against the complete removal of Western notions. Rather it should entail the inclusion of more contextually relevant sources of knowledge and include a shift of focus within the environment to align with these indigenous sources of knowledge (Higgs, 2012; Adebisi, 2016; Higgs, 2016; Stein, & Andreotti, 2016; Mampane, Omidire & Aluko 2018). Numerous scholars have maintained this view. Contrastingly, some of the participants in this study indicated that a move away from Western sources of knowledge would constitute as a better effort towards decolonisation. The participants who held this view argued that the West has dictated sources of knowledge for so long that alienation of an unsurmountable amount has taken place. These claims were similar to the findings brought forward by Carolissen et al., (2015) and Mhambi (2012). Subsequently, the students' belief was that in order to bridge this gap, a comprehensive overhaul is necessary. It seems that students have held these frustrations for so long that any form of compromise seems counterintuitive to the transformation they envision. Seemingly, some students believe that decolonisation should include a total transformation that dismantles almost completely the current source of knowledge. Scholars have held quite different views in this regard often citing

the necessity of inclusivity of all sources of knowledge (Nair, 2008; Turpin & Coleman, 2010; Higgs, 2012; Mhambi, 2012; Carolissen et al., 2015; Adebisi, 2016; Higgs, 2016; Mbembe, 2016; Stein, & Andreotti, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Mampane, Omidire & Aluko, 2018; Meda, 2019). In working together, scholars and students may experience these polarised views as a challenge in achieving a shared goal of transforming knowledge and the curriculum.

In summary, this core theme and its subthemes highlighted what students define as essential in their understanding of decolonisation. The literature coincided with some of these findings whilst some were challenged. What is eminent is that both students and scholars define and understand decolonisation as a transformative process that includes the promotion and inclusion of indigenous voices and making the field of Psychology and the curriculum more relatable to its consumers. It further highlights that both scholars and students agree on decolonisation being inclusive of a shift in the different ways of knowing and doing. However, given these shared views, a significant contrast exists between these two entities. Whilst scholars have emphasised a tentative shift that is non-dismissive of currently existing Western ideologies, students strongly feel a comprehensive shift would be more aligned to their understandings of decolonisation. Thus, in relation to the objective of this study, it is clear that students have their own understandings of what decolonisation of Psychology and its curriculum entails. In having these views, some are shared with those existing because of scholars whilst some are in opposition of what scholars have posited.

In understanding decolonisation, the students reiterated understandings which were aligned with an additional lens of understanding of this study, African Psychology. As aforementioned Makhubela (2016) defines African Psychology as an indigenous area of study characterised by distinctive worldviews and lived experiences of the continent and its people. It is also considered a universal disciplinary, practise predicated on and concerned with psychological affairs of Africans. African Psychology can be understood as a field of study

that places emphasis on the distinct experiences of Africans and their worldviews being central to their sources of knowledge production, including Psychology. This paradigm was chosen as a lens of understanding as it served as an example of a kind of transformation within the Psychology curriculum. It also served as an example of how some scholars have understood transformation in Psychology. What became apparent within this theme is how students were calling for an African Psychology themselves. Students understood decolonisation as not only a shift away from what is colonial but also a move towards what is African. Thus, in their interpretation of a decolonised Psychology and curriculum, students highlight Africanising knowledge as essential for the development of solutions catered to Africans. The link between the research aim, objectives and paradigm of this study aided the understanding of the complexity of the definition of decolonisation even within students. The theoretical framework of Rawl's theory of justice further understand this call for African Psychology as a call for justice as these indigenous sources of knowledge have been repeatedly ignored in the past. It reiterated the importance of equality in society as well as the equal distribution of good and power. Thus, the call for students for transformation of Psychology through shifting it towards an African Psychology, is a call for transformation in an empowering manner.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Afrocentric Pedagogy: Transformation of knowledge production

The need for decolonising the South African Psychology curriculum was outlines by the literature review of this study. Students also brought forward their thoughts with regards to this matter. Whilst students were more generic in their definitions and views of decolonisation within the previous theme, they were more specific with regards to the curriculum within this theme. This subtheme also best aligned with the second objective of the study which was to identify what opportunities students have been provided to engage with the process of decolonising the curriculum This entailed understanding what students identified as crucial in transforming the curriculum.

One of the main points of arguments that the students repeatedly raised was the notion of an Afrocentric Pedagogy, that is, an African epistemology inclusive of indigenous knowledge. The participants posited that for true transformation to occur, emphasis needs to be placed on the African and South African context where reliance on indigenous ways of knowing is practised. The posited that for a Western developed field such as Psychology to thrive in the African context, its curriculum needs to be informed by sources of knowledge that it will cater to. This shared concept is closely related to what Higgs, (2016) coined an African epistemic. Higg's (2016) defined this as adoption and incorporation of African indigenous knowledge into the current curriculum as a means of socio-educational transformation. Further argued that this was a transformation desperately needed by the continent stating that transformation in African education should be aimed at making indigenous knowledge available as a resource of cultural and societal transformation that can be politically and economically liberating (Higgs, 2016). What Higgs (2016) and fellow scholars argue is that in order for the curriculum, higher education and society to transform on various level, an African epistemic need to be adopted (Molefi, 2007; Higgs, 2008; Bitzer, 2011; Higgs, 2012; Zenawi, 2012). What these scholars posit is that a transformation inclusive of African generated knowledge for African curriculum is the dawn of transformation that would occur on higher levels. The higher-level transformations would include the alleviation of the socio-economic and political challenges currently faced by the African context. The notion of an African epistemic was the most strongly held idea by all the participants of this research. All participants were firmly of the view that learning from African sources of knowledge is essential in understanding Psychology in an African context. They believe that the solving of these African related psychological challenges begin with including this knowledge in the curriculum that shapes them to become the professionals that will interact with members in society. Lastly, these views shared by the students are closely linked to the view of African

Psychology. Makhubela (2016) understood African Psychology as an indigenous area of study characterised by distinctive worldviews and lived experiences of the continent and its people. Understanding the results using this paradigm essentially demonstrated that students are calling for the curriculum to make a shift towards being more inclusive of the views of African Psychology.

With regards to the opportunities to engage with the curriculum and to bring about change, students repeatedly stated the lack of sufficient avenues to bring about transformation. Meda (2019) and Vandeyar (2019) are amongst the prominent scholars to highlight this discrepancy. They state that although transformation of the curriculum through decolonisation has been written about quite extensively, few to no opportunities have been provided to students to engage and propel this transformation. Thus, without granting students opportunities to engage regarding their studies as well as the incorporation of their views in curricular structuring change that students yearn for will never take place. The interviewed students repeatedly echoed, some in frustration, the lack of opportunities provided to them to be part of this conversation. In reflecting the data collection process, most of them expressed deep gratitude for this study as it served as a genuine opportunity for their engagement. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the futility of currently existing opportunity such as that of end-of-term course feedback. The students consistently raised how some of what had been discussed in their focus groups had been shared in their feedback opportunities. They further reported that little to no change has come about, possibly due to the gatekeepers of this change being those in power and not the students. The difficulties of asking for change or engaging with the possibility of change with those wholly responsible posits what students deem a crucial barrier. This has led to the identification of Power Structures as another theme to be discussed later.

In summary, students have stated the importance of indigenous knowledge in propelling the transformation that they want to see. Their thoughts about this inclusion not only fixate on the curriculum but identify various changes within society being pivoted on this curriculum transformation. This has been supported by various scholars who have studied the necessity of curriculum transformation. Furthermore, students have posited that little to no opportunities exist for them to engage about transformation. They have expressed frustrations as impersonal attempts such as written anonymous course feedback and yearn for a more interactive and effective approach to achieving change.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Power Structures

An additional dynamic that the participating students identified was the power structures in place limiting transformation. This theme links to the aim and the first objective. In exploring the understandings of students regarding decolonisation, power was central to the understanding. In addition to defining decolonisation, the participants understood it as a power struggle between what is currently in place and the transformation that needs to occur. Thus, for the participants the link between decolonisation and power is inextricable as the one process cannot occur in isolation to the other. Additionally, the theoretical framework of this study shed understanding about these dynamics identified by students. Rawls' theory of justice focuses on the just distribution of goods within society (Edor, 2020). In this instance, the commodity of note is that of power through the inclusion of student voices. How this theory would understand the reports of the student is that they currently view the curriculum as an injustice which they are seeking to undo by the inclusion of their voices which would be an equal distribution of power in academia.

The data gathered under this theme indicated salient dynamics of the various power structures at play. What the students highlighted was that although scholars and lecturers acknowledge the necessity of students' voices in the decolonisation of the curriculum, the

initiation has to begin with them. Calls for a top-down approach where institutions and their power holders meet students halfway by inviting them and creating a space where these conversations can occur were made repeatedly by students. Students called for justice within academia and the curriculum through the equal distribution of power. In highlighting the importance of including students in the dialogue of transformation, Vandeyar (2019) makes mention of a triad that is in interaction when speaking of the curriculum and that is students, scholars in places of power and the curriculum itself. They go on to claim that change in one part of the triad may be insufficient to bring about change. Rather a proactive interaction needs to occur with all the relevant and related parties. Scholars and lecturers need only to encourage these conversations to occur, but to a certain extent, need to initiate them and meet students at the level in which they are. Kessi (2017) offers an approach to how scholars who are places of power and students who are mostly disempowered can engage. A participatory research stance where students and their powerlessness may be the source of the investigation is suggested, whilst being co-investigators themselves. Tavara and Moodley (2017) in their approach to decolonisation often position themselves as students rather than scholars. The reason for this is to highlight the importance of students once again in this dialogue and how they too should be at the forefront of the discussion for transformation. The above-mentioned scholars speak to the plight repeatedly raised by the participating students. Students being essential in decolonisation is identified as crucial by scholars however the opportunities to allow for their contributions to come to substance remains limited. Students have recognised that despite being important stakeholders, their influence is dependent on those in power. Thus, they reported that their attempts to bring about change will always remain futile if institutions do not initiate and support their efforts to bring change.

Additionally, Makhubela (2016) states that one of the purposes of the process of decolonisation is to empower those who have been previously disempowered. Students fall

within this group as they have been positioned to be recipients of the curriculum rather than participants. Thus, in continuously engaging with a curriculum that consistently limits their influence and voices, students remain disempowered. It would only be through the process of student's voices being heard and implemented in initiatives aimed at transforming the curriculum that empowerment would occur. This colluded closely with students' views of reporting that scholars meeting them halfway or taking a top-down approach would empower them. Students recognised that their needs being heard would be an interactive process of scholars sharing their power with them whilst empowering them. Thus, students support findings within the literature by understanding the role that decolonisation would play in empowering them. Essentially, scholars adopting a top-down approach would not be an act of them partially relinquishing their own power but would also be a process of empowering students.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Individual & Institutional Interventions

The last set of findings of this study related to interventions. This theme spoke closely to the last two objectives of the study. The first was identifying what opportunities have been created for their involvement in decolonising the curriculum. The second objective was to enquire students' perceptions of the possible role they can play in the process of decolonising the curriculum. Students spoke at length about how they understood and defined decolonisation. They further mentioned aspects which are central to their understanding of decolonisation such as the African epistemic. Moreover, students highlighted the dynamics of power at play with regards to the curriculum and the lack of transformation thereof. The final aspect they emphasised is how to go about getting their message across to the relevant stakeholder to bring about transformation. Students felt that the minor interventions they have already participated in such as written feedback has had minimal influence on scholars and their curriculum. Students further highlighted that a passive non-interactive approach such as

that will always be limited in its approach as they had no guarantees that their opinions were being considered. One of the suggestions that students proposed was being involved in more research projects that would be formally documented and hopefully, be used to bring about change at an institutional level. This suggestion directly met the objective of how students can be involved in the process of decolonisation. Students shared that some of them have begun to have serious conversations about decolonisation in various spaces. However, due to these discussions not being heard, they feel that assumptions are being made regarding how interested they are and how involved they want to be. These responses spoke directly to the objective of what opportunities have been provided for students to engage with decolonisation, of which they indicated as few. The importance of having students involved in research regarding decoloniality was highly favoured in the literature (Makhubela, 2016; Segalo & Cakata, 2017; Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Barnes & Siswana, 2018; Ratele et al., 2018; Oyedemi, 2018; Meda, 2019). In utilising the theoretical framework stated in the literature review, what students seem to be calling for is to an extent, a call for justice (Rawls, 1971). The key feature of this theory which forms the theoretical framework for this study is that every individual in society should have equal rights to liberty. This means in the context of the curriculum is the importance of students having equal rights and representation in a matter that deeply affects them. This entails then would be not only to hear the pleas of students, but to document them in the same manner that the views of many scholars have been documented and legitimised. Some scholars have shared this sentiment, concurring that it is important to not only hear students cries but it far more important to document these pleas. Kessi (2017) further reiterates this by highlighting how students should be incorporated into participatory action research initiatives where they are proactive stakeholders in the research process. In academia, it is common knowledge that experiences, thoughts and opinions that have been documented have weight and often, bring about change. Given the shortage of sufficient

knowledge regarding decolonisation in South Africa and within Psychology, it is imperative that students are involved in future research (Barnes & Siswana, 2018; Meda, 2019). Thus, the literature concurs with students that their involvement in research would legitimise their experiences, increasing the likelihood of change occurring.

The second set of views that students posited was how change could be achieved on the individual and collective individual level. These views stemmed largely from the participants identifying historical patterns which have brought about change for students. Some of the participants highlighted how when students have yearned for transformation, it has often had to take place through a revolutionary manner where their needs are overtly communicated. The participants stated that one of the ways in which they are positive that their voices would be heard is through protests. The participants highlighted in the past, students protesting have brought about significant change and has often led to their needs being met to a certain extent by institutions of education. The Soweto uprising of 1976 and #FeesMustFall movement were cited as examples. They believe that if students were to unite and voice these shared views, their needs are far more likely to be considered. Whilst they cautioned against shortcomings of such an approach such as the inciting of violence and damage to property amongst other things, they still believed it would be the most effective approach. Part of the reason why they felt that this approach has been effective in the past is that protest highlight how students, in their own way, also possess some level of power. They believe that this power is often effective when those in control of institutions fail to use their power to meet students' needs. Assie-Lumumba (2017) is one of the scholars that empathised with the views of students. It is reported in Assie-Lumumba (2017) that the protests in the #FeesMustFall movement were the result of long-held frustrations amongst students who had made multiple attempts to have their voices heard by the various important stakeholder to no avail. Pillay (2016) also sheds insight on how the 2015 protest led to some levels of recognition, similar to those of the Soweto uprising. Whilst it may

not be the most ideal options for both students and institutions, it is often one of the most effective (Pillay, 2016). Essentially, students have identified the role that protests have played in the past and still consider them to be a viable solution to their unheard needs.

In summary, students have recognised that interventions that will propel the transformation of the curriculum are twofold. The first is that more research needs to be conducted where student voices are at the forefront of the research. Subsequently, effective decisions could then be made and would directly cater to the needs of students. Furthermore, students have recognised initiatives in the past which have been effective in communicating with institutions. This is the form of protest. This intervention is deemed to operate at an individual level by students however it is reliant on the unity of students and them expressing a united voice.

4.5 Summary

The data collection for this research study was conducted using focus group discussions. An open interview schedule was utilised in the facilitating the focus groups which enabled the researcher to obtain information relevant to the research aim and objective whilst allowing the participants to freely engage. Upon the conclusion of the data collection, Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the data.

By utilising Thematic Analysis, several themes and subthemes emerged. The first theme looked at students' definitions, understandings, and interpretations of decolonisation. Its subthemes: 1) Dismantling, 2) Restructuring and Reconstructing and 3) Inclusion and promotion of indigenous voices highlighted aspects that students deemed as crucial in defining and understanding the process of decolonisation. This theme was linked to the objectives, aim, paradigm and theoretical framework of the study to provide further understanding. The second theme was Afrocentric Pedagogy: Transformation of knowledge production and its subtheme, African Epistemology, accentuated how students felt about the inclusion of African based

70

sources of knowledge as crucial in decolonising the field of Psychology and its curriculum. They also argued that the adoption of this African epistemic would better equip psychologists to deal with the issues relevant to the African and South African context.

The third theme focused on Power Structures. Its subthemes were 1) Top-down approach, 2) Students as change agents, 3) Barriers to change. This theme and its subthemes highlighted the various power dynamics at play in conversations about decolonisation. Students highlighted the need for institutions and their stakeholders to adopt a top-down approach to further propel conversations with students about decolonisation. They further highlight that this approach of institutions mobilising students would break barriers, allowing students to become change agents.

The fourth and final theme, Individual and Institutional Interventions and its subtheme, focus on equal representation, highlighted the ways in which interventions could be conducted. The individual interventions that students highlighted was the importance of including their voices in research. For the institutional interventions students highlighted that through protests instructors would be limited in their choice of whether to listen or not to the pleas of students. Both these interventions were viewed from a perspective of enabling equal representation which will facilitate transformation relevant to students and their needs. Essentially, all the themes were supported by verbatim quotes which substantiated most and contradicted some research findings presented by the researcher.

An interesting dynamic that also became apparent in the study was that of race. Of the eleven participants of the study, nine were African with two being coloured. No Caucasian students were part of the study. Subsequently, the views shared by the participants stemmed only from these two population groups. This group of participants largely stemmed from a middle-class background. Thus, it is possible that these views shared by these students were

also representative of these particular demographics. It is possible that with a largely and more racially diverse study, varying results might be obtained.

In conclusion, the core themes and subthemes presented were a result of shared individual and group experiences. The core themes were interpreted and accompanied by supporting and contrary research conducted previously. The research aims and objectives were closely tied to the themes and subthemes through the establishment of relationships with the research findings. Ultimately, the identified themes and relevant literature served the purpose of exploring what understandings students have regarding the decolonisation of the Psychology curriculum.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The participants presented their understandings of the decolonisation of the Psychology curriculum in South Africa. Although some of the students were doubtful of their own definitions and understanding, shared ideas emerged regarding their understanding of what decolonisation entailed. Various themes emerged where students concurred about what decolonisation entails and how it could be achieved. Students seemed to have had conversations regarding this topic multiple times, however due to limited opportunities, these conversations have seldom come to light. Some students are unhappy with the current state of the curriculum and their experiences thus far and need transformation. Students have reported experiencing the curriculum as foreign and have called for more African perspectives to be included in their studies. They feel that this inclusion would better equip them to better engage with the challenges existing in their society. The students are calling for African solutions to African problems and believe that one of the gateways to develop these solutions is through the transformation of the curriculum. Students have also identified the different power dynamics at play and understand some of the barriers that have stunted the transformation process. They have also identified ineffective initiatives such as course feedback, which they have felt have not led to much change within the different courses that they have completed. Finally, students identified the necessity of their inclusion in research to formally document their voices, possibly leading to long-term transformation such as an inclusive and culturally sensitive curriculum.

In relation to conversations about transforming the curriculum, students are crucial stakeholders that should be involved in the dialogue (Meda, 2019). As students engage most

with the curriculum, their inputs would prove invaluable as they experience it first-hand the most (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Meda, 2019). Thus, research which sheds the insights of students would prove essential in transforming the curriculum in ways that are appropriate, relevant, and useful to students. This in turn, would better facilitate the process of producing students who are better equipped to solve contextual problems in South Africa, particularly within the field of Psychology (Carolissen et al., 2015). As the curriculum is primarily responsible for education and training of future psychologists, a transformed curriculum capable of adequately equipping students to work in the South African context is necessary. Through the transformation of the curriculum, students would be empowered to navigate contextually relevant problems in the country.

As South Africa is a unique population, the solutions to the problems need to factor in this uniqueness. This uniqueness entails myriad and varying cultural and ethnic groups which also include varying ideologies and sources of knowledge. Additionally, South Africa has a rich history in terms of its schooling system which was largely influenced by the West and Apartheid system (McKeever, 2017). This historical context warrants a decolonised curriculum that will address the shortcomings of the previous education systems. The data revealed that students believe change has to occur on a curricular level and as early as possible. Additionally, students suggested that, for change to be effective, it needs to come from the sources who will be the main recipients of that change. Thus, for change to be meaningful for students, students need to be proactive participants in that process of change. Although decolonisation has been written on vastly, very few opportunities have been availed to students to contribute to this field. Thus, the significance of this research stems largely from providing students with an opportunity to voice themselves in a topic that has been contributed to sparsely by students.

Another significant contribution of this research relates to the academic-political environment South Africa currently finds itself in. As aforementioned, conversations about

decolonisation are longstanding within South Africa and Higher Education Institutions (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012; Pillay, 2016). However, following the unrest that students have demonstrated particularly during the #FeesMustFall process, these conversations have escalated, and decolonisation is being engaged with even more. The calls for the transformation of the curriculum have been called for by various parties including institutions, students, and society at large (Ratele, 2019; Pillay & Swanepoel 2019; Vandeyar, 2019; Kaur et al., 2018; Fomunyam, 2017a; Fomunyam, 2017b; Fataar, 2018; Grosfogel, Hernandez & Velasquez, 2016; Karioris, 2018; Makhubela, 2016; Ratele et al., 2018; Barnes & Siswana, 2018; Carolissen et al., 2017; Knight, 2018). Thus, the inclusion of student voices through this research, speaks to a need of inclusion and transformation that has been vastly expressed and may contribute to changes on a curricular level, institutional level, and societal level. It is for these reasons that this study is significant.

5.2 Limitations of this study

Although this study brought forth invaluable understanding about students and their thoughts about the decolonisation of the Psychology Curriculum in South Africa, it is not met without limitations. The first limitation is that the findings are limited to the Psychology curriculum whereas numerous courses are offered by differing institutions of learning. It is unlikely that all university curriculums across the country are the same, with some possibly being more progressive in terms of decolonisation. Thus, the findings of this study are closely linked to the demographic of the interviewed students as well as their own experiences of this specific curriculum in this institution.

The second limitation of this study was its sample size. Due to this study being a mini thesis conducted by one individual, the resources, and the depth to which the research could be conducted was limited. It is likely that the conducting of this study with a larger sample size and perhaps a differing data collection method such as individual interview may yield more

extensive and richer data. A bigger sample size may also increase the likelihood of finding opposing views as well as enable the researcher to better identify nuances even amongst similar views.

The third limitation of this study is relevant to the time in which it was conducted. As this study was conducted and reported on during the 2020/2021 Covid 19 pandemic, compromises which may have not been eminent in normal circumstances, were made. For instance, due to social distancing rules and health concerns, the focus groups had to be conducted online. This meant that students' participation also depended on having access to technological devices and data. Thus, many students were inherently ruled out of the study due to this limited access.

The last limitation identified for this study was that although it attempted to be as inclusive as possible in terms of varying demographics, it only included students from African and Coloured backgrounds who were of a certain class group. It is likely that the inclusion of more racial groups from differing backgrounds may offer more perspectives.

5.3 Recommendations

A noteworthy recommendation would be for a future study to be conducted at multiple universities instead of one. This could aid in providing vast information regarding the thoughts of students in their differing institutions. This could also aid in identifying useful similarities and differences between Psychology curriculums that can better aid the transformation process. A second recommendation would be to conduct this study in more than one field as it is likely that this need for transformation is not limited to the discipline of Psychology. This second recommendation is closely tied to the third, which is to explore this research with a larger sample size. Lastly, conducting this study in a different socio-economic and health climate different from that of the pandemic would also enable more individuals to have access in participating in this research thus possibly yielding richer data. Lastly, having a more racially
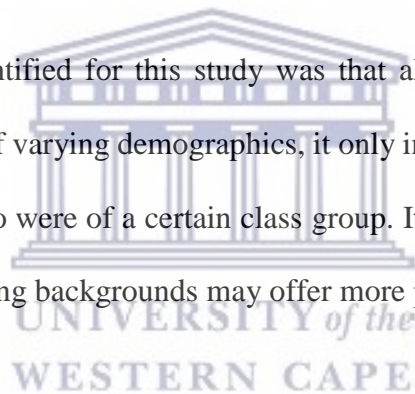
inclusive and diverse study may offer possibly differing and important perspective from a wider range of students.

5.4 Conclusion

This study aimed to add to existing literature about decolonisation by focusing on and exploring students' understandings of what a decolonised Psychology curriculum entails. It attempted to understand what ideas exist amongst students if any, regarding the Psychology curriculum and the process of decolonising it. The researcher intended to gain a better understanding of students and their positionality in relation to understanding and transforming the curriculum where necessary. The aim and objectives of this study were directly informed by the literature which indicated a need for decolonial research inclusive of students. Despite decolonial research having been done for decades, seldom has it included the voices of student. The literature indicated this as erroneous as students form an integral part of the curriculum by being valuable interactors in the triad of educators, content, and students. The literature further indicated the need for a decolonised Psychology curriculum. Amongst the reasons for this were a skewed representation demographically, the prevalence of Psychology as a course in various degrees as well as indications of the current curriculum not providing adequate skills to effectively navigate issues within the South African context. It was for these reasons, particularly the last, that African Psychology was used in conjunction with Rawls' theory of justice, with the latter serving as the theoretical framework. Whilst the former placed emphases on building and forging a Psychology from Africa, by Africans for Africans and their unique and diversified challenges, the latter emphasised the importance of justice in transformation. Justice in this instance is students' voices being included and equally considered as they have been the ones most severely affected by the injustices of a westernised, unrelatable curriculum. The study implemented focus groups and thematic analysis as a methodology. This allowed the researcher to gain a rich understanding of the thoughts of the students who participated in

the study. It further allowed for the extraction of themes which were understood using existing literature. It enabled the students to define decolonisation for themselves, highlight the role of indigenous knowledge in understanding it, identify the power dynamic at play for such a transformation as well as formulate possible interventions that could be implemented to drive this transformation.

The methodology and that was followed enabled the researcher to successfully achieve the aim of the research, which was to explore what understandings exist amongst students regarding the decolonisation of the Psychology curriculum. It also aided the meeting of the objectives which included exploring the understandings of undergraduate and postgraduate students in decolonising the Psychology curriculum. The second objective was to identify with students' what opportunities have been presented to them to practise decolonisation, if any. Lastly, it was to identify what role students think they can play in the process of transformation. Through using this methodological approach, four main themes emerged. Through the step-by-step use of thematic analysis in interpreting the data, four main themes emerged. The first was students' interpretations of decolonisation. This theme highlighted how students defined decolonisation for themselves and listed crucial elements that comprise it. These were dismantling which included a shift away from western thought, restructuring and reconstructing structures maintaining the status quo and the inclusion of indigenous voices. The second theme was identified to be an Afrocentric Pedagogy. What this theme entailed was the development and emphasis on an African epistemology to drive the production of knowledge. This theme was also directly linked to the consulted additional school of thought of the study, African Psychology. The theme emphasised the development of an African Psychology informed by African knowledge to cater to the unique and diverse needs of Africans. It highlighted the need for the development of knowledge from the context to which its practical implementation will return. The third theme was power structures. Within this

theme, students called for a top-down approach as they conceded that although they are capable of transformation, their influence would be limited without those in power meeting them halfway. They also acknowledge barriers that have and continue to inhibit change such as the fear that prevents some students from voicing out their opinion. Lastly, despite such limitations such as fear from students, the data indicated ways in which students have identified themselves as change agents. The last theme was individual and institutional interventions. This last theme highlighted how students yearn for equal representation in matters that involve them such as the transformation of the curriculum. This theme was closely related to the theoretical framework, Rawls' theory of justice. This theme represented students calling for justice and fair representation as they have been disadvantaged for many years. Lastly the theme also highlighted different interventions which could be done on an individual level such as students informing themselves and speaking out more as well as institutional level interventions such as universities creating spaces for students to freely engage and viewing those engagements as paramount.

Essentially, this study highlighted why the Psychology curriculum in South Africa is in dire need for transformation. It also accentuated the importance of having students actively involved in this process and becoming an integral part of the research process. It considered the work that has been conducted thus far regarding decolonisation and identified ways in which it can be extended upon. The study also played the role of empowering students by providing them with a platform to engage regarding decolonisation, a platform that they are desperate for. It further highlighted the shared views between scholars and students as well as differing views relating to how decolonisation has been understood by these different groups. Lastly, this study also afforded students the opportunity to challenge ineffective curricula praxis currently in place in a safe and non-threatening manner. Although this study was conducted in one university using students in one discipline, it provided an indication of

students being interested in crucial conversations relating to them whilst also identifying the

solutions that they have thought of in relation to the problem. Given the results of the study,

based on the experiences of students, more effective policies such as mandated student

involvement in curricular decisions could be instituted.

REFERENCES

Academy of Science of South Africa. (2011). *Consensus Study on the State of the Humanities in South Africa: Status, prospects, and strategies*. Academy of Science of South Africa. https://www.assaf.org.za

Adebisi, F. (2016). Decolonising education in Africa: Implementing the right to education by re-appropriating culture and indigeneity. *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly*, *67*(4), 433-451.

Africa, C. & Mutizwa-Mangiza, S. (2017). The need for a new language? How historically disadvantaged institutions grapple with the effects of labelling in higher Education: the case of the University of the Western Cape. *Politikon*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2018.1418213

Assie-Lumumba, N.T. (2017). African University Traditions, Historical Perspective. In J.C Shin & Teixeira, P (Eds.), *Encyclopaedias of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions,* (pp. 46-51). Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media.

Bailey, J. S., & Burch, M. R. (2017). *Research methods in applied behaviour analysis*. Routledge.

Barnes, B. & Siswana, A. (2018). Psychology and decolonisation: introduction to the special issue. *South African Journal of Psychology, 48*(2), 297-298.

Bitzer, E. (2011). Inquiring the curriculum in higher education. In N. Botha (Ed.), *Curriculum inquiry in South African Higher Education: Some scholarly affirmations and challenges* (pp. 3–11). Stellenbosch: Sun Media.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 77-101.

Braun, V. & Clark, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners.* United States: Sage Publications.

Carolissen, R., Shefer, T. & Smit, E. (2015). A Critical Review of Practices of Inclusion and Exclusion in Psychology in Higher Education. *Psychology in Society*.

Carolissen, R., Canham, H., Fourie, E., Graham, T., Segalo, P. & Bowman, B. (2017). Epistemological resistance towards diversality: teaching community Psychology as a decolonial project. *South African Journal of Psychology, 47*(4), 495-505.

Chetty, R. & Knaus, C. (2016). *Why South Africa's universities are in the grip of a class struggle*. Sunday Times. http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/opinion/2016/01/13/Why-South-Africa%E2%80%99s-universities-are-in-the-grip-of-a-class-struggle

Cibangu, K. S. (2012). Qualitative Research: The Toolkit of Theories in the Social Sciences. In A.́. López-Varela (Ed.), *Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to Social Sciences and Knowledge Management* (pp. 95–126). InTech.

Clarke, V. & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Over-coming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. The Psychologist, *26* (2), 120-123.

Cooper, S. & Nicholas, L. (2012). An overview of South African Psychology. *International journal of Psychology: Journal international de psychologie.* 47, 89-101.

Curriculum. (2021). In *Oxford Online*. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/curriculum

Edor, J. (2020). John Rawls's Concept of Justice as Fairness. *PINISI Discretion Review*, 4:179-190. 10.26858/pdr.v4i1.16387.

Emmel, N. (2013). *Sampling and choosing cases in qualitative research: A realist approach.* London: Sage.

Fanon, F. (1964). *Toward the African Revolution*. New York: Grove Press

Fataar, A. (2018). Decolonising Education in South Africa: Perspectives and Debates. *Educational Research for Social Change* (ERSC), 7, 1-4

Fischer, T.C. (2006). *Qualitative Research Methods for Psychologists: Introduction Through.* United States: Elsivier.

Fomunyam, K. (2017). Decolonising the future in the untransformed present in South African higher education. *Perspectives in Education*, *35*(2), 168-180.

Fomunyam, K. (2017). Curriculum responsiveness within the context of decolonisation in South African higher education. *Perspectives in Education*, *35*(2), 196-207

Galletta, A. (2013). *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond*. New York: New York University Press.

Glanvill, S. (2012). Analysing the construction of South African youth in historical-related images and texts around the time of 16 June 2011. *Yesterday and today*, (7), 169-184.

Gollwitzer, M., van Prooijen J. W. (2016). Psychology of Justice. In: Sabbagh C., Schmitt M. (eds), *Handbook of Social Justice Theory and Research*. Springer, New York, NY.

Grosfogel, R., Hernandez, R. & Velasquez, E. (Eds.) (2016). *Decolonizing the Westernized University: Interventions in Philosophy of Education from Within and Without.* London: Lexington Books.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2011). *Applied thematic analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

83

Guest, G., Namey, E., Taylor, J., Eley, N., & McKenna, K. (2017). Comparing focus groups and individual interviews: findings from a randomized study. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *20*(6), 693-708.

Heleta, S. (2016). Decolonisation of higher education: Dismantling epistemic violence and Eurocentrism in South Africa. *Transformation in Higher Education, 1*(1), 1-8.

Higgs, P. (2008). Towards an indigenous African educational discourse: a philosophical reflection. *International Review of Education,* 543-564.

Higgs, P. (2012). African philosophy and the decolonisation of education in Africa: Some critical reflections. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *44*(s2), 37–55.

Higgs, P. (2016). The African renaissance and the transformation of the higher education curriculum in South Africa. *Africa Education Review*, *13*(1), 87–101.

Imbruglia, G. (2015). Civilisation and Colonisation: Enlightenment Theories in the Debate between Diderot and Raynal, *History of European Ideas*, *41*(7), 858-882.

Karioris, F. (2018). Book Review: Decolonizing the Westernized University: Intervention in philosophy of education from within and without. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 66*(3), 412-413.

Kaur, A., Awang-Hashim, R., & Kaur, M. (2018). Students' experiences of co-creating classroom instruction with faculty – a case study in eastern context. *Teaching in Higher Education, 24*(4), 461-477.

Kessi, S. (2016). Decolonising Psychology creates possibilities for social change. *Conference proceedings of Psychological Society of South Africa's Annual Psychology Congress.* Conducted by the Psychological Society of South Africa's Annual Psychology

Congress. Johannesburg: Conducted by the Psychological Society of South Africa's

Annual Psychology Congress.

Kessi, S. (2017). Community social psychologies for decoloniality: an African perspective on

epistemic justice in higher education. *South African Journal of Psychology, 47*(4), 506-

516.

Knight, J. (2018). Decolonizing and transforming the geography undergraduate curriculum in

South Africa. *South African Geographical Journal, 100*(3), 271-290.

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Serie: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4:

Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice, 24*(1), 120-

124.

Lodge, T., & Mottiar, S. (2015). Protest in South Africa: motives and meanings.

Democratization. 23, 1-19.

Lucca-Silveira, M. P. (2016). The subject of social justice: a defence of the basic structure of

society. *Bras. Political Sci. Rev., 10*(2), e0006.

Madden, B. & McGregor, H. (2013). Exercising Student Voice in Pedagogy for Decolonizing:

Exploring Complexities Through Duoethnography. *Review of Education, Pedagogy,

and Cultural Studies, 35*(5): 371-391.

Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: a practical, step-by-step guide

for teaching scholars. *The All-Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher

Education (AISHE-J)*, 3, 3351-33514.

Mahabeer, P. (2020). Decolonising the school curriculum in South Africa: black women

teachers' perspectives, *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal, 5* (1-2), 97-119.

Makhubela, M. (2016). From Psychology in Africa to African Psychology: Going nowhere slowly. *Psychology in Society,* 52, 1-18.

Makhubela, M. (2018). Decolonise, Don't Diversify: Discounting Diversity in the South African Academe as a Tool for Ideological Pacification. *Education as Change*. 22, 1-21.

Maldonado-Torres, N. (2017). Frantz Fanon and the decolonial turn in Psychology: from modern/ colonial methods to the decolonial attitude. *South African Journal of Psychology, 47*(4), 432 – 441.

Mampane, R., Omidire, M.F., & Aluko, F.R. (2018). Decolonising higher education in Africa: arriving at a glocal solution. *South African Journal of Education, 38*, 1-9.

Matlala, M., Maponya, M., Chigome, A. & Meyer (2018). Overview of mental health: A public health priority. *South African Pharmaceutical Journal, 85*(6), 46-52.

Mawere, M. (2015). Indigenous Knowledge and Public Education in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Africa Spectrum* 50 (2): 57–71.

Mbembe, A. J. (2016). Decolonizing the University: New Directions. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15 (1): 29–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022215618513.

McKeever, M. (2017). Educational Inequality in Apartheid South Africa. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 61:114-131. 10.1177/0002764216682988.

Meda, L. (2019). Decolonising the Curriculum: Students' Perspectives. *Africa Education, 24*(6).

Meda, L., Swart, A., & Mashiyi, N. (2019). Decolonising the curriculum at a university of Technology in South Africa. *The Educational Review, USA, 36*(6), 50-57.

Mhambi, R. (2012). An exploration into the subjective emotional experiences the MSc 1-clinical Psychology trainees at the University of Limpopo (Medunsa Campus) during their first block of training. *Master's thesis in Clinical Psychology*, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Limpopo. http://ul.netd.ac.za/handle/10386/1077.

Mohajan, H. (2018). Qualitative research methodology in Social Sciences and related subjects. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, 7, 23-48.

Molefi, K.A. 2007. *An Afrocentric manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance.* Cambridge: UK and Malden, MA. Polity Press

Nair, S. (2008). Psychologists and race: Exploring the identities of South African trainee clinical psychologists with reference to working in multiracial contexts. *DPhil dissertation*, Department of Psychology, University of Stellenbosch. http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/1489.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2015). Decoloniality as the Future of Africa. *History Compass*, *13*(10), 485-496.

Nowell, L., Norris, J., White, D., & Moules, N. (2017). Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 16, 1-13.

Nwoye, A. (2015). What is African Psychology the Psychology of? *Theory & Psychology*, 25, 96-116.

Oyedemi, T. (2018). (De)coloniality and South African academe. *Critical Studies in Education, 00*(00), 1-17.

Pillay, S. R. (2016). Silence is violence: (critical) Psychology in an era of Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall. *South African Journal of Psychology, 46*(2), 155-159.

Pillay, P., & Swanepoel, E. (2019). An exploration of high education teachers' experience of decolonizing the Bachelor of Education honours curriculum at a South African university. *Perspectives in Education, 36*(2), 119-131.

Pinar, W. F. (2012). *What is curriculum theory?* New York: Routledge.

Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality. *Cultural Studies*. *21* (2–3), 168–178.

Ratele, K. (2017a). Frequently asked questions about African Psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *47*(3), 273–279.

Ratele, K. (2017b). Four (African) psychologies. *Theory & Psychology, 27*(3), 313–327.

Ratele, K., Cornell, J., Dlamini, S., Helman, R., Malherbe, N., & Titi, N. (2018). Some basic questions about (a) decolonizing Africa(n)-centred Psychology considered. *South African Journal of Psychology, 0*(00), 1-12.

Ratele, K. (2019). *The World Looks Like This from Here: Thoughts on African Psychology.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.18772/12019093900.4

Rawls, J. (1999). *A theory of justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Segalo, P. & Cakata, Z. (2017). A Psychology in our own language: Redefining Psychology in an African context. *Psychology in Society*, 54, 29-41.

Sommer, M. (2011). Colonies – Colonisation – Colonialism: A Typological Reappraisal. *Ancient West & East,* 10, 183-193.

Stebbins, R.A. (2001). *Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences.* United States: Sage Publications.

Stein, S., & Andreotti, V.D.O. (2016). Decolonization and higher education. In M. Peters (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of educational philosophy and theory.* Singapore: Springer Science Business Media.

Tavara, G. & Moodley, S. (2017). Decolonising the academy: praxis and participation: Response to 'Community social psychologies for decoloniality: An African perspective on epistemic justice in higher education' by Shose Kessi. *South African Journal of Psychology, 47*(4), 517-519.

Turpin, G., & Coleman, G. (2010). Clinical Psychology and diversity: Progress and continuing challenges. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, *9*(2), 17-27.

Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. Nursing & health sciences, *15*(3), 398-405.

Vandeyar, S. (2019). Why decolonising the South African university curriculum will fail? *Teaching in Higher Education, 25*(3), 1-14.

wa Thiong'o, N. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature.* Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Wen Su, S. (2012). The Various Concepts of Curriculum and the Factors Involved in Curricula-making. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 3*(1),153-158.

Wilson, C. (2014). *Interview Techniques for UX Practitioners: A User-Centered Design Method.* United States: Morgan Kaufman.

Yin, R.K. (2016). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Zenawi, M. (2012). Africa: *The African Renaissance is beginning. Mozambique News Agency.* http://www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2283 Fax: 27 21-959 3515

E-mail: 4000083@myuwc.ac.za

12 April 2020

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Exploring Students' understandings of a Decolonised Psychology Curriculum
at a South African University

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Qhawe Plaatjie under the supervision of Dr
Wilmien Human in the Psychology Department at the University of the Western Cape. We are
inviting you to participate in this research project because you have shown an interest in the
research project through your answers in the pre-screening questionnaire sent to you along with
this information sheet, regarding decoloniality. The purpose of this research project is to
explore the understandings that students have regarding a decolonised curriculum. This
research is being done because a lot of the research done so far often fails to include student
perspectives although the curriculum is an issue that directly affects them. Thus, your

contribution to this project would then offer insight into an area that not much is known about, but an area which is important. The purpose of this research project is to explore what understandings students have regarding the decolonisation of the Psychology curriculum in a Higher Education Institution in South Africa. Through this exploration this research seeks to understand what the decolonisation of curriculum entails from the perspective of students.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the focus group discussion shall be conducted through an online platform such as Zoom, Google Meets, Microsoft Teams or Skype. The specific platform will be chosen based on what platform is convenient for the majority of the focus group members. The participants will be asked to be part of a focus group that is going to be facilitated by the researcher. The focus questions that will be asked will include: What current understandings of decoloniality exist amongst novel Psychology students? What opportunities have been provided for students to engage with the process of decolonisation? Does current curriculum-oriented decolonial scholarship adequately consider the value of student insights in its research?

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researcher will undertake the necessary precautions to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. The online platforms shall utilize encrypted security measures in an effort to guarantee confidentiality. The collected data shall be typed, and no physical copies shall be kept as an additional security measure. Once collected, the data shall be stored on the researchers OneDrive personal vault which can only be accessed using his fingerprint. As this study will be conducted via a focus group, anonymity may be limited. During the focus group, participants shall be together and may recognize one another. Despite this, the researcher shall ensure confidentiality in the reporting of the research findings. The researcher will maintain the highest standard of ethics by using pseudonyms for all participants and not discuss the

content of the focus group outside of that setting. By signing the accompanying consent form to this study, Appendix B, the participant agrees to not disclosing the contents of the focus group in an attempt to ensure confidentiality. In the writing of the research report for this study, your identity will be protected. A pseudonym or letter shall be used in any report written if any direct quoting is done. In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities' information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others. In this event, we will inform you that we have to break confidentiality to fulfil our legal responsibility to report to the designated authorities.

What are the risks of this research?

All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some number of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to Centre for Student Support Services (CSSS) located on campus. It is a free service available for all UWC students and is dedicated to helping students in distress. Although unlikely, should any distress arise, students shall be appropriately referred to their offices. The contact person for CSSS is Bomikazi Kohli. She is the Administrative Assistant. Her contact details are Tel: 021 959 2299 email: csss@uwc.ac.za.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about the student's views regarding the decolonisation of the curriculum. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of decoloniality and that this understanding can be used in the improvement of curricula and departmental policies using the insights of students.

Do I have to be in this research, and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Qhawe Agyapong Plaatjie under the supervision of Dr Wilmien Human in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Qhawe at: 062 416 0809 or q.plaatjie@gmail.com or 4000083@myuwc.ac.za. Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department

Prof Anita Padmanabhanunni, **PhD**

Department of Psychology

Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

University of the Western Cape

Tel: 021 959 2842

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

apadmana@uwc.ac.za

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Prof. A. Rhoda

Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape (UWC). [*The REFERENCE NUMBER is:* HS20/10/19*] **HSSREC, Research Development Office**: Tel: 021 959 4111; email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

APPENDIX B: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2283 Fax: 27 21-959 3515

E-mail: 4000083@myuwc.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:

Exploring Students' understandings of a Decolonised Psychology Curriculum at a South
African University

I affirm that the study has been described to me in language that I understand and that all my

questions about the study have been sufficiently answered. I understand why I am here and

what my participation involves. I understand that I am participating of my own free will and

can choose to leave at any time without fear of any negative consequences. Given that I will

be participating in a focus group discussion I understand that there may be limitations on

confidentiality and anonymity as these may be shared by fellow group members. However,

through signing this form as well as the Focus Group Consent Form (Appendix C), I understand

that disclosing any of the information discussed in the group discussion would be unethical.

For this research project an audio recording will be made of you, which will ensure that

transferability and credibility is maintained throughout the research study. Audio recordings

will be always kept in a safe area. After the transcription of data, the audio recordings will be

deleted. No video recordings shall be made of you participating in this research.

___ I agree to be audio-taped during my participation in this study.

___ I do not agree to be audio-taped during my participation in this study.

Participant's name: ………………………………

Participant's signature: …………………………

Date: ………………………………………………

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

APPENDIX C: Focus Group Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2283 Fax: 27 21-959 3515

E-mail: 4000083@myuwc.ac.za

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

Purpose

You have been invited to participate in a focus group under the Department of Psychology for a master's mini thesis. This is a research project being conducted by Qhawe Plaatjie at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have shown an interest in the pre-screening sent to you with the information sheet, regarding decoloniality.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the understandings that students have regarding a decolonised curriculum. This research is being done because a lot of the research done so far often fails to include student perspectives although the curriculum is an issue that directly affects them. Thus, your contribution to this project would then offer insight into an area that not much is known about but one which is important. The purpose of this research project is to explore what understandings students have regarding the decolonisation of the

psychology curriculum in a Higher Education Institution in South Africa. Through this exploration this research seeks to understand what the decolonisation of curriculum entails from the perspective of students.

Procedure

As part of this study, you may be placed in either one group of two of about 6 individuals based on whether you are an undergraduate or postgraduate student. The researcher will ask you several questions while facilitating the discussion. Upon approval by the University of the Western Cape Ethics Committee, this focus group will be audio-recorded, and a note-taker will be present. However, your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in the final report.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the focus group, and you may stop at any time during the course of the study.

Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to focus group questions. The researcher wants to hear the many varying viewpoints and would like for everyone to contribute their thoughts. Out of respect, please refrain from interrupting others. However, feel free to be honest even when your responses counter those of other group members.

Benefits and Risks

It is hoped that other people might benefit from this study through an improved understanding of decoloniality and that this understanding can be used in the improvement of curricula and departmental policies using the insights of students.

All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some number of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to Centre for Student Support Services

(CSSS) located on campus. It is a free service available for all UWC students and is dedicated to helping students in distress. Although unlikely, should any distress arise, students shall be appropriately referred to their offices. The contact person for CSSS is Bomikazi Kohli. She is the Administrative Assistant. Her contact details are:

Tel: 021 959 2299 email: csss@uwc.ac.za

Confidentiality

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed during the study. By signing this document, you agree to adhere to ethical practice and not disclosing the content of the focus group nor the identities of fellow members. Upon the conclusion of the data analysis the researchers will analyse the data and write up a report, but as stated above your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports only pseudonyms.
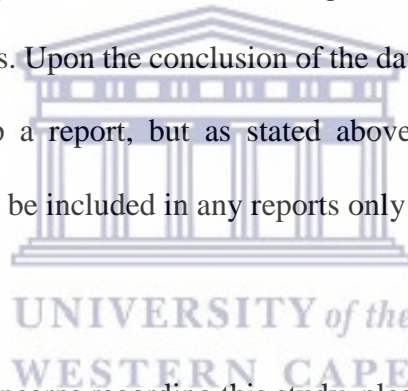
Contact

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact:

Qhawe Plaatjie   University of the Western Cape, Master's Student

Email: q.plaatjie@gmail.com/ 4000083@myuwc.ac.za

Cell phone: 062 416 0809

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above.

Sign name: _____ Date: _____

Print name: _____

APPENDIX D: Pre-Screening Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2283 Fax: 27 21-959 3515

E-mail: 4000083@myuwc.ac.za

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Topic: Exploring students' understandings of a decolonised psychology curriculum at a south African university

Researcher: Qhawe Agyapong Plaatjie – Masters Clinical Psych Student

The aim of this study is to explore what understanding students have regarding a decolonised Psychology curriculum in South Africa. This aim is informed by the analysis of available literature and the discovery of how limited student voices are within the literature.

This questionnaire is designed for the sole purpose of screening individuals who may be part of this research project. It is not designed to exclude or discriminate against any individuals but rather to facilitate a research process that may offer in-depth insights that may potentially benefit all Psychology students and their curriculum. This questionnaire will seek individuals who have thought about or engaged with decolonial scholarship but not on a formal level such a course. This is for the purposes of exploring the participants views and opinions rather than the testing of formal knowledge they possess. Upon potential participants completing it, they shall be invited to be participants based on meeting the criteria. The first 12 participants to

respond shall be chosen for the study. These participants shall be part of a smaller focus group of 6 based on whether they are undergraduate or postgraduate students. Please complete and email to 4000083@myuwc.ac.za or q.plaatjie@gmail.com.

Indicate response with **X**

1. Are You an Undergraduate or Postgraduate Psychology Student?

Undergraduate	Postgraduate

2. Do you have an interest in decolonial scholarship?

Yes	No

3. Do you have an interest in the decolonisation of the Psychology curriculum?

Yes	No

4. Have you had any formal exposure to decolonial scholarship in the form of a module or course or conference?

Yes	No

5. Would you be interested in being part of this study in the form of a focus group (group discussion)?

Yes	No

6. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, safety in the form of social distancing is also valued by this research project. As such online interviews and group discussions are to be conducted. Are you willing to participate in this format of interviewing?

Yes	No

7. Upon the conclusion of the research participation, would you be interested in different platforms which would further enable such a conversation to continue?

Yes	No