

https://dspace.org/

# Student voices on decolonising the curriculum: a study of two department at the University of the Witwatersrand

**Mashibini, Sello**

**2019**

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/28378

Mashibini, Sello (2019) Student voices on decolonising the curriculum: a study of two departments at the University of the Witwatersrand, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/28378>

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

# Student voices on decolonising the curriculum:
# A study of two departments at the University of the Witwatersrand




**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIOLOGY**

SELLO MASHIBINI

1277396

SUPERVISOR: Professor Zimitri Erasmus

# Contents


Declaration ..... IV

Dedication ..... V

Acknowledgements ..... VI

Abstract ..... VII

List of Abbreviations ..... VIII

Chapter 1 : Introduction ..... 1

1.1 Background ..... 2

1.2 Rationale ..... 7

1.3 Primary Research Question ..... 8

1.3.1 Sub-Questions ..... 8

1.3.2 Research Objectives: ..... 8

1.4 Limitations of the Study ..... 9

1.5 Theoretical Resources ..... 9

1.6 Structure of the Study ..... 10

Chapter 2 : Methodology ..... 12

2.1 Access to the University of the Witwatersrand ..... 12

2.2 Qualitative Design ..... 14

2.3 Sampling and Participants ..... 15

2.4 Data Collection Techniques ..... 18

2.5 In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews ..... 18

2.6 Reflexivity (locating Myself in the Study) ..... 22

2.7 Active Listening and Paraphrasing ..... 25

2.8 Data Analysis ..... 27

2.8.1 Reflexivity as Data Analysis ..... 27

2.8.2 Thematic Analysis ..... 28

2.9 Ethical Considerations ..... 29
Chapter 3: Literature Review ..... 30
3.1 Curriculum Reform ..... 30
3.2 Radical Decolonisation ..... 36
3.3 Epistemic Decolonisation ..... 39
3.4 Demythologising Whiteness ..... 45
3.5 The Overarching Picture ..... 48
Chapter 4 : The Academy, Blackness and Marginality ..... 50
4.1 University Culture and Alienation ..... 50
4.2 Blackness as Disability in the Academy ..... 60
4.3.2 The Deficit Discourse ..... 65
4.3 Culture and Epistemology ..... 68
4.4 Culture and Pedagogy ..... 71
4.5 Marginality of Black Texts ..... 73
4.6 Conclusion ..... 75
Chapter 5: Decolonising the Curriculum ..... 77
5.1 Decolonising the Curriculum as Mental Liberation ..... 78
5.2 Decolonising the Curriculum as a Quest for Humanity ..... 80
5.3 The Politics of Knowledge Production ..... 85
5.3.1 Afrocentrism ..... 86
5.3.2 Pan Africanist Approach ..... 87
5.3.3 Moving the Centre and Pluriversity ..... 91
5.4 Conclusion ..... 94
Chapter 6: Conclusion ..... 96
Reference List ..... 99

# Declaration

I, **Sello Mashibini**, candidate number **1277396**, hereby declare that this research report is my own original work. A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This report has not previously been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other University. Where I have used the work of other authors, I have properly acknowledged them and I have not copied any author or scholar's work with the intention of passing it as my own.

Signed: ----------

On-------- Day of---------- 2018

# Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all fallists in particular to those whose names and identities were used to justify the militarisation - by deploying heavily armed police and private security - of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Most importantly I dedicate this thesis to my son Kamvelihle. Your birth just a few days before I received my results from the examiners gave me a renewed sense of purpose and the courage to be the best person I can possibly be.

I also dedicate this thesis to my late uncle Bonginkosi Rens. Your untimely passing during the production of this work has left a huge void in my life.

*"Lala Ngoxolo Mvulane"*

# Acknowledgements

I am heavily indebted to my mentor and supervisor Professor Zimitri Erasmus. Prof I thank you for exercising patience and caution when dealing with my work. It was through your guidance and support that I found inspiration to finish this thesis. Working with you has made a significant contribution to the development of my scholarship and my personhood. I also wish to extend my gratitude for your concerted effort to source funding for the completion of this research report.

I wish to thank all my research participants who agreed to sit down with me for a maximum of an hour. Without your invaluable contribution this thesis would not have been written. Your interviews have been instrumental in the production of knowledge and of this thesis.

I humble myself and extend my greatest gratitude to the pillar of my strength, my source of humanity Buisiwe Mashibini, for the excellent parenting role you have played in my life and creating a space for me to pursue a Master of Arts Degree. Your support, encouragement and undying love for me have been the greatest inspiration in the pursuit of this qualification. I also thank all my family members who have been of great help during these trying times. If you were not so many I would record all your names here.

Lastly, I wish to thank my friends and companions, the late Bonginkosi Rens, Fanaphi Mashibini, Thabiso Moyo, Fikile Masikane, and Thabang Koole. I have no words to express my appreciation for your support and encouragement. As my friend wrote in his thesis *"Witness Me!"* will be the words I use to describe our friendship and companionship.

# Abstract

*This thesis uses three approaches to the curriculum - Afrocentrism, Pan-Africanism and Pluriversity/Moving the Centre - to explore students' understandings of decolonising the curriculum. I examine the meanings they attach to this project as revealed in semi-structured-depth-interviews that I conducted from September to December 2016. The study focuses on voices of postgraduate students in the departments of Sociology and Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. I discuss the implications of the culture of this university for Black students in light of its roots in the European Enlightenment project for which Black people are not human-beings. My main findings are first, that students experience this culture as alienating and violent, and that it treats Black students as disabled bodies and constructs them as deficient. Second, scholarship premised on Black thought is not part of the university's culture even though some of this scholarship is housed in formal structures of the university such as William Cullen Library. Third, intricately related to the content of the curriculum, pedagogical practices and questions of epistemology are deeply shaped by the culture of this university. I conclude that even when African scholarship and Black thought are introduced into the university, the likelihood of its impact would be small unless the culture of the university changes. Furthermore, while students' understandings of what decolonising the curriculum means are not homogeneous, the similarities in these understandings stem from common experiences of oppression. Finally, I conclude that at the heart of decolonisation and decolonising the curriculum is a quest for humanity and mental liberation.*

# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| BCM | Black Consciousness Movement |
| FMF | Fees Must Fall |
| IKS | Indigenous Knowledge Systems |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| RMF | Rhodes Must Fall |
| SoSS | School of Social Sciences |
| UCT | University of Cape Town |
| UT | University of Transvaal |

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Processes of decolonisation follow directly from the colonisation of the Global South by the West. Decolonisation in its broad sense is widely studied across the globe and highly contested. This has produced a variety of debates on the subject. Amongst these, debates about decolonising the curriculum – the primary focus of this study - have received the most attention in recent years. In this thesis, I use decolonisation and decolonising the university curriculum interchangeably, because decolonising the curriculum is part of the bigger project of decolonisation. Throughout history, decolonisation and decolonising the curriculum has meant different things for different scholars. For Molefi Kete Asante (1980) it means to move away from education that breeds cultural and social death amongst black people. This ultimately means moving away from Eurocentrism and focusing on creating a new centrism, namely Afrocentrism. Afrocentricity, for Asante (1980) seeks to relocate the African person as an agent in human history as opposed to an object in the margin or the periphery.

For revolutionaries such as Frantz Fanon also sometimes referred to as a postcolonial scholar, decolonisation meant a total change of the social structure and thus creating a new social order. For Fanon (1963), achieving this new social order is an inevitably violent and historical process. There are different interpretations of the place and meaning of violence as articulated by Fanon. These are explored later in the literature review chapter. Bogues (2003), who draws extensively on Fanon, also sees decolonisation as a historical process. In contrast to Asante's (1980) call for a new centrism, for Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and the Latin American Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality research collective, decolonisation is about creating multiple centres of the universe in which knowledge and subjectivity can be understood, thus questioning the universality of Western thought. The collective refers to this approach as Pluriversity. Some postcolonial scholars such as Go (2013), Connell (2007) and Mbembe (2015) argue for decolonisation through the humanities curricula in universities, through the introduction of voices and experiences of the colonised. For the Pan-Africanists decolonisation means liberation of the African people from both mental and physical slavery for the total achievement of African people's humanity which was denied by the white people. The unifying factor is common experiences of mental and physical oppression through dispossession or

slavery, social, economic, and political exclusion through colonialism. Multicultural studies in the United States of America as argued by Merryfield and Subedi (2006) argue for the inclusion of knowledge from the global South as part of decolonisation.

Recent calls for decolonisation suggest that the decolonisation project is either incomplete or its implementation was unsuccessful. This thesis covers debates from different schools of thought on decolonisation and decolonising the university curriculum. It goes on to show that even though the decolonisation project is contested and means different things to different people, at the heart of it is the liberation and re-humanisation the African people. This thesis comments on the inherited culture of the University of the Witwatersrand which has its roots in the racist and dehumanising European Enlightenment project. I show the ways in which this inherited racist culture of the university harms Black students, attempts to produce Black students who cannot know and treats Black students as if they are disabled meaning that they lack the ability to learn or know. I focus extensively on what the project of decolonisation means for the students whom I interviewed.

## 1.1 Background

This project comes at a time when there is a heightened call for decolonising our universities in South Africa in particular. This call has sparked many debates around the topic. In an attempt to give a historical overview of the decolonisation project, it is important to note that periodisation is not innocent but guided by the context of the discourse. The focus here is on the intellectual debates around the project of decolonisation with a particular bias to Africa and more specifically South Africa. I focus on the African continent and the intellectual debates for two reasons. First, the space and time to theorise or narrate the anti-colonial resistance and decolonisation projects around the world is limited because of the nature and the scope of this research. Second, some of the decolonisation projects in Africa were more focused the economic aspect of decolonisation and paid little attention to the intellectual project.

The decolonisation debate in Africa is by no means new. According to Mbembe it has its roots in "African postcolonial experiments in the 1960s and 1970s. Then, to decolonize was the same

thing as to Africanize" (2016:33). In the 1960s the decolonisation project was more of a political and economic project than it was about the politics of knowledge production. However, as argued by Mbembe (2016) this was a flawed process because it was more preoccupied with getting access to economic resources than it was about an intellectual project. According to Mbembe (2016), Fanon's was the "most trenchant critique of the 'decolonization as-Africanization' paradigm" (2016:34). A critique of decolonisation as mainly an economic and political project, rather than a project about the politics of knowledge production unfolded in the 1960s as African countries became independent from physical or direct colonial rule and the Afrocentric Intellectual Movement was ushered in by different African intellectuals (Arowosegbe, 2008). This movement was inspired by Africa's marginalisation from the global economy and it was more of an intellectual political struggle (Arowosegbe, 2008).

The 1970s marked another turn for the intellectual debates on the politics of knowledge production on the African continent. Arowosegbe (2008) argues that the 1970s marked a decade of colonial independence and the Afrocentric Intellectual Movement had taken a more academic intellectual face but it was still rooted in the economic discourse. As written by Arowosegbe "new approaches were introduced, which focused on the nature of African regimes, the crisis of neo-patrimonialism, the character of the state in Africa and the ideologies that have informed their disastrous performances" (2008:16). These approaches applied Marxist tools of analysis to discuss solutions to the aforementioned problem about African states (Arowosegbe, 2008). The move taken here by the earlier African scholars is heavily criticised by one of the respondents in the research project. In the interview Sefako argued that the Marxist narrative is not enough to explain the Black condition. This highlights the importance of decolonisation because the earlier African scholars on the continent have tried to explain the Black condition using a Marxist narrative which failed to adequately find solutions to the conditions that the newly independent African states faced. Mahmood Mamdani in his book *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and Genocide in Rwanda* (2001) heavily criticises Marxist theories and argues that they are not adequate in explaining the Black condition. In similar vein, Mbembe (2001) criticises these theories as a mode of self-writing. He argues that it is a reactionary theory that can only be presented in partisan politics and for which identity is only produced by the forces of production.

Moreover, Arowosegbe (2008) argues that the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania held a highly contested debate which focused on class, state and the role of imperialism in Africa in the 1970s. He posits that this debate had an impact on the politics of knowledge production in West and East Africa. The debate was sparked by Issa Shivji's (1973) book, *Class Struggles in Tanzania* and Dani W. Nabudere's critique of the book in his (1982) article, *Imperialism, State, Class and Race*. Other publications, which also provoked the debate, were Mahmood Mamdani's (1976) *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, and *The Political Economy of Imperialism* authored by Dani W. Nabudere (Arowosegbe, 2008:13).

This debate argues Arowosegbe (2008) changed many of the African scholars' ideological orientation from liberal to Marxist including a Nigerian scholar Claude Ake. This transition from a liberal to a Marxist approach by Ake makes one wonder if Marxism serves as a bridge between the liberal and the postcolonial schools of thought. Interestingly, the debate at University of Dar es Salaam occurred during the height of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa which produced its own debate that shaped the intellectual landscape of apartheid South Africa (Ally and Ally, 2008). The irony is that while Black people in the East of Africa were fighting to have Marxism as their mode of analysis in South Africa the BCM was arguing against the use of Marxism as a mode of analysis for understanding the Black condition (Ally and Ally, 2008). The BCM took a Pan-Africanist approach to analysing and explaining the Black condition. This approach by the BCM posed serious epistemological questions to the white South African academy. Furthermore, this approach also exposed the inadequacies of the colonial episteme for understanding the Black condition in South Africa.

More interestingly, in the years that preceded the formation of BCM colonial epistemologies were heavily challenged by Nosipho Majeke in her book *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* (1952) and Bangani Tabata in his book *The Awakening of the People* (1974). Majeke (1952) gives a compelling argument about the role the missionaries played in the subjugation of Black people. This argument exposes the complex nature of colonisation but most importantly it challenges the popular European narrative that portrays the missionaries as a group responsible for the civilization and the education of the Black people. I choose to focus on Majeke's work

because she writes from the other side of power, the side of the oppressed in South Africa. Her work shows that the missionaries played an instrumental role in negotiating with Black Chiefs to establish mission stations for the benefit of white capitalists. For Majeke (1952) the mission stations were established to facilitate the 'divide and rule' colonial strategy towards the natives. They were also used to facilitate a process which converted scores of natives into landless people ready to sell their labour for means of survival. Moreover, the missions were responsible for inculcating a culture of obedience amongst the natives to limit resistance and protest against colonial forms of economic organisation. Christianity was central to creating this culture (Majeke, 1952).

Tabata (1974) makes an important analysis about the role of 'white liberals' in the colonisation process. He argues that liberals were able to attract African leaders and form fake solidarities that enabled negotiations with these leaders on behalf of the white settlers. These fake solidarities led African leaders to betray collective decisions made by Africans in resistance movements (Tabata, 1974). For Tabata (1974) the ability of the liberals to attract African leaders depended to some extent on the nature of the British capitalist economy. The advanced capitalist mode of production compared to the dying Dutch fascism seemed more seductive to the African leaders. This attraction together with the promise of protection by the British Queen shaped the role played by the missionaries and the culture of obedience they managed to inculcate amongst African leaders made it easier for the liberals and African leaders to form the fake solidarity. Moreover, missionary education played an important role in making capitalism attractive to African leaders. This relationship solidified the relationship between missionaries and liberals as active agents of colonisation.

The decolonisation project takes a new turn as it matures. Scholarship developed beyond the African borders moved away from Afrocentric intellectual production. The new approach moved to post-colonial scholarship, a tri-continental intellectual project covering Africa, Latin America and Asia (Arowosegbe, 2008). Post-colonial scholarship can be understood as "a counter-colonial resistance project, which draws upon many indigenous and hybrid processes of representation, self-determination and self-writing with the aim of supplanting the prodigious power of imperial cultural knowledge" (Ashcroft, et al. 1995 as cited by Arowosegbe, 2008:16).

According to Arowosegbe (2008), this paradigm has produced a variety scholars such Archibald Mafeje, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Achille Mbembe, Edward Said, Partha Chatterjee, Homi K. Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Gayatri C. Spivak. For Young (1990, 1995 and 1996) as cited by Arowosegbe

> Broadly, post-colonial studies represents an intellectual engagement developed over the past thirty years on a set of issues, debates and articulations of points of interventions, performed as a tri-continental project within the institutional sites of the universities and research centers across the world, particularly outside the metropolitan intellectual centers on a range of disciplinary fields, especially Anthropology, History, Political Science, Sociology studies, Cultural, Gender and Literary Studies. In addition to colonialism, its discussions examine the continuing impact of displacement and forced migration; slavery and suppression; gender, racial and cultural discriminations; and other responses to the dominant narratives and discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being (Arowosegbe, 2008:16).

More recently the decolonisation debate took a new turn ushered in by the Latin American scholars. These scholars have conceptualised decolonisation through the modernity/coloniality research project (Mignolo, 2007). They conceive of the decolonisation project as a counter to colonisation and a critique of modernity as it is conceptualised by the West. It is a project that questions the idea of the university and the concept of universality of knowledge as presented to the world by the West. Like Pan-Africanism the modernity/coloniality research project works towards the total liberation of the formerly colonised. However, the modernity/coloniality research project is more focused on all subjugated and excluded knowledge systems whereas Pan-Africanism focuses on the political, governance and economic systems of the African people. Escobar argues that "the modernity/coloniality group certainly finds inspiration in a number of sources from European and North American critical theories of modernity to South Asian Subaltern studies, Chicana feminist theory, Postcolonial theory and African philosophy" (2007:180). It can be argued that the modernity/coloniality scholars take a pluriversal approach to decolonisation, in that they believe in the creation of multiple centres of knowledge.

Since 2015 with the #Rhodes Must Fall (#RMF) and #Fees Must Fall (#FMF) movements rising, the decolonisation debate is back on the African table. This study is inspired by this call for decolonisation. After #RMF called for the decolonisation of the curriculum and during my involvement with #FMF my interest and passion for decolonising the curriculum grew. The discussions in #FMF meetings and assemblies sparked my curiosity about what the project of decolonisation means to students. This renewed passion and curiosity prompted me to pursue this research project. Above all decolonisation is a historical project that has been with us since the years of independence in Africa. For Bogues (2003) history plays a critical role in a decolonial project. Bogues (2003:152) asks, what is the precise role of history? He uses Fanon to answer the question. Bogues posits, "Fanon makes the point that for the colonized—and I would argue for the racially oppressed as well—there is no radical politics without history" (2003:152). Fanon further argues that "Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements, which give it historical form and content" (Fanon, 1963:36).

## 1.2 Rationale

Decolonisation is currently a highly fashionable topic in the world, particularly in the Global South. This study is concerned with South African students' calls for a decolonised university. In 2015 students in the Political Studies Department at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University), started a movement called 'Decolonise Wits' which focused, amongst other things on decolonising the curriculum. From my observation in 2015, these students were not given a platform to share with the broader university community what they mean by decolonising the curriculum. Similarly, students in the Department of Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand raised questions about decolonising Sociological Theory. These questions and discussions were inspired mainly by students from the post-graduate theory course titled Social Transitions. These student initiatives sparked my interest in the topic 'decolonising the curriculum'. Given that these student voices have not been widely heard, the rationale for this study is to investigate what students mean when they advocate for a decolonised curriculum.

Through my interaction with students in various movements, organisations, and student political parties, I came to realise the heterogeneity of views on what decolonisation means. Moreover, through my engagement with the literature, it came to my attention that decolonisation has been by far a 'rational expert' project championed by a few scholars and activists, which has to a certain extent ignored the voices of students. The exclusion of students' views from the project of decolonisation has to a larger extent portrayed the project of decolonisation as an imposition on the students by academics. Even though there is a heightened call for decolonisation, only a certain clique of student activists are involved in the debates about decolonisation and this process is often dominated by people with similar views on the matter. Given this, I wanted to learn more about the subjective meanings of decolonisation amongst a variety of postgraduate students – activists, and non-activists – in the departments of Political Studies and Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand. This project is part of the broader struggle that seeks to interrogate the politics of knowledge production in the academy, which often manifests through curriculum content, development and design. I do not claim mastery of what decolonisation means or should mean. My wish is to contribute to the ongoing debate about decolonisation.

## 1.3 Primary Research Question

What do students who advocate for decolonising the curriculum mean by it?

### 1.3.1 Sub-Questions

In an attempt to understand, the deep meanings attached to decolonisation, the study aims to answer the following sub-questions

What do students mean by the concept 'decolonisation'?

Which factors contributed to shaping students' understanding of decolonisation?

What do students mean when they call for 'decolonising the curriculum'?

### 1.3.2 Research Objectives:

The study aims to gain an understanding of the meanings students attach to the project of decolonisation and decolonising the curriculum and to establish which factors contribute to their understanding of the decolonisation project.

## 1.4 Limitations of the Study

Students who advocate for a decolonised curriculum are not limited to postgraduate students in the Political Studies and Sociology departments at the University of the Witwatersrand. I was tempted to do a study of the entire School of Social Sciences (SOSS) in the university, but due to the nature of a Master of Arts research report and the time one has to complete the report, such a large project was not possible. Even in the aforementioned departments students who advocate for a decolonised curriculum are not limited to postgraduate students. However, I chose to focus on postgraduate students because I felt that I will not do justice to the study if I involved all the students in these two departments. My decision to focus on the Political Studies and Sociology departments will be further explained in the methodology chapter. I focused on the postgraduate students pursuing their B.A. Honours, Master of Arts and PhD degrees. The study has no intention of generalising the findings as true for all postgraduate students who advocate for decolonising the curriculum in SoSS or in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand.

## 1.5 Theoretical Resources

This study draws on a number of theoretical resources to explore a variety of concepts and themes. Moreover, the study is overtly a theoretical project that seeks to explore the experiences of Black postgraduate students in the SoSS at the University of the Witwatersrand. To explain concepts such as disability as a political and social construct I draw on the theoretical paradigms of post-structuralism and phenomenology. Post-structuralism stems directly from structuralism after structuralism scholars rejected it (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012). Post-structuralism broadly refers to a deeper understanding of how social and cultural phenomena influence structural patterns in society with the central argument that there is no absolute truth or fact (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012). This approach enables me to argue that the body is a political construct and that

disability is a social construct. Inglis and Thorpe (2012) argue that phenomenology is a study of how the world is perceived through the lived experiences, emotions and feelings of individuals being studied. Phenomenology helps to capture the lived experiences of the body and the construction of meaning from these experiences. The combination of these theories makes it possible to make an argument that the University of the Witwatersrand treats Black students as disabled.

The study also draws on Post-Colonial, Pan-Africanist and Modernity/Coloniality theories. These theories have been extensively defined throughout the thesis. The primary use of these theories is to make a case for decolonisation and decolonisation of the university curriculum, which is also a pathway to explain some of the experiences of Black students at Wits University. These theories are not homogenous in making a claim for decolonisation, however, they enable me to explain the different and sometimes contested meanings of decolonisation.

### 1.6 Structure of the Study

*Chapter 2* focuses on the methodology of the study. I explain the challenges I encountered in the field and how I negotiated these challenges. The chapter covers how I accessed the research area and participants. It explains and justifies the data collection techniques that I employed such as in-depth semi-structured interviews, the sampling methods – purposive and snowball sampling. Lastly, it addresses how and why reflexivity and active listening were used during the interview process. In *Chapter 3* I review the relevant literature for the research project. The literature is divided into four paradigms: curriculum reform, radical decolonisation, epistemic decolonisation and demythologising whiteness. Each paradigm discusses different debates on the curriculum.

*Chapter 4* focuses on the findings. It deals with ways in which the culture of the university contributes to curriculum development and the ways in which its structures alienate Black students. It discusses how the university treats Black students as disabled beings that are unable to think or learn and how it places Black students in the deficit discourse. Lastly, pedagogy and literature are discussed in relation to the culture of the university and the marginality of Black texts in the academy. *Chapter 5* explores the meanings students attach to the project of

decolonising the curriculum. These are discussed thematically as mental liberation and a quest for humanity. The chapter also draws from various theoretical resources to capture these meanings. These include Afrocentrism, Pan-Africanism, and Modernity/Decoloniality. *Chapter 6*, the concluding chapter, summarises the arguments that have been presented throughout the thesis.

# Chapter 2: Methodology

## 2.1 Access to the University of the Witwatersrand

It is important to note that I share various ties with the research participants for this study which include being friends and Fallists at the university. This strong sense of community and comradeship between the research participants and me meant that mutual trust and respect helped when setting up interviews. It was not difficult to get access to the university and to the participants because I am a student at the university and I am part of the national community of fallists. The challenges I faced when setting up interviews were circumstantial, not about reluctance on the part of the participants.

I became a fallist in 2015 when the Wits Fees Must Fall (Wits FMF) protest erupted in October that year. I saw this as a just call that questions the commodification of rights, particularly the right to education in this instance. As the protest matured, it went beyond fees and started to raise questions around curriculum in relation to decolonisation. These questions encouraged me to stay in the movement and changed my participation in the movement. Generally, everyone in the Fees Must Fall Movement was a protester and was involved in various forms of protests. I became more involved in the planning of various protest methods, in leading some of the protest action in specific spaces and in the discussions around campus. These discussions focused on the question of decolonisation and the curriculum. This was a platform for me to finally speak about my frustrations regarding the university's culture and the anti-Black curriculum. It was during this time that I built strong ties and mutual respect with the participants interviewed in this research.

I have been a student at Wits University since 2015, when I started my honours degree at the Department of Sociology. Even though I completed my undergraduate studies at a different university, I had an opportunity to experience the curriculum provided for Wits University undergraduate students through tutoring all levels of undergraduate studies in sociology. This opportunity made me realise that the undergraduate sociology curriculum is similar across different universities. My experiences of this curriculum would not have differed much had I

done my undergraduate studies at Wits University. Generally, I experienced the sociology curriculum at both my *alma mater* and at Wits University as an instrument to entrench the white/colonial cultural hegemony and the universality of white Western thought. The curriculum was always repulsive to me because I could not find myself or a representation of myself in it. As a result I could not make sense of my existence a Black man. I could only hope to find myself somewhere in the white man's logic but that depended on how much of myself I had to negate to fit into this phantom world that is continuously rejecting me. I cannot comment much about the Political Studies curriculum; as a result, I largely rely on the responses of the students I have interviewed for this research project.

First year students whom I tutored in sociology kept on disputing Durkheim's claim that mechanical solidarity (rural societies) is characterised by competition because people are competing for the same goods. They often share from their lived experiences in the rural areas of South Africa and argue that there is more harmony and interdependence in the rural areas than in the city. I closely relate to the arguments they are making because I also come from the rural areas. The questions and frustrations they are posing actually question the universality of European thought but because of power relations in the academy, students in undergraduate studies are not allowed to offer such critiques and they will have to adhere to what the theory is prescribing even though their experience tells them otherwise. When you have to pretend that your existence is not meaningful and that it is something you can just ignore so that you can get the marks to pass the course, this does not offer a positive experience of the curriculum.

It was in postgraduate studies where I finally found space to actually ask questions around Black existentialism and modes of existence. My experience of the curriculum was starting to change, but it was only two modules that affected my experience positively. However, because the culture of this university is still white and anti-Black it made it difficult for such modules to contribute significantly in shaping my experiences towards the curriculum positively. Conventional and dominant forms of pedagogy and epistemology make it difficult to have a positive experience of the curriculum.

I started arranging interviews a few days before the start of the 2016 Fees Must Fall (FMF). Almost all participants are active members of Wits FMF and they were active during the protest. Some agreed to have interviews with me while the majority were adamant on putting a halt to all academic programmes. Some of the interviews that were scheduled during the protest were disturbed by the lack of venues to conduct the interviews because the Wits University Senior Executive Team decided to close all academic buildings. After the FMF protest, most participants were busy with the last assignment submissions for the semester and examinations. This made it difficult to meet. Moreover, some of the participants were busy with their research projects and were sometimes unavailable for interviews. Despite all these challenges the participants were willing to fully participate in the research process.

## 2.2 Qualitative Design

This is a qualitative study. Stangor defines qualitative research method as "a descriptive research that is focused on observing and describing events as they occur, with the goal of capturing all of the everyday behaviour and with the hope of discovering and understanding the phenomena that might have been missed if only more cursory examination had been used" (2011:15). The purpose of my study is not to subject data to statistical analysis, but to access complex social phenomena by collecting rich data, by locating participants in their local setting and by documenting their day-to-day experiences of life in the academy. According to Janesick, "qualitative research focuses on getting rich and complex subjective experiences of participants in their day-to-day life experiences" (2002:382). This method has helped me to tap into these experiences so that I can elicit the deep complex meanings students attach to the project of decolonisation.

Qualitative research is a challenge, particularly with regard to access to sensitive matters. This requires that the researcher builds relationships, trust, rapport and authentic communication patterns with participants (Janesick, 1994). On the other hand, Janesick (1994) argues that qualitative research design has been criticised for lack of generalisability, the difficulty of establishing validity and reliability. However, for Janesick (1994) validity can be established by allowing other researchers to read your field notes and interview transcripts. Moreover, Janesick

(1994) argues that psychometric language and the trinity of validity, generalisability, and reliability need to be questioned. She further argues that such language needs to be replaced by a language that more accurately captures the complexity and the texture of a qualitative research (1994:49-50).

## 2.3 Sampling and Participants

Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003:77) cite (Burgess, 1982, 1984) to argue that sampling is a general feature of social enquiry whether qualitative or quantitative in form. Furthermore, Ritchie et al (2003:77) posit that even if a study involves very small populations or single case studies, decisions still need to be made about people, settings, or actions. "Sampling involves the selection of a portion of the finite population that is studied" (Battaglia, 2008:523). According to Stangor (2011), there are two types of sampling method known as probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Battaglia argues that "nonprobability sampling does not attempt to select a random sample from the population of interest rather; subjective methods are used to decide which elements are included in the sample" (2008:523). For Ritchie, Lewis and Elam "probability sampling is generally held to be the most rigorous approach to sampling for statistical research but is largely inappropriate for qualitative research" (2003:78).

I used non-probability sampling which according to Bryman (2012) is an umbrella term that captures all forms of sampling that are not conducted according to the principle of probability sampling and they are known as availability/accidental sampling, quota, purposive and snowball sampling. I intended to use these three sampling methods. However, I could not do quota sampling because the number of students that were interested in decolonising the curriculum could not be proportionally represented according to the different postgraduate levels. I used both snowball and purposive sampling. Bryman argues, "snowball sampling is a method in which the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the study and then uses these people to establish contact with others" (2012:424). Snowball sampling facilitated access to participants particularly in the Political Studies department and amongst doctoral students in the Department of Sociology. Furthermore, Bryman (2012) asserts that purposive sampling is a selection of participants for research because they have certain

characteristics that can help the case of the researcher. For the purposes of this study this sampling method facilitated my selection of participants based on the fact that they actively advocate for decolonising the curriculum.

Initially, I intended to sample twenty (20) postgraduate students in the Sociology and Political Studies departments from Wits University. However, I only managed to get fifteen (15) students because not every student was interested in decolonising the curriculum. Moreover, three of the students are currently pursuing their studies in the Department of African Literature. They had recently moved to this department from the Political Studies department. One of the students was part of the authors of the Transformation Memorandum that was handed to the Political Studies department in 2014. This document was part of the reason why I chose the Political Studies department students to be part of my research project. The other two students were vocal around curriculum issues in the Political Studies department before they moved to the department of African Literature. I was also curious about the reasons why these students decided to abandon the Political Studies department and migrate to the department of African Literature. These matters will further be explored in following chapters.

The students in the Political Studies department submitted a memorandum of demands to the department in 2014. This process was sparked by the fact that there was not a single Black academic in the department. By Black the students meant those who were historically and politically defined as Black people by the colour of their skin. As reported in the memorandum, the students want the department's academic staff to be representative of the country's population demographic in relation to race and gender. As argued in the memorandum, this representation will create a platform for transformation. From the language of the Transformation Memorandum it is clear that at this stage, students were more concerned with transformation rather than decolonisation. The memorandum postulates that transformation is important for two reasons: representation and diversity.

It warns that "this type of representation must not be mistaken for a form of window dressing, where the physical change can be seen on the face of the department, but the internal structure remains the same (Transformation Memorandum, 2014:08). Representation as recorded in the

memorandum brings into question the issue of the university's culture, which will be further explored in chapter 4. They further argue that the Political Studies department tends to blame Black scholars for their shortage and absence in the academy. They contend that the department claims that the lack of Black scholars is caused by the lack of interest among Black professionals in academia because they are chasing better salaries in the private sector. This argument labels Black professionals as people who are merely after monetary incentives rather than people who are interested in knowledge production. Instead of taking responsibility, the department places the burden on Black scholars or professionals for their lack of transformation. This argument further reveals the toxic anti-Black culture at Wits University, one that seeks to violate and reject Black people while at the same time it blames Black people for these violations.

In this memorandum diversity means the plurality of thought within the Political Studies department. This is a fight to include subjugated knowledges that have found expression elsewhere in the world. Diversity here questions the Westernisation of universities masquerading as universality of knowledge or internationalisation of institutions of knowledge production. This argument is consistent with the argument made later in chapter 5, that the solution lies in Moving the Centre/Pluriversity. These concepts are engaged more deeply in the aforementioned chapter.

In response to the grievances presented in the Transformation Memorandum one of the lecturers in the Political Studies department introduced a course focusing on the genealogies of Fanon. This was a positive response from the department in an attempt to diversify scholarship, however some of the students felt that this attempt was not necessarily positive for everyone. They offered critiques of the manner in which the course was structured and offered with regards to gender and sexuality. They raised questions about epistemology and pedagogy and about how these practices facilitate inclusion and exclusion. The views of the students that were interviewed are explored in chapter 4.

Moreover, the memorandum argues for a more transparent process for appointing academic staff in the department. It was proposed that students must be represented during the appointment of academic staff. The department responded to this call by asking students to send representatives from undergraduate to postgraduate level in appointment meetings of academic stuff. During the

writing of this research report the Political Studies department had made two appointments of Black academics. I note that there are some positive responses to the demands of students even though for them these were not sufficient.

## 2.4 Data Collection Techniques

Collecting data is a crucial part of research and the selection of appropriate methods for data collection informs this process. I planned to use three such methods namely, in-depth interviews, curriculum design workshops, and focus group discussions but I only managed to conduct research interviews. The aim was to use the interviews as the guiding principle for the selection of participants for the curriculum design workshop and focus group discussions. As I was conducting interviews I realised that for me to adequately utilise the curriculum design workshop I would need to establish a reading group for some time prior to the workshop. This would have helped me and the participants to adequately prepare for the workshop so that we could have time to work through elements of the curriculum other than the content. Due to time constraints I did not conduct the curriculum design workshop. Moreover, by the time I completed my interviews most of my participants had already left the campus and were tied up with other commitments. As a result, I could not conduct the focus group discussions.

## 2.5 In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

I was able to schedule seventeen (17) interviews from the intended twenty (20), but could only conduct fifteen (15) of the interviews. The other two interviews were rescheduled but due to time constraints the interviews could not take place. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews, mainly because I wanted to create a space for participants to respond as freely as possible and to have the opportunity to guide and facilitate the conversation. I designed the questions to allow participants to respond to the question being asked and to narrate their life stories in the academy. For ethical reasons I use pseudonyms to protect interviewees' identities. In some instances, I did not follow the interview schedule as a rigid guideline because some participants raised matters that needed follow-up questions. Moreover, other participants were able to respond to questions in the interview while conversing about other questions.

The interviews started at a very exciting, but also a very emotional time. It was during the FMF protest. As a fallist, it was exciting to conduct the interviews with fellow-protestors at the picket line. It was also an interesting change of roles from protesting together to being the interviewer and interviewee. The processes involved a dynamic change of power relations.

During my third interview, I could hear the songs sung by fellow comrades from a distance. This was a powerful experience. When we heard the fallists sing I pointed in the direction I thought the music was coming from and the interviewee sighed and touched her chest. We paused to appreciate the efforts of fellow fallists as they continued with the struggle for a 'free decolonised education'. This moment reminded me that the struggle for 'free decolonised education' is an emotional and personal journey with deep complex meanings that cannot always be expressed in words. I conducted most of the interviews in the sociology postgraduate room and the tutors' room. For the sociology students, the environment was more welcoming and familiar and they kept referring to the room as a space that gives them a sense of belonging:

> **Lerato:** … the one upstairs here, even though we hardly go there now, but every time when I go there we usually see the people and 'ohhh I haven't seen you like in a long time, it's good to see you'. It's those people that… you forget about… and when you see them… why am I not seeing these people every day?... I would say that the postgraduate room **(Interview with Lerato: 27 September 2016).**
>
> **Interviewer:** Which spaces in the university give you a sense of belonging?
>
> **Bongani:** I would say they are very few …the postgraduate society and …this room [sociology postgraduate office] that we are in... the mere fact that… since last year when I came here this is where I met my fellow Africans… brothers and sisters with similar line[s] of thinking where we can talk about these issues. Yah so this is one space that I can really say I am really comfortable in, let me say a sense of belonging where I really feel I belong, there is where I made friends. **(Interview with Bongani: 28 September 2016).**

I facilitated two interviews in the Political Studies postgraduate room. The two students in this department expressed similar views about a sense of belonging as those in sociology. The two groups of students referred to both the sociology and political studies postgraduate rooms as spaces that give them a sense of belonging.

> **Sefako**: …I think it's wherever in the university space itself, wherever I get to engage ideas… Black Thought [*a reading group made up of a few Black students who engage with different scholarly texts especially those written by Black people across the globe*] is one of the spaces… the political community that I hang around with in some of the spaces. So there's the political community, there's the intellectual community, so these are the different spaces that you would say… nurture you as a person. They are drawn by common cause these communities, there are different groups and there's yah that which draw[s] us together as Black people… it cuts across from fluid spaces which can be created anywhere and fixed spaces which can be… the office… those are the spaces that I would say I get to hang around, that are burnt by the same question that drive me, that are driven by the same passion **(Interview with Sefako: 23 November 2016).**

> **Duminsani:** Funny enough, the space is not in the classroom… it is outside the classroom with my own community, with my own friends. We have made this place political studies postgraduate room) our home, in whatever way, how we chill, how we conduct intellectual discussions and stuff like that. The way… as a community… we have lived here in this place… we have done it, we have done it, now it's, let us transpose it to different departments and stuff like that. You know it's messy. It's a long process… I am not even trying to simplify this thing, but I am calling it home. I have the audacity to call it home because already we have carved this space for ourselves to, to live in this place comfortably. You know what I am saying. I am here, I can stay here for like five days and not go home and just do my work and do extra-curricular activities *uya bona*. It's a home **(Interview with Dumisani: 14 December 2016).**

Only two of the interviews were not done in these postgraduate rooms. One was held at the Library Lawns in the late afternoon. This was a very quiet time on campus, the first week of December 2016, most of the students had finished writing exams and many had left campus. The interviewee asked for the interview to be held at the lawns because at the time she felt that she spent too much time inside classroom walls and needed to be in a friendly and open environment. Sitting there facilitating the interview, which unfolded as a natural conversation

was an exhilarating experience. It was amazing how a space that we used to assemble during the FMF protest and a space that was used by the police to tear gas us and shoot us with rubber bullets was now turned into a research field, a space for knowledge production and a space for reflection on various forms of epistemologies and curriculum in general. I tried by all means to interview the participants where they were most comfortable.

An interesting dynamic was interviewing PhD students. This process was filled with contradictory emotions. I was nervous and excited; nervous because I felt that I am interviewing experienced researchers and academics, and I might just fall short as a new researcher going through the ranks of academia. On the other hand, it was exciting because it is just an amazing scholarly experience to interview those who have been in the academy longer than you and have been engaging the questions of knowledge production.

Lewis and Jane argue that "Interviews provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of each person's personal perspective, for an in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomenon is located, and for very detailed subject coverage" (2003:37). Furthermore, they also argue that in-depth interviews are the "only way to collect data where it is important to set the perspectives heard within the context of personal history or experience; where delicate or complex issues need to be explored at a detailed level, or where it is important to relate different issues to individual personal circumstances" (2003:58). Louw, Todd and Jimakorn argue that "the value of semi-structured interviews lies in the flexibility to respond to the interviewee's specific responses, thus deepening understanding and enriching the data" (2011:71). Using in-depth semi-structured interviews, I was able to illicit different experiences of the participants in the academy and how the academy shaped these experiences. Moreover, I was also able to extract how these experiences have shaped their understandings of decolonisation and decolonising the curriculum. I was also able to unearth the contested meanings that the participants attach to the project of decolonisation. The interviews also managed to raise important issues about the university culture and how it alienates Black students.

I facilitated all my interviews in English. It was the most convenient language for both the researcher and the respondents. Furthermore, English is the only language of instruction at Wits

University, so the respondents were more comfortable in expressing themselves in English. I did ask them to express themselves in any South African language even in the middle of the interview. All the interviews were recorded and I did not have difficulty obtaining consensus to record the interviews. Furthermore, I gradually transcribed the interviews so that I could have easy access to them during the analysis stage. I constantly took notes during the and after interviews. I went through the notes to sift out possible themes and also to look for links between the interviews.

Lastly, it was challenging to conduct this research because I am amongst the people who have been calling for a decolonised curriculum. I constantly had to reflect on what the respondents were telling me and my views on decolonisation so that I did not confuse what I was told with what I wanted to hear. I continuously had to reflect on my own biases during the research process, and also listening to the interviews given by other students to various media platforms during the FMF protest on decolonisation. I had to ensure that these interviews did not influence the outcome of my study because none of my participants gave interviews to these news stations.

## 2.6 Reflexivity

According to Berger (2015), reflexivity has been increasingly recognised as a crucial strategy in the process of generating knowledge by means of qualitative research. Berger further argues that "questions about reflexivity are part of a broader debate about ontological, epistemological and axiological components of the self, inter-subjectivity and the colonisation of knowledge" (2015:220). Berger (2015:220) citing (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Pillow, 2003; Stronach et al., 2007) posits that "reflexivity is commonly viewed as the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome". In a nutshell, reflexivity means that the researcher turns the lens towards the self and takes responsibility for the situation which may have an effect on the setting and people being studied and ultimately influence the outcome of the research process and research

outcome (Berger, 2015). Reflexivity has been a very important aspect of this research process. Throughout the research process, I continuously had to reflect on my different social positions as well as my particular relationship with the participant. According to Berger "relevant researcher's positioning includes personal characteristics, such as gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, personal experiences, beliefs, biases, preferences, theoretical, political and ideological stances, and emotional responses to participant" (2015:220).

Notably, gender was one of the most important characteristics that I had to continuously reflect on considering that there has been a heightened awareness of gender-based harm and the power relations that exist between men and women. It was challenging sometimes to have interviews with women participants in an enclosed space. This was associated with fear of making the participants uncomfortable in any manner, particularly in any sexual manner. At times I had to view myself as a man rather a researcher and acknowledge the violent history that exists between men and women with a bias to sexual harm perpetrated by men on women. Mauthner and Doucet argue that feminists have been involved in heated debates about the "extent to which similarities or differences between researcher and researched in characteristics such as gender, race, class and sexuality influence the nature and structure of research relationships" (2003:5). This was not a matter I could overlook because gender has also taken centre stage in debates about pedagogy and epistemology and I had to ensure that the space I created during the interviews did not suppress the voice and ideas of women. For example, as argued by some of my participants, women have been marginalised in the academy. Moreover, I had to make sure that the space is safe to an extent that women do not feel that they cannot speak freely on issues of gender and the culture of academia. Mauthner and Doucet emphasise that "critical reflections on the inevitability of power differentials within the various stages of research have superseded earlier emphases on reciprocity and the implicit demands on the researcher to equalise these power relations" (2003:5).

Despite all these challenges I took comfort in that the participants were willing to have the interviews with me in enclosed spaces and they engaged freely with the questions. It must also be noted that the participants did not at any point try to rush the interview process and in some instances we went over the one hour that was scheduled for an interview. The patience of the

participants put me at ease and gave me confidence that the space that was created during the interview process was safe for them to engage on any matter. One could, therefore, argue that this was made possible because there is some level of trust between the researcher and the participants. For Berger (2015) that the idea of reflexivity challenges the view of knowledge production as independent of the researcher producing it and of knowledge as objective.

As a researcher, I shared multiple relations with the participants, relations I could not take for granted in the research process. Interviewing friends and comrades has its challenges. I had to assume different roles and shift from one role to another sometimes within a matter of minutes without compromising the research process. In some instances, during the interview process, participants would share their experiences in the academy, a moment that made me realise that experiences are not universal even though some experiences were similar. I constantly had to be aware of my position as a researcher and as a friend or comrade. This process finds expression in Berger's writings "researchers need to increasingly focus on self-knowledge and sensitivity; better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge; carefully self-monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences in their research; and maintain the balance between the personal and the universal (2015:220). To transcend all these identities was one of the most challenging moments of the research process. At times, during the interview, I had to imagine the experiences shared by participants during the interview because some of these experiences happened during the same time and spaces I shared with the participants and it was interesting to hear how fellow colleagues experienced those moments.

The earlier interviews with participants were also used as guidance to illicit some of the emerging themes. For example, in my third interview, the interviewee presented Blackness as a disability in the academy, meaning that Black students are treated as people who do not have the ability to know and think. A similar remark was made in the later interviews by another participant. I used the previous interview as a guiding tool to help me establish whether the participants meant the same or similar thing. Moreover, the seventh (7th) interview raised the issue of gender and pedagogy which became a recurring theme in the interviews that followed. A similar method as mentioned above was used to illicit meanings. On the other hand, the later interviews were used as a tool to reflect back on the earlier interviews to extract the linking

themes and similar meanings. The sixth (6th) interview explicitly raised the issues of culture in the university, a matter that was subtly present in the previous interviews. As a result, I had to reflect back on the earlier interviews and interviews immediately after the interview and go through my notes to extract the hidden issues of culture. This process shows that reflexivity is an iterative rather than a linear process.

## 2.7 Active Listening and Paraphrasing

In an attempt to ensure that I understood the interviewee I paraphrased some of the responses. For me to adequately perform paraphrasing I had to listen attentively, a process described as active listening. Louw, Todd and Jimakorn posit that active listening can be best described as "involved listening with a purpose" (2011:72). The importance of active listening is emphasised by Louw, Todd and Jimakorn (2011) because they argue that for the researcher, successfully seizing opportunities that arise unexpectedly during the interview, and encouraging the interviewee to expand, explore and reflect can be a daunting undertaking. One crucial skill in achieving the goals of a semi-structured interview is that of active listening. On the other hand paraphrasing, in essence, is providing the interviewee with a mirror to examine the message, expand on it, correct it and reflect on its implication (Louw, Todd and Jimakorn, 2011). Following Louw, Todd and Jimakorn (2011) active listening and paraphrasing are crucial aspects of semi-structured interviews because they argue that during the interview process of semi-structured interviews the researcher is looking for any opportunity to expand or explore the interviewee's responses as they come up. However, they also argue that follow-up questions can be counterproductive; therefore, the interviewer needs to respond to these responses thoughtfully. Active listening and paraphrasing were cornerstones during the interview process. I used them to illicit hidden meanings in the interviewee's responses and also to confirm certain meanings I picked up with the interviewee:

> **Interviewer:** If I understand you correctly the course, Social Transitions, introduced you to the nuances of decolonization? [Are you saying] … people usually think if you are in a township you are exposed to decolonization of knowledge? (exactly: Karabo) and then it happens that you are

not (exactly, exactly, that's what I could not understand: Karabo) (**Interview with Karabo: 28 September 2016)**.

This also gave the interviewee an opportunity to correct me when I misinterpreted a response:

> **Interviewer:** … when you said the complaints of the Black students were ignored by… on the brutality of the police and that he attended to white students' problems…when you talk about Judith Butler's conception of ungrievable lives…?
>
> **Omo Dudu:** I mean she came here, Judith Butler, for some ISCR thing with Wendy Brown and …she tried to use the conceptualisation of grievable and ungrievable lives to try and explain Black Lives Matter… this was her point… that white policemen can kill Black men because their lives aren't grievable and what does it mean to have ungrievable lives… that you don't have… a life to begin with right? And so she tries to explain how, if Black lives are ungrievable lives … they are lives that can be sacrificed because there is no consequence right, whereas with white lives there will be consequences right and there has to be grief because that life was a full life. But I have a problem with that conceptualisation even when she applies it to Black Lives Matter and with the Black people in South Africa because when she says a white policeman can kill a Black man… because the world won't grieve, what she means is the white world won't grieve. White people won't care but Black people will grieve. His family will grieve, his community will grieve that's why there's a protest and there's riots and people who stay up all night **(Interview with Omo Dudu:24 November 2016).**

This gave me a deeper understanding of the meaning of this response. It also made me realise that in as much as the complaints of Black students were ignored by the university executive they were acknowledged by Black students and staff. As argued by Louw, Todd and Jimakorn "In general, active listening aims to deepen the interviewer's understanding of the speakers' preoccupations and interests by creating empathy and making the speaker feel well listened to" (2011:72). Moreover, Louw, Todd and Jimakorn (2011) vehemently argue that paraphrasing helps the interviewer to demonstrate to the interviewee what message has been received thus giving the interviewee an opportunity to either confirm or correct the message.

Creating a safe space for participants was of utmost importance. Moreover, it is also important to create a space where the interviewee feels valued and listened to. This space was created through

the interchangeable use of active listening and paraphrasing. As argued by Louw, Todd and Jimakorn that paraphrasing is the cornerstone of active listening's endeavour to create an 'understanding response' and is thus a key to the successful use of the technique" (2011:72). It should also be noted that to successfully complete the task of active listening and paraphrasing, the researcher has to be able to make effective use of open-ended and closed questions.

## 2.8 Data Analysis

Mauthner and Doucet argue that "most methods continue to be presented as a series of neutral, mechanical and decontextualized procedures that are applied to the data and that take place in a social vacuum" (1998:122). Moreover, they also emphasise by citing (Mason, 1996) that data analysis is described as "a range of techniques for sorting, organising and indexing qualitative data". For Mauthner and Doucet, (1998) the positivistic model of the absent or neutral researcher is reinforced by computer aided programs for qualitative data analysis as by the use of technology to confer scientific objectivity onto a subjective and interpretive process. This project involves the analysis of the subjective experiences of students from the Political Studies and Sociology departments at Wits University. Therefore, the analysis of these experiences is not premised on the positivistic approach to social science and objective reality of the students being studied. My analysis of the data was not a linear process. It involved a back and forth process during and after the interviews through reflexivity in an attempt to illicit emerging themes from the interviews. And, it involved listening, pausing, and re-playing during the transcription of the interviews and during the writing of the results.

### 2.8.1 Reflexivity as Data Analysis

According to Mauthner and Doucet (1998), reflexivity is crucial throughout all phases of the research process, including the formulation of a research question, collection and analysis of data, and drawing conclusions. Furthermore, Berger (2015) argues that reflexivity frees researchers to handle and present the data and consider the complex meanings that have contributed to the understanding social phenomena as presented by participants in the process of knowledge production. This practice helped me to solicit emerging themes from different

interviewees during the interview process and has also helped in guiding and developing follow-up questions. Moreover, reflexivity has also helped me revisit the interviews through memory when I was involved in conversations about decolonisation and about the culture and nature of the university. This process helped me note down concepts as they emerged from the conversations and compare these with my notes soon after the interview.

According to Mauthner and Doucet (1998) there is recognition in social science that the interpretation of data is a reflexive exercise through which meanings are made rather than found, thus one cannot separate the process of data analysis from reflexivity and that meanings are elicited from the data through analysis rather than being found in the data. However, Mauthner and Doucet further argue that "reflexivity has not been translated into data analysis practice in terms of the difficulties, practicalities and methods of doing it. Instead, there is an assumption built into many data analysis methods that the researcher, the method and the data are separate entities rather than reflexively interdependent and interconnected" (1998:2). Mauthner and Doucet (1998) also encourage researchers to reflect on their interpretations and that it is important to remember that the validity of the researcher's interpretation relies on being able to demonstrate the ways in which these interpretations were arrived at.

### 2.8.2 Thematic Analysis

In the process of thematic analysis, I used two forms of coding, namely open coding and selective coding. I started with open coding, a process which is defined by Neuman (2014) as the first pass through the collected data where a researcher identifies concepts and themes and assigns codes to the analysed data. This process also involves reading various kinds of literature, which helps with categorising the data. I started with open coding deliberately so that I could map out the broader themes and concepts that emerged from the interviews and form categories. After the open-ended coding I opted for selective coding. Selective coding as described by Neuman (2014) involves scanning data and using central themes and concepts which have emerged in the earlier stages of analysis. This is a process where themes and concepts are clear and the researcher goes through the data to illicit evidence that supports the themes and concepts. Here I explicitly selected specific segments of text from the interviews so that I could support

and solidify the themes and concepts that I had identified. This was done through listening to the interviews by pausing and playing and reflecting on the data. This process according to Neuman (2015) happens after the data has been collected in full.

## 2.9 Ethical Considerations

According to Neuman (2014) in social science, ethics act as guiding principles to assist researchers through a series of concerns, dilemmas and conflicts that arise through the process of conducting research. Moreover, Mauthner and Doucet argue that "reflexivity helps maintain the ethics of the relationship between researcher and research by 'decolonizing' the discourse of the 'other' and securing that while interpretation of findings is always done through the eyes and cultural standards of the researcher, the effects of the latter on the research process is monitored" (1998:221). This study involved a variety of ethical issues that I needed to take cognisance of, particularly the identities of participants, spaces and institutions, and gendered power relations. Also noting that the participants are students who are questioning the nature of knowledge production in the academy, it was of utmost importance that I protect the identities of these students because I did not want them to face any form of victimisation from the university. It was also of great importance to ensure that the women participants were not harmed or silenced in any way by me during the research process.

To address the problem of ethics and to make sure that no participant suffers from any psychological, physical, financial or any form of harm I addressed a variety issues. Firstly, I obtained informed consent through informing all the participants concerning their participation in the study ensuring that they had a full understanding of the implications thereof. To protect the integrity of my participants I had to at least ensure confidentiality even if I could not guarantee anonymity. To this end I gave the participants pseudonyms. As argued earlier, I constantly had to reflect on my positionality not only as a researcher but also in a gendered way. This helped me to ensure that the women participants did not suffer from any psychological and emotional harm.

# Chapter 3: Literature Review

Decolonising the curriculum or decolonisation has been a very popular topic in recent years and it should be noted that it is not a project unique to Africa or to the so-called 'Third World'. In this chapter I review a variety of debates on decolonisation in general and on decolonising the curriculum which can be grouped into multiple paradigms which one could distinguish in the following ways: Curriculum Reform, Radical Decolonisation, Epistemic Decolonisation, and Demythologising Whiteness. Each of these paradigms contains in itself a variety of scholars and debates from various parts of the world. The recent student protests in SA reveal an energised call for a decolonised curriculum. Given the arguments presented by Go (2013) and Connell (2007) – that sociology, as we know it, is assumed to have a canon created from a colonial and imperialist standpoint which is presented as the universal knowledge on social theory in general and about sociological theory in particular - I focus on decolonising the curriculum with reference to sociological or social theory.

## 3.1 Curriculum Reform

Debates on curriculum reform include the following subsets: Afrocentrism, Social Curriculum Studies, Structural and Cultural Marxism, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and Pedagogical debates.

**Afrocentrism:** According to Asante (l980), Afrocentricity, seeks to re-locate the African person as an agent in human history as opposed to an object in the margin or the periphery. For him, decolonising the curriculum would mean to move away from education that breeds cultural and social death amongst black people, which ultimately means moving away from Eurocentrism and focusing on creating a new centrism which is Afrocentrism. A decolonised curriculum for Asante (1990) is the development of a new discipline that he called Africology, which stems from African American Studies. According to Asante (1990:7), "Africology is not merely a collection of courses on a particular subject matter differentiated from other courses because of its emphasis on African phenomena - but a scientific inquiry that is equivalent to any other. The discipline Africology focuses on a variety of issues of inquiry, namely cosmological,

epistemological, axiological, and aesthetic issues (Asante, 1990). Africology covers a number of concepts ranging from 'race, gender, culture, and history (Asante, 1990). Briefly, Africology is "the Afrocentric study of phenomena, of events and personalities related to Africans" (Asante, 1990:14).

**Social Curriculum Studies**: Another emerging view from the American debates on decolonising the curriculum is from Social Curriculum studies. Social Curriculum studies in the broadest sense, that is, the preparation of young people so that they possess the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active participation in society, has been a primary part of schooling in North America since colonial times. Merryfield and Subedi (2006) argue that if young American citizens were to be adequately educated in today's global age then social curriculum studies must go beyond European or American constructions of knowledge and also teach the experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of diverse peoples in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. These authors argue for a world-centred global education that removes the nationalistic filters that only allow students to see events, ideas, and issues through the lens of their country's national interests and government policy. Furthermore, they posit that a world-centred global education also challenges colonialist assumptions of superiority and manifest destiny. They caution against the introduction of experiences, knowledge, and perspectives from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East merely as events and places settled and visited by Europeans or white Americans as though the billions of people in these huge regions had nothing in their histories or cultures worth teaching about except as a backdrop for white-people's trade, exploration, war, or benevolence. Merryfield and Subedi (2006:287) argue that if the Eurocentric and American-centric conceptions of knowledge are consumed unchallenged this creates what they call a "colonised mind".

These Afro- and world-centric suggestions for ways to change the curriculum emerge specifically from the US context.

**Structural Marxism:** Curriculum debates do not only form part of the decolonisation project but they form part of broader economic debates. Structural Marxists such as Bowles and Gintis (1976) have argued that curriculum and education have been used as mechanisms to reproduce

the capitalist relations of the society. Furthermore, they argue that the schooling system is designed in a manner that prepares pupils as future employees. The school system resembles a company structure, in that it is hierarchical with the principal playing the role of the CEO, heads of department take the role of senior managers or the executive, the rest of the educators assume the role of managers and supervisors and the learners are the general workers in uniform (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue against the idea that education in a capitalist society is designed to improve human lives, rather they posit that its aim is to replicate the status quo. Dave Hill (2001) offers a critique on the British government's attempt to reform the teacher curriculum. He argues that "Government 'reforms' of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) are an attempt to control and 'mould' new teachers and student teachers, to prepare them for what the Government sees as the task of the economic, ideological, and cultural (re-) production of future generations of labour power, cohorts of workers, citizens" (Hill, 2001:135). The aim here is to critique the close relationship between the state and capital, one which has a huge influence on the outlook of the curriculum.

**Hidden Curriculum** – debates about the hidden relationship between curriculum, the broader society and social structure. Philip Jackson started it in his book *Life in Classrooms* published in 1968. It is mostly advocated for by cultural Marxists and is not completely divorced from the arguments made by Structural Marxists. The hidden curriculum can be defined "as the elements of socialization that take place in school, but are not part of the formal curricular content" (Margolis, Soldatenko, Acker, and Gair, (2001:6). Margolis et al. (2001) argue that the hidden curriculum is embedded in two sociological paradigms namely Functionalism and Marxism. According to Margolis et al. (2001), the Functionalist perspective focuses on how the hidden curriculum imparts certain behavioural aspects which help learners to negotiate their way in society. On the other hand, the Marxist perspective focuses on the close relationship between the structure and the nature of schools, the capitalist economy and the reproduction of a culture of capitalism. Here I will focus on the cultural reproduction of capital as argued for by Pierre Bourdieu. According to Margolis et al. (2001), Pierre Bourdieu argues that the hidden curriculum privileges the children of the middle class because the schools they attend privilege the capitalist social and cultural reproduction of ideals, thus they get equipped with the necessary skills to

negotiate their way in the capitalist economy. More debates about the hidden curriculum are expressed in the critical sociology of education as formal and informal education.

These approaches to criticising existing curricula and to curriculum change emerge mainly in Britain.

**Pedagogical Debates:** Trifonas writes about what he calls "pedagogies of difference" (2003:3). He argues that different political bodies in the academy have been advocating for forms of pedagogy that can adequately represent them and summarises four such forms. Feminist Pedagogies which seek to challenge and interrogate the construction gender bias as a means to overcome gender discrimination and prejudice. Critical Pedagogies which, according Trifonas focuses on "examining the importance of socio-political ground for difference in subjectivity to illuminate the ideological nature of human interaction and focuses on the economic distinction of class differences to address the bounds of social justice and exploitation" (2003:1). Anti-racist and Post-colonial Pedagogies which focus on "acknowledging the uniqueness of racial difference as a heterogeneous marker of identity that gives a powerful voice to the ethnic specificity in the face of discrimination against minorities and cultural hegemonies" (Trifonas, 2003:1). And lastly, Gay and Lesbian Pedagogies which focus on "recognising the differences in sexuality and sexual orientation to situate the essence of subjectivity at the psychic and somatic core of human desire" (Trifonas, 2003:1). For Trifonas (2003) difference is the central tenet of these forms of pedagogy and is used to emphasize the importance of different positions of power in learning stretching from race to gender and sexuality.

There are many other forms of pedagogy that have been richly written about, but what strikes me the most is the Decolonising Pedagogy. According to Tejeda, Espinoza and Gutierrez (2003) a decolonising pedagogy is formed by an anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, antiracist, antisexist and anti-homophobic dynamic world view and a set of values that aims to address issues of social justice. Drawing from Tejeda et al. (2003) it could be argued that a decolonising pedagogy is a combination of the pedagogies of difference. What Tejeda et al. (2003) calls internal neo-colonisation/inter-colonisation influences this form of pedagogy, because the authors argue that it is a response to the dominant economic, cultural, political, judicial and education arrangements

in contemporary American society which are produced and reinforced by systems of colonial and capitalist domination. Tejeda et al. argue that inter-colonisation "is a form of colonialism in which the dominant and the subordinate populations are intermingled so that there is no longer a geographically distinct metropolis separate from the colony" (2003:12).

These debates about pedagogy emerge partly in response to the privileging of class bias in the curriculum at the expense of focusing on social difference other than but related to class.

**Indigenous Knowledge Systems** is another dimension that has sparked debate in curriculum studies. For Ogunniyi "the justification for introducing a new curriculum in any country is often based on historical, political, or socio-economic reasons" (2007:963). The South African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) policy was formalised in 2004 (Green, 2012). Following the formalisation of the (IKS) was the development of a new curriculum in 2005, the formalisation of the (IKS) meant that the formal curriculum in South Africa had to include (IKS) but this sparked a lot of controversy from various stakeholders in education (Ogunniyi, 2007). Much of the debate on curriculum and IKS centres on natural and medical sciences but for Green "such a debate is needed both in the sciences and the humanities if universities are to be able to respond to the continued marginalisation of African intellectual heritages in the region" (2012:1). According to Green (2012) the (IKS) sparked a science war in South Africa in particular between natural and traditional medicine on the matter of HIV/AIDS and antiretroviral treatment.

Curriculum 2005 propelled educators to include indigenous knowledge into the science curriculum (Ogunniyi 2007). Drawing from Ogunnyi (2007) there are two reasons for the introduction of IKS in science in South Africa. The Indigenous Knowledge Systems in South Africa "reflect the wisdom about the environment developed over the centuries by the inhabitants of South Africa, and much of this valuable wisdom believed to have been lost in the past 300 years of colonization now needs to be rediscovered and utilized to improve the quality of life of all South Africans" (Ogunniyi, 2007:936-964). For Ogunniyi (2007) Curriculum 2005 was rejected based on argumentation. Citing Van Eemeren, Grootendorst, & Kruiger (1987), Ogunniyi argues that "argumentation is a statement or constellation of statements advanced by

an individual or a group to justify or refute a claim in order to attain the approbation of an audience" (2007:966). It should be noted that indigenous knowledge systems are not unique to South Africa. In fact, Ogunniyi (2007) argues that India is the most successful country in implementing and incorporating indigenous knowledges into the curriculum. Countries such as Australia and New Zealand together with Latin America are also involved in the project of indigenising knowledge (Ogunniyi, 2007).

Australasia's decolonisation project focuses on transforming the academy through the introduction of the indigenous knowledges, a project similar to other former colonies of white settler colonisation such as South Africa. Hokowhitu (2004) argues that in 2004 New Zealand was about to undergo curriculum transformation, in part because the Mäori people have waged arguments that their current curriculum is disempowering to them and is not inclusive of their experiences. Hokowhitu (2004) further argues that creating a new curriculum will need to address the following challenges: deconstructing the historical discourse; the sharing of decision-making power with Mäori in the development of curricula; the integration of Mäori-defined *tikanga* (method) into curricula; and the decolonisation of educators as a stratum of professionals. McLaughlin and Whatman (2007) argue that Australian universities have embarked on a project of decolonising the curriculum through a project known as Embedding Indigenous Perspectives in the curriculum. However, they are sceptical about the project. They posit that the methods are not deeply entrenched to challenge white Australians about their white privilege and supremacy and that the state merely uses the project for economic reasons.

**Transformation –** decolonisation has transcended the transformation discourse. Jansen (1998) criticises the discourse for being too preoccupied with the numbers and the change in demographics of the university rather than fundamentally dealing with curriculum issues. He posits that "an impact assessment of this kind signals little of the depth, quality and sustainability of transformation given the fixation of this approach with numerical indices of performance such as 'number of African students enrolled' without inquiring, for example, about the nature of their curriculum experience within a white a university" (1998:106). Moreover, Jansen (1998) argues that the transformation discourse is not genuine, because it always gets currency when there is an institutional crisis and it is often these crises that expose the lack of transformation in

universities. He uses the 'Mamdani Affair' of UCT and the 'language crisis'at Stellenbosch University to support his claims. This *affair* happened in the 1990s yet almost twenty (20) years later we are still faced with the transformation discourse. Again, here at Wits University it is after the Political Studies postgraduate students submitted a document to their department and after the student uprising through FMF and RMF that this debate receives currency and attention. This supports Jansen's argument.

Debates about indigenous knowledge systems and transformation emerge predominantly from the global south.

### 3.2 Radical Decolonisation

This paradigm focuses on the total change of the systems, structures and the mind-set of the African. It is premised on the debate made by Mamdani that "we need to recognise that decolonisation in one sphere of life does not necessarily and automatically lead to decolonisation in other spheres" (2001: xiv). This also supports the argument of decolonising the mind, because decolonising the systems and structures does not mean that Africans will automatically rid themselves of the inferiority complex.

Decolonisation for Frantz Fanon is a complete violent change of the current system. Fanon explicitly argues, "Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder" (1963:36). Fanon (1963) further argues that decolonization is always a violent phenomenon. What Fanon really means by the use of violence in the decolonisation project is contested. Neil Roberts (2004) summarises the different debates about Fanon's meaning of violence and the different conceptions of violence. Roberts (2004) argues that Hannah Arendt misunderstood Fanon by reducing Fanon's conception of violence to physical or instrumental violence. "Instrumental violence refers to a concept in which the implementation of either wanton irrational or calculated rational violence occurs as a means to an end" (Roberts, 2004:145). For Roberts Fanon's use of violence refers to intrinsic violence which means a metaphysical violence perpetuated by an individual or a group of people, which emanates as a result of internalised oppression and means liberation, re-humanisation and

dignity" (2004:146). Roberts further argues that "the ultimate goal of this form of violence is the total change of the system and the creation of new laws" (2004:146). Intrinsic violence is not only physical but it is also psychological, as a result the oppressed can also violate the oppressor by their refusal to obey the orders and the rules of the oppressor and by refusing to be what the oppressor wants them to be. For example, the oppressed could refuse to believe that they are non-human beings who bear capacity to think or reason. Whether such refusal constitutes a violation and whether oppressed people can violate their oppressors is a matter of debate which I do not engage here.

Roberts (2004) also argues that Fanon has been criticised by feminists for his masculinist conceptions of violence which do not offer women liberation in their femininity. Roberts contends that "feminist criticisms of Fanon are right to point out the rampant masculinism in Fanon's thought, but this masculinism does not exclude Fanon from being pro-feminist or hinder his attempt at articulating a correct theory of freedom rooted in the quest for self-determination" (2004:153). For Roberts "the challenge remains applying the Fanonian theory of anti-colonial violence and freedom to both female and male anti-colonial revolutionaries without rigidly disaggregating anti-colonial revolutionaries based on gender before analysing the meaning of freedom and the actions of these revolutionaries seeking increased agency" (2004:153). Roberts (2004) makes it clear that the use of violence for the attainment of freedom, humanity and dignity is necessary. This usage of violence is not merely physical and does not need to be bloody. However, in an event where the coloniser resists the change as envisaged by the colonised, then the physical violence becomes part of the violence enacted by the colonised on the coloniser. Roberts cites Lewis Gordon to emphasize the importance of violence in anti-colonial struggles:

> "Violence is broader than bullets, knives, and stones. Violence, fundamentally, is a form of taking that which has been or will not be willingly surrendered...If the postcolonial, post-racist world is to emerge, colonizers face the problem of it emerging through the resistance and eventual submission of colonizers and racists. The tragedy of the colonial and racist situation, then, is the price that has to be paid for the emergence of such a society. If the master's dirty values are accepted as a source of liberation, then no slave can be free without getting his hands dirty. But why must the colonized be clean". Gordon cited in Roberts (2004:144).

For Fanon "at whatever level we study it—relationships between individuals, new names for sports clubs, the human composition at cocktail parties, in the police, on the directing boards of national or private banks—decolonization is "quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men" (1963:35). Furthermore, Fanon (1963) argues that at the outset all decolonization is characterised by *tabula rasa*, meaning that it is a clean start. For Fanon (1963) decolonisation is total change of the social order and its success will be proven when the whole social structure it turned upside-down. "The possibility of this change is equally experienced in the form of a terrifying future in the consciousness of another 'species' of men and women: the colonizers" (Fanon, 1963:36). "Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements, which give it historical form and content" (Fanon, 1963:36). He seeks to suggest that a decolonised world is unimaginable and can only be realised through violence because he argues "…it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding" (Fanon, 1963:36). Decolonisation can happen if those who are colonised have the desire for decolonisation (Fanon, 1963).

For Fanon and Biko decolonisation was not only the change of systems and structures but it is also about a quest for humanity and mental liberation. According to Ahluwalia and Zegeye "Biko and Fanon share a highly similar pedigree in their interests in the philosophical psychology of consciousness, their desire for a decolonising of the mind, the liberation of Africa and in the politics of nationalism and socialism for the wretched of the earth" (2001:455). Fanon ([1952]2008) argues that the inferiority complex is a psychological process that is largely inculcated through a dual process of deprivation of economic resources and the internalisation of the inferiority complex. Fanon ([1952]2008) further argues that Blacks should wage a war about their inferiority on both levels because throughout history they influence each other and liberation in one of the two and not in both the process will be incomplete. He further posits that it will be a grave mistake to assume that achieving liberation in one will automatically lead to the independence of the other. In similar vein, Biko argues that:

> "…the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. Once the latter has been so effectively manipulated and controlled by the oppressor as to make the oppressed believe that he is a liability to the white man, then there will be nothing the oppressed can do that will really scare the powerful masters" (Biko, 2004:74).

A quest for humanity is central to Biko's argument in a process of decolonisation. As argued by Biko a quest for humanity "is based on a self-examination which has ultimately led us to believe that by seeking to run away from ourselves and emulate the white man, they are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black" (2004:101). For Biko "the first people to come and relate to blacks in a human way in South Africa were the missionaries. They were in the vanguard of the colonisation movement to 'civilise and educate' the savages and introduce the Christian message to them" (2004:102). This means that decolonisation should also focus on Christianity because it was not only responsible for matters of faith but it was central in facilitating education in society. Biko urged that a "long look should also be taken at the educational system for blacks" because this is where Black children were taught to abandon Black modes of understanding and being (2004:104).

It is worth noting that Fanon and Biko are not the only ones propagating for radical forms of decolonisation. Many other thinkers, in particular the African leaders of liberation movements such as Nkrumah, Nyerere, Senghor, and Sankara to name a few also form part of the radical decolonisation tradition. Many of the radical decolonisation thinkers come from the Pan-Africanist, Negritude, and Marxist school of thoughts. The reason I focus more on Fanon and Biko is that most of the other radical decolonisation thinkers were more concerned with economic liberation as compared to Fanon and Biko who emphasises psycho-social liberation.

### 3.3 Epistemic Decolonisation

This paradigm involves mainly epistemic arguments about decolonising social or sociological theory. This paradigm involves a variety of schools of thought such a Pan-Africanism, Modernity/Decoloniality research group, and Postcolonial Studies. This research project is mainly influenced by this particular paradigm and by the various calls for decolonising the curriculum in the Global South stretching between Asia, Latin America, and Africa. With the

recent outbreak of student protests, starting with the Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement, then Fees Must Fall and as a participant in the protest I came to realise that there is an energised call for a decolonised curriculum in universities amongst the student community in South Africa. This call is often appropriated by academic staff who feel the need to tell the students what this means rather than listening to students as they articulate the meanings they attach to this call. This heightened call for decolonisation comes at a time which Achille Mbembe calls 'a negative moment' (Mbembe, 2015). For Mbembe a "negative moment is a moment when new antagonisms emerge while old ones remain unresolved" (2015:1). My focus on decolonising the curriculum is on sociological theory. This comes after my realisation – as written by Go (2013) and Connell (2007) – that sociology, as we know it, is assumed to have a canon created from a colonial and imperialist standpoint. This canon claims to be the universal knowledge on social theory.

The creation of the sociological canon started with the USA after World War II, when Talcott Parsons and Charles Mills laid the foundation for what came to be known as a classical sociology and classical thinkers in sociology (Connell, 2007:22-23). According to Connell (2007:28) the canonical establishment of sociology also created, the basis for the 'general theory', which actually means a theory that is created at a particular place and time can be applied beyond the local boundaries and will work everywhere it is applied. A major concern for Connell is that 'general theory' is produced in the metropole and is applied as it is in the colony or periphery. In an attempt to deal with the concern Connell asks a question, does it matter that 'general theory' is produced from the metropole? For Connell (2007), sociological knowledge would say 'yes' it does matter because general theory works with four characteristics: first, the claim of universality, the idea that every society is knowable and that it is knowable in the same way. Second, reading from the centre: the belief that solutions for the world come from the corrections of Western theories by the West. Third, gestures of exclusion: the practice of excluding literature and theories from the periphery by writers of the metropole. Fourth, grand erasure: the tendency of writing about the experiences of the world without writing about the experiences of the colonised.

Go (2013) argues that sociology has an imperialist standpoint because of its tendency to supress the agency of the postcolonial people and its conformity to analytic bifurcations. Here Go (2013) argues that sociology has not attempted to include in its theories the postcolonial thinkers or theories from Black, Asian, and Latin American scholars. Moreover, Go (2013:26) argues that sociology's understanding of agency is limited to the conception of the Western way of what constitutes agency and that it has continued to theorise the colony as a separate creation from the metropole, people's experiences as separate from their environment. For Go (2013) one of the ways to decolonise sociology is to include postcolonial theory as part of sociological theories, to reconsider agency, to overcome sociology's analytic bifurcations and recognise sociology's imperialist standpoint. What this means for sociology is not the removal of the Western theories in sociology but to bring these theories in conversation with postcolonial theory.

Alatas (2000) uses the concept of 'intellectual imperialism' to describe a colonised mind. For him "[i]ntellectual imperialism is the domination of one people by another in their world of thinking" (2000:24). Alatas conceptualised different forms of intellectual imperialism. The former colonies are treated as reserves of raw data used to produce finished products (books, journals, and articles) to be sold in the former colonies. Given the assumption that the best knowledge resides in the west, the colonised need to be tutored in this knowledge. The Global South is expected to conform to theories and methods of analysis of the west without question and develop an interest in topics that interest the west. These forms of intellectual imperialism imply a secondary role for the formerly colonised in knowledge production. The most valuable journals and theories are considered to be in the West and whatever knowledge production happens in the Global South comes secondary to that of the West. Furthermore, the West regards itself as holding the burden to develop science in the former colonies because they claim monopoly and dominance in knowledge production. For Alatas (2000) the emancipation of the mind from these shackles of intellectual imperialism is the major condition for the development of a creative and autonomous social science tradition in developing societies.

The creation of the education system as we know it in the Global South was through the destruction of knowledge systems in the South, which led to the creation of new forms of epistemology, ontology, and pedagogy (Quijano:2013). This form of education system led to

what Quijano conceptualised as "coloniality of power" (Mignolo, 2007:156). Escobar richly defines coloniality of power as "a hegemonic model of power in place since the conquest that articulates race and labour, space and peoples, according to the needs of capital and to the benefit of the white Europeans" (2007:185). Decolonisation for the coloniality/modernity scholars means taking theories of the West and the Global South bringing them in a critical conversation, refracting Western theories, to create theories through multi-versality (Escobar, 2007). Briefly, coloniality/modernity is an ongoing project, which invites other thinkers and other scholars to contribute in decolonising social theory and to offer counter theorisation of modernity (Escobar, 2007).

As noted earlier, for Bogues (2003) history plays a critical role in a decolonial project. To emphasize what he means I repeat what Bogues (2003:152) asks, namely what is the precise role of history? He uses Fanon to answer the question: "Fanon makes the point that for the colonized—and I would argue for the racially oppressed as well—there is no radical politics without history" (2003:152). This question drove his creation of a course called "Africa and the West" and his argument is that the course "organizes itself around the thinking, praxis, and political thought of Africans and the African diaspora without reducing complexities to a set of essential qualities" (Bogues, 2003:153). Furthermore, Bogues argues, a class that undergoes this course "should explore how racial, colonial, and capitalist oppression created a context and human beings who, from a liminal status, addressed a set of fundamental questions about the human condition" (2003:153). Bogues (2013) suggests that history should not be used only as a vindication but to prove that theories of history are central to the black radical tradition.

For Wa Thiong'o the questioning and challenging of Eurocentrism is not substituting one centre with the other, but it is about problematizing the idea of using one centre and generalising it as the universal reality (1993:22). He argues, "the modern world is a product of both European imperialism and of the resistance waged against it by the African, Asian, and South American peoples" (1993:22). Brandon (2010) posits that the inclusion of Black people's history of slavery and colonisation is a step towards eradicating the inferiority complex that has found a home in Black minds and that is entrenched by the white education system. Wa Thiong'o argues that decolonising the mind involves two processes: "choice of literature and the attitude to" or

"interpretation of that literature" (1986:87-88). For him decolonisation is not only the inclusion of African texts in the discourse but it is also about pedagogy across all forms of education, from basic (primary and high schools) to tertiary education (university). Following Wa Thiong'o (1986 and 1993), one can argue that decolonisation is about questioning the universality of the white English writers whose literature has been represented as the universal experience of the world. For him "decolonising the mind is a call for the rediscovery and resumption of African languages and a regenerative reconnection with the millions of revolutionary tongues in Africa and around the world over demanding liberation" (1986:108).

Similarly, for Nyoka (2013) the practice and application of sociology in South Africa by South African sociologists is characterised by white supremacy and Eurocentrism. According to Nyoka (2013) at the epistemological level, sociology as we know it cannot adequately explain the lives South Africans. He uses the structure of family, traditional healing and medicine as examples to state his case. For Nyoka (2013) the use of extended family to describe a black family is indicative of how sociology cannot comprehend or adequately represent Black people, because in Black people's culture family is used to refer to all those who bear the same surname. Furthermore, he argues that the Xhosa family structure is even more complicated, because those who share the same clan name are family even if their surname is different. For example, the people who come from *amaxesibe* will be family even if they bear different surnames. Traditional healers have been conflated with witchcraft, because sociologists cannot comprehend the difference between *ubuthakathi* and *umuthi* (Nyoka 2013). Often times when people speak about *umuthi* – they refer to witchcraft while *umuthi* refers to medicine in isiZulu. In isiXhosa medicine is *iyeza* and *umthi* refers to a tree (Nyoka, 2013).

Nyoka (2013) argues that the debate between the Black Consciousness Movement and Marxist sociologists reveals that South African sociology is characterised by denialism. For Nyoka, the presentation of "Marxism as an alternative to liberalism (which was brilliantly critiqued by BC members) was itself a preservation of whiteness and an avowed refusal to be of Africa, presenting public sociology as an alternative is itself a denial of Africa as a source of knowledge" (2013:14). Moreover, Ally and Ally (2008) argue that the move from liberalism to Marxism was because the Black Consciousness attack on White liberals rendered white

oppositional politics to the apartheid regime useless. As a result, they presented Marxism as an alternative to both Black Consciousness and liberalism. Consequently, through its critique of White oppositional liberal politics Black Consciousness influenced the intellectual landscape of South African universities (Ally and Ally, 2008). The bone of contention between the White Radicals and Black Consciousness Movement was the prioritisation of class over race by the White radicals vis-à-vis Black Consciousness Movement. For Nyoka (2013) an intervention at an epistemological level is needed in order to rescue sociology from its imperialist standpoint.

For Mbembe (2006) it is not enough to focus on curriculum only when it comes to decolonisation. He emphasises that institutional symbolism is an important part of decolonising the university. He posits that "there is something not only wrong, but profoundly demeaning, when we are asked to bow in deference before the statues of those who did not consider us as human and who deployed every single means in their power to remind us of our supposed worthlessness" (2006:32). Furthermore, Mbembe (2006:31-32) adds that areas of decolonisation in the university include the "*decolonization of buildings".* For him the apartheid architecture that dominates most of our universities is not conducive to deliver a good education for a post-apartheid society. For Mbembe class rooms should be spaces where students are encouraged to develop their own knowledge and contribute to the ongoing process of knowledge production. What he calls the "*mania for assessment"* refers to the university's obsession with quantitative assessment of every function of the university. He also argues that "*methods of evaluation"* at faculty level are preoccupied with the quantification of its members' work to judge their quality and value. For Membe, these matters, as well as the commodification of education require decolonisation.

Mangcu (2016) focuses on the discourse of race to raise the point of decolonising sociology. He argues that how South Africans understand and conceptualise race is limited and negates how Black people see and understand race. Mangcu disagrees with academics who defended the decision by UCT's council in 2014 to replace the word race with disadvantaged students in UCT's affirmative action policies on admission. He contends that the sociologists who defended this decision were preoccupied with arguing that race has no biological basis. This argument was heavily criticised by Hesse (2011), he argued that biology cannot be used to explain race because

race was a political construct rather than biological decision, however, biology was used to justify a political decision. Furthermore, Mangcu (2016) argues that they also deployed the Marxist narrative to support the decision to use class and economic status as modes of analysis to make justify their support for the abandonment of race. For Mangcu (2016) this argument takes us back to the 1970's when BCM members and Rick Turner and other Marxists debated the deployment of class or race as a mode of analysis.

Mangcu (2016) draws from history to make a claim that Black people have long politically defined themselves as Black. He posits that "countries such as Sudan, which means "the blacks" in Arabic or Guinea, and "the land of the blacks" in Berber. The root word of countries such as Niger and Nigeria is *niger*, which means 'black' in Latin" (2016:46). Mangcu (2016) further argues that in Black South Africa black people have been referring to themselves as Black since the 1800s. He posits that:

> "Black authors in South Africa in the nineteenth century had racial identification in its title—as in Abantu Aba-Mnyama or Aba- Ntsundu [Black/Brown People]. The major Black newspapers were also similarly titled, as in the case of Imvo Zaba Ntsundu [Black Opinion] established by John Tengo Jabavu in 1886 or William Wellington Gqoba's essay, Ulaulo Lwabantsundu [The Administration of Black People] published in 1880" (2016:47).

### 3.4 Demythologising Whiteness

Another striking paradigm towards decolonising social theory is what Mbembe call demythologising whiteness in his unpublished paper *Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive*. This paradigm involves scholars and thinkers who question the idea of whiteness as it is presented to us. They work towards dispelling the image that often portrays whiteness, as pure, holy, and other races are barbaric. This paradigm can also be used as a critique of the above-mentioned debates especially decolonial and postcolonial way of decolonising. Moreover, the above-mentioned debates and forms of decolonisation took shape in what Mbembe (2001) calls 'Afro-radicalism and Nativism'. For Mbembe "Afro-radicalism is described as a baggage of instrumentalism and political opportunism, and nativism as a burden of metaphysics of difference" (2001:240). Scholars in this paradigm also critique the on-going practice of equating identities with geography and race.

Gilroy in his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) grapples with the project of decolonising the mind or decolonising social theory. Gilroy (1993) argues that the book is a result of an attempt to convince students that black people's experiences were part of modernity and in so doing he brings to the fore black scholars who were defending and those who were critiquing the Enlightenment project. Gilroy (1993) questions the universality of Europe, not merely to offer a corrective inclusion of blacks in the intellectual commentary, because they have been overlooked by the west. The above argument by Gilroy can be used as a critique of Afrocentricity, but the critique is not about dismissing the content of Afrocentrism. It is about problematizing the way in which Afrocentrism is introduced as well as the purpose it is meant to serve. Moreover, he does not only question the credibility of the tidy and holistic conception of modernity, but he "argues for the reversal of the relationship between the centre and the margin" (Gilroy 1993:45). Wa Thiong'o argues a similar view, he suggests a solution to the post-colonial inheritance of cultural imperialism by "moving the centre" (1993:6). By this Wa Thiong'o questions the conception of the centre and periphery and advocates for multiple centres, which are made of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The difference between Wa Thiong'o and Gilroy is that, for Gilroy there are no centres, but a fluid space called the Black Atlantic that stretches between the three geographical spaces namely Africa, United States of America, and Europe.

The writing and conceptualisation of modernity as a Eurocentric project is an attempt by the West to ignore or deliberately exclude the oppression and subjugation of Africans in the history of modernity. Gilroy further notes that the grand narratives of Euro-American progress have been centred on the enhancement of social and political freedoms (1993:44). However, this "novelty of post modernism evaporates when it is viewed in the unforgiving historical light between Europeans and those they have conquered, slaughtered and enslaved" (Gilroy 1993:44). Gilroy (1993) proposes that the history of modernity should be written from the slave perspective. Following Gilroy, McClintock argues that "imperialism emerged as a contradictory and ambiguous project, shaped as much by tensions within metropolitan policy and conflicts within colonial administrations - at best, ad hoc and opportunistic affairs - as by the varied cultures and circumstances into which colonials intruded and the conflicting responses and

resistances with which they were met" (1995:15). For McClintock a central claim of *Imperial Leather* is that "imperialism is not something that happened elsewhere - as a disagreeable fact of history external to Western identity rather, imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity" (1995:5).

McClintock is not convinced that the sanctioned binaries- colonizer-colonized, self-other, dominance-resistance, metropolis-colony, colonial-postcolonial- are adequate to the task of accounting for, let alone strategically opposing, the tenacious legacies of imperialism (1995:15). McClintock explores how the "Victorian metropolitan space became reordered as a space for the exhibition of imperial spectacle and the reinvention of race" (1995:16). In this process McClintock investigates what she calls circulating themes commodity racism and fetishism, the urban explorers the emergence of photography and the imperial exhibitions, the cult of domesticity, the invention of the idea of the idle woman, the disavowal of women's work, cross-dressing and gender ambiguity, the invention of the idea of degeneration, panoptical time and anachronistic space (1995:16). Secondly McClintock explores how "the colonies - in particular Africa how they became places for exhibiting, amongst other things, the cult of domesticity and the reinvention of patriarchy" (1995:16-17). McClintock (1995) uses sadism and masochism and the concept of Victorian women to show that slavery is an integral part of the memory of Europe and it is lived through sexual expressions of pain.

Another interesting scholar suitable for this paradigm is Susan Buck-Morss. In her paper Hegel and Haiti Buck-Morss argues that the creation of study fields such as Diaspora studies and African American studies work towards preserving the current form of knowledge production (Buck-Morss, 2000). According to Buck-Morss, such studies allow certain knowledges or counterevidence to be someone else's story and prevent such knowledges to be part of the mainstream curriculum (2000:822). Interestingly, Buck-Morss (2000) argues that these knowledges have the potential to threaten the academic disciplines that reproduce the mythologised history of the world. This argument by Buck-Morss can be used as a direct critique of Afrocentrism and the Africology curriculum in the United States. Like Gilroy, Buck-Morss is against Europe's theorisation of history that excludes the diaspora, slave labour, and slave trade as the integral part of Europe's history

## 3.5 The Overarching Picture

The classification of different forms of decolonisation of the curriculum debates is purely for analytical purposes. The paradigms discussed above are not opposed to each other but should be viewed as intricately woven with one another which shows the complexity of the decolonisation project. The curriculum debates cut across all paradigms, meaning that any change that happens in one paradigm will have a significant impact in pedagogy and curriculum as a whole. A unifying principle to all the approaches is their historical analysis. The difference in this principle is that the Epistemic Decolonisation Paradigm focuses on the history of the Global South and the Demythologising Whiteness Paradigm focuses on the history of the West. All the writers question the notion of the centre and the periphery, however the difference in this questioning is that Gilroy, McClintock and Buck-Morss argue that there is no centre and the writers in the Epistemic Decolonisation Paradigm argue for multiple centres. On the other hand, Gilroy's and Buck-Morss' critique of Afrocentrism is not a complete dismissal of Afrocentricity but a dismissal of how it is introduced and its purpose. The problem with the scholars in the aforementioned paradigms is that they want to claim mastery over a method of decolonisation. Even though the modernity/coloniality scholars offer an invitation for others to contribute to the project of decolonisation, this contribution is made towards an existing method. Therefore, in as much as they do not see their work as a canon, they seek to suggest that their method is mastery.

The literature shows empirical gaps. For the most part decolonisation is treated as an expert project through which prominent thinkers and scholars write and speak to the world on what the project should look like. Rarely has the voice of the ordinary students been considered. This approach suggests that decolonisation is imposed on the ordinary subject. Hence, this study aims to understand from students what this project means for them. The literature reviewed here also shows a variety of views with regards to decolonisation. What is more striking is how all the scholars aim to create a new world order and yet their approaches are so different. Even though this thesis is mainly about Epistemic Decolonisation as a paradigm, I seem to be lobbied more and more by the Demythologising Whiteness Paradigm. The Demythologising Whiteness paradigm broadens the scope of analysis regarding decolonisation. It does not only focus on

which knowledges are excluded but also aims at poking holes into the history of the West about the things they claim to have developed.

# Chapter 4: The Academy, Blackness and Marginality

In this chapter I explore the culture of the University of the Witwatersrand and how it affects the Black students whom I interviewed. I explore alienation, pedagogy and epistemology as themes that are central to the university culture. I problematize the university's culture as alienating to Black students because it treats Black students as beings who lack the ability to think, to know and to learn or as beings that suffer from a deficit of certain characteristics which if attained will enable Black students to fully comprehend knowledge as presented in the academy. Alienation in this regard refers to how the university culture repels Black students and forces them to abandon their identities and assimilate into what the students refer to as whiteness. I also argue that this alienation is facilitated through processes such pedagogy, ontology and epistemology. Lastly, I conclude that this form alienation has forced Black students to create temporary and fluid spaces of belonging as a coping mechanism. However, these spaces are not necessarily always comforting for some Black students, particularly Black women and queer Black people.

## 4.1 University Culture and Alienation

Biko writes: "whenever colonisation sets in with its dominant culture it devours the native culture and leaves behind a bastardised culture that can only thrive at the rate and pace allowed by the dominant culture" (2004:51). The feeling of alienation produced by the legacy of these conditions and manifested in university culture is eloquently expressed by Omo Dudu:

> … The conditions will deal with you right. So the picket line or the site of conflict is no longer an application form like [during] apartheid … where they're like but there is a bush college in the Eastern Cape, why are you coming here? This is a white people's university you know. The site of oppression is no longer the application form. But when you come here, and you're alienated from the university's culture, from its grounds, from its everything, language policy etcetera, it's found a new way to exclude you and that way is more harmful for you and your family and your community **(Interview with Omo Dudu: 24 November 2016).**

At the end of this section I speak about how spaces of belonging are temporary and are not part of the formal university culture. For them to have any impact they need to be permanent and must form part of the formal university structure.

This interview segment illustrates how the university's culture alienates Black students through race and gender. According to Inglis and Thorpe (2012) the concept of alienation initially started with Hegel. He argued that over time human beings create social structures and institutions which tend to assume an objective reality of their own to people who live within these structures and they see these institutions as over-powering. Hegel called such a situation an alienating condition (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012). The concept of alienation was later taken up Karl Marx. He used it to explain a situation where workers were separated from one another and from the product they produce thus causing a feeling of estrangement from the product and fellow workers (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012). For the purposes of this report, I will focus on cultural alienation. Culture is defined differently by a variety of thinkers. Biko (2004) argues that culture is evolutionary and emanates from different experiences and therefore it is political. Biko further argues that for Black people their culture emanates from a common experience of oppression. Swartz (1997) draws from Pierre Bourdieu to argue that culture is responsible for facilitating communication, interaction and that it also includes beliefs, traditions, values and language. Moreover, Swartz (1997) maintains that culture is also a source of power whether in the form of dispositions, objects, systems, or institutions, culture embodies power relations.

I understand culture to refer to a way of living that is considered legitimate in a particular society and thus contains power. Power facilitates who gets access to ‘culture’ and who does not. Even though there are multiple cultures, however, the legitimate culture is the dominant one and people from subordinate cultures are expected to assimilate to the dominant and legitimate culture in order to survive. This assimilation process depends on the extent to which subordinate groups can perform the dominant culture. From the interviews, it became overwhelmingly clear that Wits University alienates Black students. Almost all of the interviewees expressed strong statements about how the university repels them. These are some examples from the interviews.

> …the department in itself repels you (laughs) the department in itself repels you. The whole school in itself repels you, this has always been …the position of the Black intellectual… *a priori* you are already denied entry. So whatever that you do, your participation in it *uya hesha* (you force matters) (laughs) so yah because this system is structured and refined; already in existence; already in movement towards a specific course; so already [if] you want to turn the clock [a]way or anti-clock wise… you definitely are going to face resistance. So even in the department itself where The Transformation Memorandum was drafted. … the system is repulsive, the university itself. **(Interview with Sefako: 23 November 2016).**

The argument presented here by *Sefako* is consistent with the one presented in the Transformation Memorandum that whenever a call for change is made by the department it is faced by some resistance and that for Black scholars to exist within the system they must force matters. This call for change is also met by an anti-Black racist culture that blames Black people for the lack of transformation the department is faced with.

Mmathuto talks more specifically about the elements of the university that she experiences as 'violent':

> I don't have any spaces that are giving me sense of belonging. I think I am beginning to create my own spaces with Black women not only here on campus but also outside campus to kind of forge alliances and with the realisation that there is a need for a space where you will speak unapologetically about things that bother you every day and about your challenges that you meet every day as a student on campus, but you simply can't because these spaces are basically not safe so yah. …Wits University in its entirety it challenges my sense of belonging because I am Black. First of all, you arrive here, you come from a township school and you have never seen a white person standing in front of you. You only encounter a white person for the first time here. They have got some accent from wherever across the world. You can't relate, first of all this person is supposed to lecture you and you can't hear them and it takes time to understand them. Secondly, also the fact that Wits University is also a typical society just like South Africa where you have to embrace this whole thing of a rainbow nation that is none existent where some other people are allowed to express their culture, to express themselves in everything but as a Black child you always need to be apologetic, to mind your words, you need to guard yourself in terms of what you can say and what not to say and also the fact that the school fees is too high here at Wits University. I mean you don't afford to live an

average life of an average student. Wits University is just violent in too many ways violent, very very violent. **(Interview with Mmathuto: 30 November 2016)**

These narrative segments illustrate Robert's (2004:146) interpretation of Fanon's conception of violence as intrinsic (see page 34 of the thesis).

Dumisani says the university 'does not feel like home':

… it is not, you know it, I know it, every black person knows it. It does not feel like a home. You know anywhere; in fact, this institution is a reflection of how the society is. This institution is not immune to that. This institution shows you where you belong. You know this institution says this is not where you belong *uyabona*, but we are saying we have been here, you know, we have been participating, you know from now it is no longer, it is not even a matter of asking to make this home. You know we are here and we are saying let us come with the initiatives to make it a proper home for all of us, at least those who are serious about certain projects, you know. **(Interview with Duminsani:14 December 2016).**

Lesedi confirms the overall sense of alienation expressed by participants:

**Interviewer:** So you know which spaces or places here at Wits University gives you sense of belonging.
**Lesedi**: none, (none? Interviewer) none, none, at all none none none.

**Interviewer**: okay, it's the first time I heard that. Now since there is none, let's talk about, you know actually how is Wits University not giving you sense of belonging in terms of space.

**Lesedi**: (sigh) I don't wanna [want to] say too white, but again it goes to the fact that I can't relate to anything here. I feel like each time I am here I am, instead of me working towards understanding myself, it's pushing me to work towards being something else. If you know what I mean like aspiring to lead a certain kind of life you know, that's very, that's very that is not personal, if you know what I mean. It is not pushing me to, to want to go back to the township, whatever the case might be. It pushes me to go towards more whiteness, that's the kind of, space that; I don't know, something as simple as *i-ress* (university residence) for instance, you know that this side of life is more calm, more white, more *bourgie* (bourgeois) whatever you wanna [want to] call it as opposed to deep there in South Point (student accommodation) or outside of campus is more that's not right, that's not how,

that's not the standard you should be living in, this is the standard. So it creates that barrier *uhkuthi* this is the standard and this is the standard that you have to meet. I don't know how to explain it, yah it's not, I don't feel like I belong here. I am constantly trying to be something that I am not and I don't want to be you know so yah. **(Interview with Lesedi: 29 September 2016)**

These testimonies show the ways in which – from the perspective of Black student life - Wits University through its culture repels Black students. Mmathuto offers insight into her experience of being taught by a white person for the first time. Lesedi focuses more on one element of capital – economic capital, as she explains that the culture of the university pushes her towards leading a life that is different from her background, a life that places money above humanity. In the interview excerpt of Sefako, he does not specifically state how Wits University and its Political Studies department are alienating, but throughout the interview he refers to the violent nature of the university's curriculum and epistemology towards Black students. These testimonies strongly suggest the cultural estrangement experienced amongst participants in this study. Cultural estrangement is the gap between the individual and the dominant political and cultural values and beliefs of a particular society (Bernard, Gebauer, and Maio, 2006). Bernard, Gebauer, and Maio (2006) cite Nettler (1957) who defines an alienated person as a person who has been estranged from and made unfriendly, unwelcome to his/her society and the culture it carries. It is important to ask how Black students can be expected to excel in such an environment. How much of their ways of being in the world are they expected to give up in order to succeed in such an institution? Moreover, Lesedi makes a comparison between University of Zululand and Wits University. She posits that:

… I can't really I can't. I genuinely can't, even amongst friends there is a certain kind of language you have to establish, there is a certain behaviour that you have to have, because you know what I mean (it's not homely: Interviewer) no it's not. I had *inhlanhla yokufunada* (the luck of studying) at the Black institution and so that's where I spotted the differences. At the University of Zululand, I was more, I was at home basically. I was at home, I was taught in a language I understood…, even though there were those dynamics that you had to write in English but it was more homely. You could relate with your lecturers more you know. You had *o mama* (a mother) type of thing. There was no doctor Magwaza, Professor *banibani*, it's more a mother child [parent and daughter relationship] type of space. So it was more homely than here. You know here you need to please these white people

> who are enforcing their own ideas, who are trying to push their own history throughout us you know. In fact, the funny thing is that, the course that is most passed was isiZulu namaGugu, that was the language that was pushed more, that is the course work that people really excelled *kuyona* because they felt at home and reading African texts and yah it was more homely than anything else, so then the shift from that space to this space I see that here, you can't do anything. **(Interview with Lesedi, 29 September 2016)**

Lesedi highlights an important component of cultural capital, the linguistic capital. Linguistic capital as developed by Bourdieu is the level at which social validation is given to an individual due to various levels of speaking or comprehending a language, which is mostly based on class (Bourdieu, 1977). For Bourdieu "language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge, but also an instrument of power" (1977:648). This power cannot be separated from culture because the language of the dominant culture becomes the legitimate one. The power contained in these structures facilitates inclusion and exclusion. Moreover, the power in the language cannot be separated from the speakers because "all particular linguistic transactions depend on the structure of the linguistic field, which is itself a particular expression of the structure of the power relations between the groups possessing the corresponding competences (e.g. language and the vernacular, or, in a situation of multilingualism, the dominant language and the dominated language) (Bourdieu 1977:647).

In this context, the conceptualisation of linguistic capital is limited, because the unit of analysis in Bourdieu's argument is class and the focal point of the aforementioned experience is 'race'. Considering the history of South Africa and how race operates, the speaker a lecturer is likely to possess two forms of symbolic power during the production of the linguistic structure. This means that a white person who is lecturing holds power over a Black student, not only because of academic status but also as a white person. This kind linguistic field makes it more difficult for Black students to access the message being delivered, because even though Black students are able to master the language but the linguistic field has other power structures that facilitate exclusion. Lesedi posits that isiZulu language was the most passed course at University of Zululand, which could be argued that it is the most passed course as claimed by Lesedi because the students who take this course have linguistic capital and the symbolic power embedded in race fall away. The purpose of this thesis is not to compare and contrast Black and White

universities in terms of culture. I am simply using this quotation from the interview with Lesedi to emphasise the point that the culture of Wits University is seen as white and it alienates Black students. Here Lesedi demonstrates that it is possible for people to be successful if they are taught in a language they are more comfortable in. This is a phenomenon that needs to be explored in an attempt to understand university culture and alienation. Other respondents focused on specific spaces and places that alienate them. These spaces vary in their nature and in their purpose for the university.

Bongani reports,

> I feel like I am getting used to it but classes mostly you know, seminars you know the way seminars were done I feel like it was very rigid, you know like you go there, I felt like the whole process of learning sometimes it's very rigid and the authority that is given to the lecturer in that kind of space also **(Bongani, 28 September 2016).**

Mmabotle confirms a sense of alienation by providing a concrete example from her lived experience of the classroom:

> Spaces that challenge my sense of belonging are classrooms, especially in undergrad, being taught by white lecturers, white kids who are irritating me also about what they say (laughs) challenge my sense of belonging, but particularly in undergrad because you know I hadn't come into my own. I was seventeen when I came into university, coming from a township school, like I said you know, I remember there was an exercise done with us by professor who was the head of Political Studies department. So we were doing a section on South African education, like just policy stuff, and he says students that went to a school where school fees was from zero, maybe he will say R 20 or R 50 put up their hands, students who paid from R1 00 to R 600 a year and then there students who went to these posh schools paid R 120 000 a year and the they will stand and I am like, I am in class with these people, now it makes sense the way these people are acting, they pay school fees, Wits University was actually cheaper than their high school. Imagine. And so the class room was very alienating to me **(Interview with Mmabotle, 05 December 2016).**

This example illustrates a particularly crude pedagogical practice on the part of a teacher who shows little awareness of the power dynamics in his classroom.

The following quotation shows how historic debt is accumulated. It speaks to how universities are turned into corporate spaces and Black students are forced to afford education through debt. Historic debt burdens Black students who are already burdened by course work and research projects. It contributes to the discomfort Black students are already experiencing in the university. As a result, "higher education is increasingly placed beyond the reach of students from poor backgrounds" (Vally, 2007:20). Furthermore, Vally argues that "South Africa has not escaped the debasement of higher education, a process which recasts public space as a commodified sphere with students as consumers and staff as sales consultants" (2007:20). This practice has links to the liberal understanding of what constitutes human rights, hence the constitution has failed to prevent the commodification of education in South Africa (Vally, 2006).

> The Fees Office, because every time *iyangdina, njalo mangidlula laphaya* (it makes me angry every time I have to pass there) I think of my debt. It was great when I had NSFAS at some point in my life. *Yazi bengidlula ngicabanga i-allowance* (I used to pass there and think of my allowance) now I think of my debts, because I have my debts to payoff that's my reason you know what I mean. That corner of Fees Office, Financial Aid and Scholarships Office, and Cashiers' Office it's the one place I cringe up every time *ngidlula nje* (I pass) not because I don't want to pay, it makes me think of how much this great experience is costing me financially and that is not okay **(Interview with Mmathapelo, 24 October 2016).**

There are many other spaces that have been mentioned by the respondents including eating spaces and departments, however, due to space limitations, I will not focus on these here. Two of the three interview excerpts used above point to economic capital as an alienating factor. Bourdieu defines economic capital as capital "immediately and directly convertible into money and [that] may be institutionalized in the form of property rights" ([1986]/2011:48). Inglis and Thorpe simplified this idea into "the level of monetary resources a person has at their disposal" (2012:228). This speaks to the commodification of education. Commodification of education can be referred to as a process by which governments reduce funding of the universities and place the burden of financing the operation of the universities to their management (Altbach, 2015, Lawrence and Sharma, 2002, Mbembe, 2016). This process also turns students into consumers

who treat education as a product they can buy in a form of an investment and expect returns after graduation. This means students are pushed to study courses that will make it easier for them to get jobs rather than those which stimulate curiosity (Altbach, 2015, Lawrence and Sharma, 2002, Mbembe, 2016). To attain this investment has come at a cost for Black students in the university. Students have been forced into debt, which one can argue is a mechanism of neoliberal discipline to entrench debt as a condition for living.

The experiences highlighted above give the reader a sense of what is meant by Black students' alienation in the university. Mmathapelo's experience is an illustration of the burden Black students bear throughout their university years. This burden could be referred to as a violation of the memories and experiences Black students are trying to forge in this university. Two of the respondents had totally different experiences of the university, one white and one Indian. The two respondents both regularly visited the university during their childhood years because their parents were employees of the university. As a result, the university was part of their upbringing, part of their culture hence they did not experience any cultural alienation or estrangement. They both expressed views that they feel like they belong at Wits University in every way. Their responses embody all the aspects of capital as conceptualised by Bourdieu. They possess cultural capital which Bourdieu defines as capital, "which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications" ([1986]/2011:48). These students' home language is the medium of communication in the university and it is the language of instruction. This also means that they have linguistic capital as discussed earlier in the chapter. They are born into academic families and this gives them social capital. Social capital is "made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" ([1986]/2011:48). As a result, they have a strong network and connection with academics. Lastly, they also have economic capital, which enables them to easily negotiate their existence on campus. Under these conditions the Fees Office for example does not become a constant reminder of student debt.

A striking example of the enactment of cultural capital occurs during graduation ceremonies. Students whose parents are academic staff at the university have the opportunity to be 'capped'

by their parents. Given the historical and contemporary exclusion of Black South Africans from tertiary institutions, the chances of Black students being 'capped' by his or her parent is small. The choice to be 'capped' by one's parent is produced by and further generates a sense of belonging that participants in this study do not have. Following Bourdieu, the three forms of capital – economic, linguistic and cultural – are necessary tools to succeed in the academy.

This alienation by the university forced Black students to form temporary and fluid spaces of belonging in an attempt to cope and find a sense of belonging within each space. I use the terms temporary and fluid because these are spaces that can be disrupted at any point by the university and by students themselves. Moreover, some of these spaces do not have concrete structures; they can be created anywhere and disbanded at any time. Sefako gives a powerful example of such:

> … it's wherever in the university space itself wherever I get to engage ideas, Black Thought [a reading group] is one of the spaces, … the political community that I hang around with in some of the spaces, so there's the political community, there's the intellectual community, so these are the different spaces that you would say… nurture you as a person. They are drawn by common cause these communities, there's different groups and there's that which draw us together as Black people you see. **(Interview with Sefako: 23 November 2016).**

Other students presented more concrete spaces such as postgraduate rooms in Political Studies and Sociology departments. However, these are temporary spaces that can be disrupted by the university. For instance, during the FMF protest, the university management refused students entry to these spaces. Even though there is some form permanency in terms of membership to these spaces, but the mere fact that this membership is dependent postgraduate students registering at the university; a process based on exclusionary practices such as fees, makes it difficult for members to occupy these spaces as long as they want. Moreover, postgraduate studies at honours and masters levels are often short lived, which is another factor that contributes to the longevity of the membership. It should also be noted that these spaces are not part of the university culture; they are created through common experiences of alienation, as a result, they might be dissolved as members come and go. For these spaces to ameliorate the experiences of Black students they need to be a permanent feature of the university's culture.

## 4.2 Blackness as Disability in the Academy

Socially constructed conceptions of the body are useful when trying to understand the ideas of the Black body in a white university as 'disabled'. As a result, I use the social constructionist approach to disability, by adopting post-structural and phenomenological theories to understand and conceptualise the body. Hughes and Paterson (2010) argue that the social constructionist approach views disability not as an outcome of bodily pathology, but of social organisation. Furthermore, they argue that disability "was socially produced by systematic patterns of exclusion that were-quite-literally-built into the social fabric" (2010:328). Using the post-structural approach Hughes and Paterson (2010) posits that the real cause of disability is discrimination and prejudice. Using the body as a political concept it helps us to understand "the body as a social and cultural construct and a fundamental element in material and symbolic processes of power and conviviality" (Adelman and Ruggi, 2015:908).

To further stretch the disability discourse Hughes and Paterson (2010) draws from feminist debates to argue that the body is a product of power and the limits to what the body can or cannot do are socially constructed. This argument stems from how cultural determinations of what a woman is able and not able to do. As argued by Hughes and Paterson (2010) feminists have presented these cultural determinations as disabling women and thus portraying women as disabled bodies. Furthermore, Hughes and Paterson (2010) draw from David Hevey (1993) to make a connection between race and disability and how it has been used in similar ways with those of feminists, in that the idea is to de-biologise disability and stop looking at the body but society. On the other hand, Ben-Moshe and Magaña argue that Jenifer Barclay wrote "about how disability among slaves in the antebellum South was determined by the economic value of the bonded individuals as defined by slaveholders" (2014:106).

The arguments above offer an important insight about the complexity of disability. They also offer a challenge to the conventional biological argument which sees disability as a physical medical condition or biological. According to Hughes and Paterson "medicine is the sole master of the language of impairment and it acquires this sovereignty through its power to name bodily

dysfunctions" (2010:333). The above-mentioned arguments about and definitions of disability challenge conventional understandings of disability and stretch its meaning. This prompted me to use disability to argue that the university treats Black students as disabled, in that they are understood as unable to know, to think or that they do not possess the capacity to know. Moreover, as argued by Mbembe (2001) after the abolition of slavery the Enlightenment scholars decided that a Black person did not contain any sort of consciousness and they do not possess the characteristic of reason or beauty. As a result, a Black person was an extension of material, an object doomed to death (Mbembe, 2001). Given this history, which is an integral part of universities across the globe it is, therefore, sensible to conclude that historically Black people have been viewed as disabled or worse, as non-beings in the academy. This argument finds expression in the interviews I conducted with Karabo, and Omo Dudu.

Karabo explains that for her,

> The decolonising of the idea that a Black person is unable … until proven otherwise it's still there. So for me the project of decolonising should be more than just academia. It should go beyond, I don't know how that can be done. It's, it's deep because we might … change the faces but …, we will not change the fact that till this day, I don't know how many years later you will question a Black person standing right in front of you **(Interview with Karabo: 28 September 2016).**

Karabo did not explicitly use the term disability. To make sure that I understood what she said I asked a follow up question in a form of statement and she confirmed that she was speaking about disability.

> **Interviewer:** … you bring the idea that a Black person is not able (yes: Karabo) …. You know like disability is not only being bodily but also how you say *ukuthi* you know like the perception of a Black person not being able which means a Black person has, suffers from an inability of doing anything in academia? (Exactly: Karabo) to prove that they don't have that disability? (Exactly: Karabo) wow (and that's the point where you have to overcompensate: Karabo), (**Interview with Karabo: 28 October 2016).**

Omo Dudu's testimony shared similar sentiments with those of Karabo that Black students are treated as beings that are not capable of learning and knowing. She also argues that this culture is embedded in the power structure of the academy. These convictions are presented in the excerpt from an interview with Omo Dudu:

> The power structure [of] the university [produces] a possibility where it is assumed that there are those who know and they have a very particular complexion [white people] and gender [male] and there are those who can't know. Not that they don't know, like they are incapable of knowing right, so it's not a surprise if there is no Black academics because there is just something wrong there with that group right, not that there is something wrong with the structure, which is what they are saying like but Blacks can come in to UT, we can apply for jobs but there must be something intrinsically wrong with that group of people that they haven't assumed these positions of power and privilege. I mean they can do that because who decides the standard of knowing, who decides what it means to know right [white men decides on the nature and standard of knowing]. It's a very same person that has already decided that I can't know and that they do know. So if I am going to decide what the requirements are, it's obviously going to do things that suit who I am and have nothing to do who the other person is. **(Interview with Omo Dudu: 28 September 2016).**

Similarly, Omo Dudu did not explicitly use the term disability. To find surety that she meant disability in her statements I had to ask a follow-up question in which she confirmed. Moreover, she further argued that actually the disability lay with the white academics, but due to the power systems of white privilege their disability is normalised and protected by the institution through its laws. This argument finds expression Hughes and Paterson (2010) as they argue that disability is produced through systems of exclusion and that its real cause is discrimination and prejudice. These testimonies as presented by the respondents are their life experiences of the academy. In as much as their experiences are subjective, they are also expressed by other students who do not form part of the study. Similar experiences were shared during general conversations I have had with fellow students.

It also helps to take a phenomenological approach in order to explain the experiences that have been expressed by the respondents. Drawing from (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) Hughes and Paterson

argues that whether "the body is impaired or not it is an experiencing agent, itself is a subject and therefore it is a site of meaning and source of knowledge about the world" (2010:334). Moreover, Hughes and Paterson argue that the body is a "complex interpenetration of oppression and affliction" and that "to be a body (the body as subject) is a purely experiential ontological condition in which the body is as it-is-in pain, pleasure, joy or tears (2010:335). Following the arguments about the phenomenology of the body, it becomes necessary to argue that the university through its apparatuses inflicts pain on Black bodies, be it emotional or otherwise. It is through these lived experiences that Black students are able to draw these conclusions.

A counter-argument will be that I was merely writing about the deficit discourse. However, I argue that the deficit discourse is not enough to capture the complexity and the meanings attached to the words like "are not able" and "can't know". This is not to say that the deficit discourse is irrelevant in explaining some of the elements of the Black condition in the academy. It is to argue that it is not enough to capture the varying degrees of 'Blackpain' and marginality in the academy. 'Blackpain' is a term coined by Debra Walker King (2008) to refer to the "visual and verbal representation of pained Black bodies that function as rhetorical devices, as instruments of socialisation and socio-political strategy in American popular culture and literature" (King, 2008:16). Furthermore, King describes "pain as a boundless perception woven intricately, from experiences of physical, mental and emotional wounding and trauma that threatens one's ability to move safely into survival wholeness" (2008: 16). 'Blackpain' has its foundation in the European Enlightenment project, which argued that Black people have an animalistic humanity and have high pain tolerance (King, 2007). King (2008) however, gives this concept a new meaning by arguing against the European Enlightenment's conception of 'Blackpain'. She argues that Black bodies too are vulnerable to pain, whether physical, mental or emotional pain. This is not an attempt to universalise the concept of Blackpain as applicable in the same way in South Africa as it is in the United States of America. I use this concept because there are commonalities in the experiences of oppression amongst Black people around the globe.

Even though King (2008) analyses Blackpain from a cultural and structural perspective, she heavily focuses on physically pained bodies of Black people. I am more interested in the mental

and emotional pain inflicted by the university system on the collective of Black people. To address this form of Blackpain I draw from Liz Philipose (2007) and King (2008) to make an argument that pain can be used biographically, meaning that it is a lived experience than has been with the individual throughout their lives. Moreover, Philipose argues that "the idea of pain as biography comes from Donald Nathanson (1994) who states that feeling is the awareness and knowledge of a response to stimuli (what is referred to as affect), while emotion is the feeling plus the additional recall of previous experience from memory" (2007:62). Furthermore, Philipose (2007: 63) argues:

> Understanding embodied pain as biography suggests that healing cannot be accomplished without the erasure of the self. In this way, to allude to the pain of structural violence is not necessarily to demand a compensatory or therapeutic response designed to eliminate pain. It is, more likely, to seek recognition that the self and the pain are part of the same identity and the lived experience of a person.

The pain expressed by students during FMF and throughout their academic years at the university suggests that this pain has been inflicted on the students by the university through its culture and systems which construct Black students as those who cannot know, and who do not possess the capacity or the ability to know. This pain has been inflicted on students by structures outside the university as well and it has come to shape the identities of the students. Blackness as disability, like Blackpain finds its roots in the European Enlightenment project, as a result it is not able to capture the complex nature of Blackpain in the academy. The primary assumption of the deficit discourse is that Black students lack certain traits (such as the correct language or language use known as English) to cope and adequately learn in the academy, therefore through the Academic Development (AD) Black students will develop these skills (Jansen, 1998). Moreover, the deficit discourse does not address the problem as a process that has its roots in the European Enlightenment and as a question of humanity. The deficit discourse does not adequately deal with pain that is inflicted on students. In the following section, I will fully unpack the deficit discourse and also use it to explain some of the testimonies presented by the respondents.

### 4.3.2 The Deficit Discourse

Broadly the inherent assumption of the deficit discourse is that there is one form of knowing and one language in which this knowing can be facilitated, the language of the dominant culture; and that those who do not possess these forms of knowing, particularly Black students are viewed as deficient (Lawrence, 2003). Moreover, the deficit discourse is expressed in a language and in pedagogical designs that perpetually paint Black students in a negative image and with a narrative of deficiency (Fforde, et al. 2013). Jansen (1998) argues that the critics against Mamdani at the University of Cape Town (UCT) by white academics during the Mamdani affair gained institutional legitimacy by constantly placing Black students in the deficit discourse. Jansen further argues that "rather than to see students as reservoirs of experience and knowledge which can contribute to, even define, the curriculum, these students are either viewed as lacking language (that is, English) skills or reasoning abilities or writing competencies and so on" (1998:111). As argued above by Omo Dudu during the interview the disability actually lies with the white academic, Jansen (1998) argues the same with the deficit discourse. He asks extensively:

> "What this conception does is leave outside of critical inquiry some basic questions, such as: What if the problem was framed as the incapacity of the UCT staff to teach in Xhosa or Afrikaans? Why make the student the object of a deficit gaze, and not the staff? Whose problem is it really? And is it not a point of consideration that given their capacity to survive the hazards of an as yet unequal education, the students who gain access to UCT should already have considerable competencies and potentials to draw on for the institutional curriculum?" (Jansen, 1998:111).

The questions asked by Jansen (1998) are important in that they help us to think deeply and critically about the nature of the academy. They also speak to an interview excerpt quoted earlier from Omo Dudu when she says that the inabilities of white academics are protected by the system hence the students are always burdened with this inability or the deficiency. More broadly this also brings us to the question of who is studied? Who becomes an object of research? The experiences of the respondents do find expression in the deficit discourse. Mmabotle in her interview makes reference to the deficit discourse as she reflects on her experiences of the academy. She postulates that:

> You know interpersonal relationships - it doesn't have to be with your … lecturer - are very important. Because you know you will be a Black student here [who has] never been taught by a white lecturer…or [who has] never been in a class with a white person. So there might be things you don't understand as Black student because English for you is not on par you will be afraid to go to that white lecturer because of the energy that they bring out but also because of your own subconscious and anxieties or because you were taught to see a white person…as the authoritative figure all your life. Even if you don't understand you won't go to that white lecturer and then the white lecturer might view you as stupid, as less intelligent. When you have typed an essay but your essay… it's not all straight, it's not all in one sentence… they will say 'Oh these stupid careless Blacks without understanding'. *Wena* (you) might come from a situation where you have to do your first essay on a computer. I remember when I typed my first essay on a computer for the first time was here at Wits University. It took me days because I had to search for the letters on the key board for a long time. When they said line spacing … fonts I had to ask someone what is that, where do I get it on the computer. You know certain assumptions that they make about Black students without understanding where these Black students come from, and certain prejudices they have about Black students, that they are able afford computers and travel as easily as white students **(Interview with Mmabotle: 05 December 2016).**

The prominent reference to the issue of language supports the argument that language is an important aspect of cultural capital, also bearing in mind that culture can be used as a tool of dominance and exclusion, it is no surprise language is used as a tool to measure intelligence and facilitate cultural alienation. Fforde, et al. also highlight the importance of language when they argue that they "use the term deficit discourse to describe a mode of thinking, identifiable in language use, that frames Aboriginal identity in a narrative of negativity, deficiency and disempowerment" (2013:162). They further argue that the deficit discourse is embedded within the race paradigm. This cannot be divorced from the racist past of the academy, that seeks to uphold white supremacy and in this case language is used as a tool of control. This means that for Black people to be accepted in the academy depends on the extent to which they can be articulate in the English language. This stems directly from the violent past of colonisation and the practice of undermining the intellectual capacity of Black people is not surprising. Biko (2004) argued that if a group of people can move from their country of origin and impose

themselves as superior beings in a country of another group of people everything else they do will follow that culture.

The intention here is not to treat Blackness as disability and the deficit discourse as opposed to each other, but to treat them as two concepts that are trying to capture the varying degrees of Black pain in the academy. The fundamental difference between the two concepts is that the deficit discourse deals with a temporary condition that can be alleviated, whereas Blackness as disability is a permanent condition which can only be treated and managed by white academics. The notion that the disability of Black students becomes permanent is premised on the argument that Black students are unable to fully attain the learning culture of white people and will need to continuously be treated to ensure adherence to the culture throughout their academic years. Moreover, the deficit discourse is developed through the critique of the academy and its culture by academics in an attempt to problematize how the academy perceives Black students while the discourse of Blackpain is developed through the students' own perception of how the academy makes them feel. The inherent assumption of the deficit discourse suggests that Black students are able to fully attain the learning culture. However, both these concepts are embedded in the anti-Black, oppressive, culture which was at the core development of the universities in South Africa. Therefore, for Blacks and whites to exist harmoniously in the academy depends on the Blacks' adherence to 'the treatment' as prescribed by white academics, which dictates rules of engagement and acceptable behaviour. When the Black subjects act independently of their 'treatment' or exercise their agency they often face several forms of disciplinary mechanisms such as suspension and exclusion. Any form of resistance against the treatment is viewed as an anomaly.

In the next section I focus on the elements that make up the actual curriculum and how these elements are also embedded in the racist and patriarchal culture of the academy. This is not to say that culture does not form part of the curriculum. I treat culture as an overarching practice that infuses the curriculum, epistemology and pedagogy.

## 4.3 Culture and Epistemology

Bruce and Yearly argue that broadly epistemology is "the science or discipline ('ology') of knowledge (episteme)" (2006:89). They further stress that epistemology in "philosophy denotes the field concerned with how we know what we think we know about the world" (2006:98-90). For the purposes of this study, the philosophical approach will be used because the approach is that of social sciences. The intention is to link the culture of the university to the approach the university takes to epistemology. If epistemology is concerned with 'how we know what we think we know about the world' it becomes impossible to escape the question of how do Western ways of knowing or understand Black people? This question is sparked by two concerns: first, the subjugation and oppression of Black people by white people through slavery, colonisation and apartheid; and second, the alienating culture of Wits University in the experience of Black students. These concerns are related because one cannot separate history and epistemology from culture. Culture is a historical project that produces many concepts and phenomena which include epistemology. To respond to these concerns, I draw from the interviews I conducted with the students and from Mbembe (2001) as he briefly writes on the legacy of European Enlightenment.

> … from the perspectives of African systems of thought, within these African orders of knowledge we must take them as different modes which seek to understand the human condition… The only way in which we can understand the human condition under modernity as it is, is through rooting our conceptual frameworks from the Black experience … We can't rely on theories that are rooted in the notion of the European subject because… if you check the European subject or the European normative values as critical modes of enquiry, they fail us as what we are. They have become useless as modes of understanding the human condition. So, what we are saying by participating in the Black radical tradition is to say that theories that are rooted in the Black experience, Black modes of existence, … African spirituality, the chronology of African mythology... what sort meaning can we denote from these systems of thought? **(Interview with Sefako: 23 November 2016).**

Sefako argues that the European epistemologies cannot adequately address and explain the Black condition. As quoted earlier in the chapter, Sefako argued that he came to engage in Black modes of understanding outside the formally recognised academic spaces in the university. This begs a

range of questions: is the university invested in Black modes of being; why is the onus on Black students to go and explore these modes of being and understanding; what does this tell us about the epistemic culture of the university? Mbembe (2001) argues that current systems of knowledge in the African continent are largely inherited from European colonial traditions. Gaidzanwa affirms the exclusion of Black epistemologies as she argues that "in universities in particular, cultural and intellectual production are explicitly stated to be the missions of the institutions, privileging specific types of knowledge, frameworks, and ways of thinking and expressing intellect" (2007:61). The European tradition preoccupied itself with ontological difference with regards to African people and African modes of being (Mbembe, 2001). The emphasis on recognising Africans as different, simply meant that they were not yet fully human, however, through a process of assimilation which was to be facilitated using religion, by converting Blacks into Christians, introducing them to the market economy and enlightened rational forms of governance they could be human (Mbembe, 2001).

The education system as we know it has its roots in the European Enlightenment project, which at its inception was characterised by exclusion or non-recognition of African epistemologies. Following Mbembe (2001) the epistemic culture that has been produced through this project which is the basis of Western epistemology alienates African epistemologies and can only ever understand Africans as non-human who can only be recognised as full human beings after they have successfully assimilated to Western modes of being. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Black epistemologies are excluded in the university. The culture and tradition of the university through its colonial past makes these exclusions possible.

Dominant epistemologies are not only racialized but also gendered. Queer and women respondents have argued that in as much as Black modes of knowing are excluded from the academy, so are women's and queer modes of knowing. Two respondents shared their experiences of a course that was introduced as a result of their protest about the transformation of the curriculum in their department. This course was developed and designed by an academic who is known to be fighting for a decolonised curriculum. These two interviewees questioned the decolonisation project and noted what they see as some of the limitations to the way in which

this project is imagined. They point out that decolonisation is not immune to the culture of exclusion of those who are in the periphery amongst the excluded. Mmabotle and Dibakang said:

> … last year when they introduced the postcolonial course on the genealogies of Fanon, after we submitted the Transformation Memorandum to the Political Studies department … I got the course material and attended a few classes because I was working and studying. So I was like no … so we look at Fanon from the views of white men and Black men and we don't understand Fanon and the response to Fanon by Black women. They were not referenced in the course and Amina Mama her first book touches a lot on Fanon and others and I am like *haibo* this course is good maybe for Black Thought but what about Black feminist thought. **(Interview with Mmabotle: 05 December 2016)**

> Last year I did a course on the genealogies of Fanon. So we've had like four Fanon books and anybody else who writes on Fanon. That was interesting but also not liberatory in any way for me. I mean it's homo-sacrilege to say that in Black radical circles Fanon does nothing for me because his analysis of Black is still limited. So I can understand what he does for Black heterosexual people because that's the ambit through which he can see life. So for me if you are speaking about Blackness and it does not have class, gender, sexuality analysis then you are not speaking to me, you are not involving me in the project, so there is nothing about it that is liberating. **(Interview with Dibakang: 01 December 2016).**

Epistemology and pedagogy are what I will call inseparable aspects of the curriculum that are both embedded in the culture of the university. The interview excerpt from Dibakang shows how epistemology and pedagogy are intricately woven. He posits that the analysis of Blackness without the analysis of sexuality with regards to homosexuality is not liberatory to him as a Black gay/queer man. Moreover, how the course was taught did not encompass homosexuality. Mmabotle also highlights how the course on Fanon was presented in only masculine ways of knowing and understanding Fanon's work, which is both the question of epistemology and pedagogy. The section that follows will focus on pedagogy in relation to the experiences of students from both a racial and gendered perspective.

## 4.4 Culture and Pedagogy

According to Knowles, "pedagogy means, literally, the art and science of teaching children" (1980:40). Using this definition, I wish to argue that the forms of pedagogy as largely practiced at Wits University puts Black students in the deficit discourse and it is also a disabling condition. As noted earlier in the chapter white people have decided that Black people cannot know. These are the very same people who decide on the standards of knowing and how they are communicated. The standard of knowing and the means to communicate this knowing is exclusionary to other forms of knowing particularly Black modes of knowing. This automatically puts Black students outside the framework of knowing thus disabling them. Many of the respondents have shared this view. However, I will focus on Omo Dudu because she elaborates on the matter.

> The second issue of the curriculum was a problem and not just what the people were teaching but how they were teaching as well. There was this assumption that everyone can be taught the same way. So go read come back, we test you finish right, no debating, no critical engagement in fact lecturers get offended when you question them right because of academic freedom … **(Interview with Omo Dudu, 24 November 2016).**

She goes further to say that:

> You have this influx of students who do not reflect the lecturer. And the lecturers instead of adjusting themselves to … a new type of student … they don't even try. But they are actually more convinced that it's impossible [to adjust teaching methods so that they are able to accommodate different kinds of students]. Hence, the need for decolonisation and transformation. … Clearly you failed and clearly you are not invested in that project. So how do we bring more people in so that it's not always the fact that even if 80% of the class is Black (20% is white) and the 80% is not alienated by one lecturer and only 20% is comfortable in the environment before even the course outline is given) This set-up is conducive to the way they can hear you, they can understand you, they feel that you have some investment in their well-being and in them doing well, now you talk about someone who is clearly racist. **(Interview with Omo Dudu: 24 November 2016)**

As argued above, the dominant epistemologies are not only racialized but are also gendered. The same can be argued about pedagogy. The women and queer respondents have consistently argued that in as much as pedagogy alienates Black students it also alienates Black women and queer Black people because of the heteronormative nature of the pedagogy. Here I will also focus on Omo Dudu's interview, for the same reasons mentioned above. She vehemently argues that:

> So, the patriarchy thing is full scale… at every single university [teaching] is still predominantly … [done by] white men academics. And that relationship - if you look at the demographics of white males in South Africa - is completely disproportionate to the demographics of our country. Who are they going to be teaching? …The most patriarchal thing about pedagogy is the structure of the lecture hall. This idea that you have one person who stands in focal point of authority, who knows, and you have all these people below who don't know and they must merely [put] themselves in this transfer of one knowledge and that's patriarchy. So whether it's a Black female in that position, an Indian male or whoever it is, the pedagogical technique of learning is extremely patriarchal. Here is the one centre of power that knows right and they communicate and it's your job to understand and if you don't understand the problem is you right but we never ever challenge that power structure. **(Interview with Omo Dudu: 24 November 2016).**

I am almost persuaded by Banks and Banks as they argue for 'equity pedagogy' which they define as "teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society" (2009:152). However, equity pedagogy is oblivious to gender, and it also treats students as passive agents rather than active agents in the process of knowledge production. Two other forms of pedagogy that seem most persuasive in dealing with the racist and sexist pedagogy are critical pedagogy and decolonising pedagogy. These two pedagogies, if used together can produce beneficial results.

Peter Lang writes that "critical pedagogy is an educational approach that engages students in teachings that analyse power relations to promote students' critical consciousness" (2011:200). Tejeda, Espinoza and Gutierrez (2003) on the other hand argue that a decolonising pedagogy is

formed by an anti-capitalist, antiracist, antisexist and anti-homophobic dynamic world view and a set of values that aims to address issues of social justice. For Tejeda, Espinoza and Gutierrez (2003) a decolonising pedagogy is a response to the dominant economic, cultural, political, judicial and education arrangements in contemporary American society which are produced and reinforced by systems of colonial and capitalist domination. The situation described is similar to the one of South Africa. It points to the inherited colonial, sexist and racist higher education system. The content of what is taught is often not seen as intrinsic to the culture of the university. For us to effectively decolonise our universities it becomes important to view all aspects of the curriculum as embedded within the culture of the university. This will also help us understand that the exclusion of and the marginalisation of Black texts is no coincidence.

## 4.5 Marginality of Black Texts

African scholarship is excluded from the academy and can almost only be found in marginal spaces. It can be argued that William Cullen Library houses such scholarship and it is part of the university's formal systems and therefore it is not marginal. My argument here is that even though African scholarship and literature is housed in formal institutions of the university it is not part of the of the university's formal culture. The literature in William Cullen Library is not part of the university's curriculum. It is merely for extracurricular reading and research purposes. Even the library system of the university does not promote African Literature. Moreover, in welcome and orientation events of the university William Cullen Library is hardly ever mentioned. The literature in William Cullen Library has become a story of the Other. All the respondents from the Political Studies department reported that they only encountered African scholarship outside their department. A different story can be told about department of sociology because all the participants have been introduced to African scholarship and decolonial thought through the department, especially through a course called Social Transitions. In as much as the department is trying to include different scholars and different forms of knowledge, it is still very much marginal because only a selected few are able to access such literature. These forms of scholarship are also introduced as alternative knowledges and systems of thought.

This brings us to the question of methodology. My argument is that if this course was introduced using different forms of pedagogy than the regular seminar form, it could have created a platform to have a critical dialogue about decolonisation in the department. On the other hand, it goes to show the introduction of other systems of thought without changing the institutional culture will not really assist us in creating critical conversations about decolonisation. As things stand, Social Transitions was able to spark a conversation about critical modes of inquiry in the seminar, but the same momentum was not carried out beyond the Social Transitions seminars. The conversations that happen among the department of sociology students about other systems of thought are not conducted with the same conviction as students in the Political Studies department. The students in the Political Studies department have been able to develop a language through which they communicate the project of decolonisation. This can be partly attributed to the Transformation Memorandum that was submitted by students to their department. This memorandum helped them create a platform for a meaningful dialogue about decolonisation.

It is important to ask, what is the importance of having Black scholarship as part of the mainstream university culture? We find our answer in Jansen (1998) and Mbembe's (2006) writings. Jansen argues that:

> "Content matters, and it matters a great deal when a European-centred curriculum continues to dominate and define what counts as worthwhile knowledge and legitimate authority in South African texts and teaching; it matters very much in the context of the inherited curriculum, informed by apartheid and colonialism, in which only the more readily observable, offensive racism has been skimmed off the top; and it matters in an institutional culture where the intellectual leadership (all Deans concerned were white) has its origins, training, qualifications and academic enculturation firmly lodged in an environment foreign and alienating to the so-called disadvantaged student" (1998:110-11).

Mbembe on the other hand vehemently argues that "there is something profoundly wrong when, for instance, syllabuses designed to meet the needs of colonialism and Apartheid should continue well into the liberation era" (2006:32). The arguments made here are instrumental in shaping the debate of decolonisation and its importance. Moreover, they make a meaningful contribution to

explaining why it is important to have Black texts in the academy in the aftermath of colonialism and apartheid.

## 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter argued that the culture of Wits University alienates Black students in various ways and forces Black students to form temporary and fluid spaces which can at any given time be disrupted and taken away by the university because they do not form part of the university's culture. The literature and the testimonies presented in this chapter complicate the decolonisation project. The testimonies of the respondents suggest that the university creates a space for cultural estrangement amongst Black students. Moreover, the chapter also argued that the university treats Black students as disabled in that they are assumed not to possess the capacity to think and are unable to know. The meaning of what constitutes disability was also stretched to accommodate this conception. Phenomenology of the body and post-structuralism are theoretical resources that have been applied to stretch or broaden the meaning of disability.

It was also established that largely Black radical thought does not form part of university's culture and students who are interested in Black modes of being and knowing and Black scholarship will have to make means to get hold of them outside the recognised university culture. Even though the literature might exist in the university's formal structures like William Cullen Library that literature is still marginal and is largely accessed by a selected few. This is not to say there have not been efforts by other academic staff to bring these forms of literature in to the lecture hall or seminar room, but such efforts too, remain marginal. Lastly, the chapter exposed the limitations of pedagogy at Wits University and established that this form of pedagogy is racialized and gendered, particularly the structure of the lecture hall. This form of pedagogy is inherited from the racist history of South Africa.

Moreover, if the current culture of the university is not changed the university will continue to be a violent space for Black students. The university will continue to be a space where Black students will have to negate Blackness for them to thrive and be accepted as human beings. These are the conditions that will stifle the decolonisation project and will continue to facilitate

structural violence on Black students. The decolonisation project therefore carries hope for Black students that they too can be Black and accepted in the university. To change the culture of the university is one of the most difficult things that needs to be done to further decolonisation and will require more than just a simple replacement of white academic staff with Black academic staff. If the complexities of decolonisation and curriculum are not explored and understood closely, the end result of this project will be more disastrous than helpful. Lastly, the experiences of students who are currently studying at 'so called' Black universities needs to be explored in relation to academic staff, university culture and compared to those of students studying in 'so called' white universities. It will be an important contribution towards understanding the culture of the university.

# Chapter 5: Decolonising the Curriculum

When students speak about decolonisation and decolonising the curriculum, it is often assumed that they mean a simple replacement of white lecturers with Black lecturers and European literature with African literature. Literature here is not used to refer to literary texts but, it is used to refer to any written works from all disciplines. In October 2016 Helen Zille posted a series of tweets about decolonisation in which she implies that students mean a simple replacement of Western thought with African thought. She attributes all the knowledge that has led to inventions to white people. Similarly, Tim Crowe claims that students mean a simple replacement of white academics with Black academics (https://www.biznews.com/thought-leaders/2016/11/21/decolonisation-university-backwards/). These sentiments point to the need to demythologise whiteness as part of the project to decolonise the curriculum. There are students who believe that decolonising the curriculum is about replacing white academics and European literature with Black academics and Black literature. However, during the interviews they did not sound too sure about this approach. Their thoughts on decolonisation and decolonising the curriculum will be unpacked later in the chapter. In this chapter I argue that students do not mean a simple replacement of what is white with what is Black. To adequately decipher what students, mean by decolonisation and decolonising the curriculum, it is necessary to understand decolonisation first as a contested terrain in which the meaning and methods of decolonising vary; and second, as a historical liberation project that seeks to re-humanise Black people after they have been dehumanised by the West. Despite these contestations, the mobilising and the unifying factor is the quest for liberation and humanity.

My understanding is that students are fighting for the inclusion of the different knowledges of all the oppressed people from the Global South, with a particular bias towards the inclusion of Black Radical Thought which includes the work of Black thinkers across the world. This implies a Pan-Africanist approach. Students argue that these knowledges should not be introduced as subordinates of European knowledges or as alternative knowledges but should form part of the mainstream curriculum. Mainstreaming these subjugated knowledges implies a change in epistemology and pedagogy. Ultimately, the decolonisation project seeks to change the culture of knowledge production in the academy. In this chapter I discuss what the students who I

interviewed mean when they talk about decolonising the curriculum using the following related themes: liberation, humanity, and the politics of knowledge production.

## 5.1 Decolonising the Curriculum as Mental Liberation

I conceptualise 'liberation' in the way that both Biko (2004) and Fanon ([1952]2008) use the term in their respective texts: freeing the mind from the shackles of oppression and subjugation by white people. This finds expression in Biko's (2004) quote I used in chapter three, which speaks to the need to free the mind as one of the fundamental elements to decolonisation. For him if the mind is still not free from the hands of the oppressor then the oppressed will continue to believe that they need white people to survive.

This quote by Biko suggests that it is through the colonisation of the mind that the oppressor is able to control the thinking of a Black people. This control according to Biko (2004) is accomplished through various social institutions. Education is a key institution for the production of a colonised mind amongst Black people, a mind which is filled with feelings of fear, insecurity and inferiority. Decolonising the curriculum seeks to instil a positive and proud self-image for Black people and to rid them of this inferiority complex. This makes the process of decolonising the curriculum a form of mental liberation. Fanon ([1952]2008) argues that the inferiority complex is a psychological process that is largely inculcated through a dual process of deprivation of economic resources and the internalisation of the inferiority complex. Fanon ([1952]2008) further argues that Black people should wage a war about their inferiority on both levels because throughout history they influence each other and with liberation in one of the two and not in both the process will be incomplete. He further posits that it will be a grave mistake to assume that achieving liberation in one will automatically lead to the independence of the other. Two respondents share their testimonies on the inferiority complex.

> For me decolonization is simply an ongoing project that started with the liberation movements, gaining independence from colonisers. So it's an ongoing project that now seeks to … would I say sort of get rid of the inferiority complex in the mind of the former colonized people. **(Interview with Bongani: 28 September 2016).**

> …if we could decolonise our mental state and what we have been taught or the feelings, the perception, the stereotypes and stigma, if that can also be part of decolonising, the decolonising of the idea that a Black person is unable **(Interview with Karabo: 28 September 2016).**

Both respondents reiterate the importance of liberating the mind as part of the decolonisation process. Karabo talks about the emotions and perceptions that we have been taught by the coloniser at first, but because the oppressor has already convinced Black people that they are inferior to white people Black people become the carriers of these messages convincing other Black people of their inferiority. This is what Biko and Fanon refer to when they argue that the internalisation of the inferiority complex allows for complete control of the Black people by the coloniser for the benefit of the oppressor. This phenomenon is evident in Karabo's testimony as she shares her experiences at high school.

> So, any school that had a Black teacher for me was a down grade… And then the white school and learning Afrikaans and speaking English in this way, learning white material. Like when you have novels in English, I remember we had one called *Witness Kiss*. It was about a Xhosa teenage couple that was shut down by almost every white child at the school, because why are we learning Xhosa. Xhosa novels should be taken to *those* high schools; you know those in the townships… The literature itself was not in Xhosa; it was English, but it was about a Xhosa culture, it was about understanding the Xhosa culture and how these two young couples understood or experienced their romance in Xhosa. *Nami* (me too) I even got to a point where I was like this is actually for township people. While we were learning with these kids you have to learn Macbeth, you had to learn, you know all these Romeo and Juliet you had to learn **(Interview with Karabo: 28 September 2016).**

That this novel dealt with the lives of characters who were Xhosa-speaking was enough for it to be dismissed by a Black student. One could argue that this was a desperate attempt on Karabo's part to assimilate into the dominant culture at her school. At the heart of it however is a rejection of black life as worthy of knowledge and reading attention. Karabo also spoke of how a Black teacher was for her 'a downgrade' and that anything Black was 'a downgrade'. Meaning that she perceived Black teachers as inferior to white teachers and any that she also perceived any form of knowledge that has links to Black people or Black life as inferior knowledge. Karabo has since changed her perception of Black people and Black knowledge. This did not happen

miraculously. A series of engagements with other Black students and with Black lecturers precipitated this change. What if Karabo did not engage in discussions with other Black students and did not have Black lecturers? Her experience highlights the importance of developing a decolonised curriculum in an attempt to liberate the minds of colonised Black students. Having Black lecturers does not automatically translate to decolonisation, but it does contribute to the removal of myths that Black people cannot be the bearers of knowledge. The argument is not about a simple replacement of white academics with Black academics, but it is to point out that the mere presence of Black academics in the class rooms can positively influence Black students.

Bongani acknowledges that decolonisation is a historical project in which Black people are fighting for their humanity and freedom through liberating the mind. Bongani's testimony speaks to what Fanon (1963 and [1952]2008), Biko (2004) and Bogues (2003) that decolonisation is a historical project. It should be noted that decolonising the curriculum and liberating the mind is a quest for humanity. It is an attempt to re-humanise the colonised, because "colonisation dehumanises and objectifies the colonised, rendering them incapable of being human" (Ahluwalia and Zegeye, 2001:456). In the next section of the chapter I focus on the quest for humanity as a form of decolonising the curriculum.

## 5.2 Decolonising the Curriculum as a Quest for Humanity

The quest for humanity as liberation is premised on the argument made by Mbembe (2002) and Gilroy (1991) when they historicised and problematized the European Enlightenment project and modernity. As argued by the two thinkers, Enlightenment was not only a human rights project but it was also concerned with deciding whether Black people or the African people should be afforded a human status so that it can be decided whether they should also be privy to human rights. Using Mbembe (2002) I argued in chapter four that for the Enlightenment project African people were not fully human and did not possess consciousness and subjectivity. I establish in the previous chapter that the modern university has its cultural foundations in the Enlightenment project which facilitated intellectual imperialism, colonisation and racism. At the heart of decolonisation and decolonising the curriculum is a quest for humanity since the African people have been denied their humanity. To decolonise the curriculum, is to create a curriculum that

will re-humanise Black people or the African people. A quotation from an interview with Omo Dudu speaks to this concern.

> So, go read Rawls. Go read all these white Western political theorists and then what can you say about South African local government elections [keeping] in mind [that] these people you have been reading weren't even thinking about Africa as a place where humans live when they were writing. But now you must apply their thinking to your context **(Interview with Omo Dudu: 24 November 2016).**

Omo Dudu points to the divide between Europeans and Africans as human and non-human respectively. This leads me to ask: How will knowledges of people who were considered non-human - meaning they do not possess the capacity to think or know - be included in the academy? Is the exclusion of Black people's knowledges and forms of knowing from the academy due to the fact that the academy still views Black people as non-humans? The quest for humanity should not be misunderstood for assimilation into whiteness or the abandonment of how Black people understand humanity. It should be understood as a concerted effort for Black people to define themselves and not be Black people in relation to whiteness. For Fanon ([1952]2008) Black people can only be Black amongst themselves, where they do not have to experience their humanity through others, but when they are confronted by white people they have no ontological resistance. Fanon ([1952]2008) further argues that humanity as we know it is white. Therefore, a quest for humanity should not be to seek validation from white people that we too are human but a rejection of humanity as presented by white people. It should be understood as a concerted effort to create a humanity that is not insecure about itself, so that it will not be preoccupied by dehumanising others for it to exist. As argued by Biko a quest for humanity "is based on a self-examination which has ultimately led us to believe that by seeking to run away from ourselves and emulate the white man, Blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black" (2004:101). Taking the cue from Biko (2004) the quest for humanity is also a continuous struggle for truth, which questions the old values and systems of knowledge.

In the previous chapter I draw on Majeke (1952) to show that part of the civilising mission to humanise Africans was to convert them to Christianity. This conversion was facilitated by

missionaries and this process ultimately became part of the curriculum of a Black child. Biko writes that "the first people to come and relate to Blacks in a human way in South Africa were the missionaries. They were in the vanguard of the colonisation movement to 'civilise and educate' the savages and introduce the Christian message to them" (2004:102). It is for this reason that Biko urged that a "long look should also be taken at the educational system for blacks" because this is where Black children were taught to abandon Black modes of understanding and being (2004:104). This was done so that Black people can only understand modes of being through and in relation to whiteness. Sefako shares his experiences and reflections on the teachings of the church.

> I go back to my teaching from the church from Sunday school…that this Jesus that we are taught about, these doctrines we are taught about, they don't really fit. We don't really fit into this. So the Rhodes Must Fall…sparks all these fragments. It's an event which captures all these articulate things in my identity, in my being as it happens **(Interview with Sefako: 23 November 2016).**

Biko's arguments and Sefako's experiences are indications that there are many things that contribute to the curriculum in an attempt to ultimately colonise the minds of Africans. Having attended a Catholic mission school, Sefako reflects on the teachings he was subjected to about 15-16 years ago. Sefako's experiences are an indication of how these teachings require Black students to negate Blackness in order to survive in institutions of learning. It appears not much has changed regarding the culture of the mission schools and the kind of subjectivity they want to inculcate amongst Black people.

For Biko (2004) the missionaries were not satisfied by merely teaching the doctrine, but they were also interested in creating divisions amongst the colonised. The result of the concerted effort of the missionaries was the creation of two camps known as *amagqobhoka* the converted and *amaqaba* the pagans (Biko, 2004:60). Majeke (1952) unpacks the role the missionaries played in conquest and also exposes missionary history and ideology. She shows that the missionaries were not merely teaching and converting Black people into Christianity, but they were mainly responsible for dismantling the knowledge systems of Black people and teaching them to be obedient to an oppressive white system. The history and ideological orientation of the missionaries finds expression in the individualistic liberal forms of economics. Missionary

education encouraged Black people to reject themselves and aspire to whiteness. Another contributing factor to a quest for humanity as liberation is demythologising history, because Black people's history in South Africa has been distorted and erased. For Biko "A people without a positive history is like a vehicle without an engine" (2004:32). This can be taken to mean that Black people without positive self-image will always believe that they are nothing without the help of white people and thus creating and sustaining the inferiority complex. A compelling testimony is given here by Molebogeng about the importance of positive history:

> …what I am obsessed with is, I am thinking Black texts. Like I haven't been exposed to texts written by Black people writing Black stories. I don't know if I heard it somewhere that …we don't hear at all about inventions that have been done by Black people, we don't hear anything positive that has been done by Black people. And I believe that it's stored somewhere …like I would love to know what my dad has done, like something great that he has done, that will sort of like make me believe that there is something great about myself that I can do, like something out of this world, that my dad or my dad's dad has done that will contribute to the person that I am today. I want to hear stories like that… stories of Black people who have done this and this, so that I can have this perception of we are not as bad as the world paints… Black people. So, I feel like history is important in terms of determining how we behave on what we think of ourselves and what we think we can accomplish and that is not visible. So that's what I mean by Black texts… I would love to hear stories of how Black people write, their thinking, for example your Steve Biko and everything, how they think so that, it will sort of like help me to think of myself and what I am capable of **(Interview with Molebogeng: 27 September 2016).**

The importance of positive history is explicitly highlighted in this interview as a tool for finding our humanity and liberating our minds from the shackles of inferiority. Biko goes on to say about the importance of positive history.

> As one black writer says, colonialism is never satisfied with having the native in its grip but by some strange logic, it must turn to his past and disfigure and distort it. Hence the history of the black man in this country is most disappointing to read. It is presented merely as a long succession of defeats. The Xhosas were thieves who went to war for stolen property; the Boers never provoked the Xhosas but merely went on 'punitive expeditions' to teach the thieves a lesson. Heroes like Makana who were essentially revolutionaries are painted as superstitious

> trouble-makers who lied to the people about bullets turning into water. We would be too naive to expect our conquerors to write unbiased histories about us but we have to destroy the myth that our history starts in 1652, the year Van Riebeeck landed at the Cape (2004:105).

Fanon (1963) warns us about romanticising history, in an attempt to go back and rediscover our true culture. He argues that going back to find history that existed pre-colonisation and try to re-live that past is by no means revolutionary. In fact, he posits that it is static and will not ameliorate the conditions of the colonised. However, Fanon also argues that we can "use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope" (1963:232). Fanon further articulates that "we must not therefore be content with delving into the past of a people in order to find coherent elements which will counteract colonialism's attempts to falsify and harm. We must work and fight with the same rhythm as the people to construct the future and to prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already springing up" (1963:234). The use of positive history above is used in light of Fanon's arguments. It is used as a tool to breathe into the colonised a sense of pride in being Black people and the belief that Black people too are bearers of knowledge. Positive history is used as a tool to create a platform for Black people to work towards total liberation and not depend on colonialists for forging a new future. Moreover, it does not imply the denial of the present situation, destruction of what has been built or an attempt to go back to earlier forms of civilisation.

Mmabotle uses Mazibuko Jara to give an account that in the pre-colonial era women were allowed to own and inherit land, and that all this was reversed by the colonial governments. As a result, this strengthened patriarchal relations in Black societies. This questions the representation of history that is been presented to us as true and leads to us unconsciously defending colonial traditions as African tradition. Magubane (2003) also argues that the British settlers were adamant in enforcing patriarchal division of authority as the natural order of human societies amongst the colonised. This naturalisation of patriarchal authority is in many respects defended by Africans as an African culture. Mmabotle makes a similar argument which relates to how we defend patriarchal ownership and inheritance of land. She posits that:

> There is this social activist *igama lakhe ngu Mazibuko Jara* (his name is Mazibuko Jara) and he works with thirty (30) rural formations. They are challenging agrarian reform and other issues.

> Mazibuko was telling me that colonisation also strengthened patriarchy in the sense of land ownership. [In the pre-colonial era] Black women could have a stake in land, Black women could inherit land, and Black women could do so much with land. They [colonial government administrators] appointed chiefs who were Black men and because also in the West women were seen as nothing **(Interview with Mmabotle: 05 December2016).**

Decolonisation and decolonising the curriculum are efforts to question history as it is presented to us and more importantly it questions what is known as 'African culture' - a culture that has been modified and manipulated to serve the interest of the coloniser. This is not to say everything about African culture was changed or modified. Moreover, decolonising the curriculum attempts to expose the role played by missionaries in dismantling our humanity.

The following section is more content-based and solutions-orientated and deals with the politics of knowledge production. It points to the contestation that exists in the students' understandings of decolonising the curriculum. It will highlight the differences and the similarities between these understandings.

## 5.3 The Politics of Knowledge Production

The respondents generally advocate for the inclusion of different knowledge systems and curriculum design methods. Some advocate for Afrocentrism while others argue for a Pan-Africanist approach to decolonising the curriculum. The fundamental difference between these two approaches is that Afrocentrism aims at replacing Eurocentric scholarship with Afrocentric scholarship whereas the Pan-Africanist approach seeks to fight for the inclusion of African systems of thought into the academy, but not as alternative knowledge understood and taught through Western forms of knowing. Amongst respondents who advocate for Afrocentrism there is some sense of uncertainty as to whether Afrocentrism is what they mean by decolonising the curriculum, but they are clear about including more of African knowledge systems into the academy. This will be discussed later in the chapter. Those who advocate for a Pan-Africanist curriculum seem certain about what they mean and argue for the inclusion of knowledges of all the former colonised people in the global South.

### 5.3.1 Afrocentrism

Afrocentrism has been defined and discussed both in the introductory chapter and the literature review chapter. I have used Asante (1980) to define what Afrocentricity means. In essence it means the creation of a new centre of knowledge that will focus on Black or African knowledge systems in an effort to re-locate Africans as agents of history (Asante, 1980). Asante does not stop at merely defining Afrocentricity, he goes as far as proposing a curriculum which he named 'Africology' (1990:7). Africology means a scientific inquiry that focuses on cosmological, epistemological, axiological, and aesthetic issues from an African perspective. Some of the students conceptualise decolonisation in an Afrocentric manner. Bongani and Molebogeng share their meanings on decolonising curriculum.

> …another understanding of my decolonisation is in a broader sense, yes, I am an advocate of decolonisation at a broader African scale. I am not for decolonization at a localized scale, universities or South Africa. For me decolonization is a broader scale, it involves all of Africa. …An Afrocentric curriculum …showing decolonisation is a much broader project, than you know localising it. And then of course we come back to the issue of borders again. Yah I mean I hate borders; I hate the whole immigration policies. Yah so for me decolonisation should also be about looking into that level of borders. If we are saying Afrocentric then borders and you know citizenship and issues of citizenship also have to be decolonized. The whole thing should be about Africa really. That's my take on it **(Interview with Bongani: 28 September 2016).**

Bongani is making an argument that decolonisation and decolonising the curriculum should not be understood as a national or a country project, but rather it should be an African project. For him decolonisation also means changing the way citizenship has been used to entry into geographic spaces amongst and against Africans by other Africans, thus holding on to colonially created borders and identities. His argument echoes that presented by Mbembe: "decolonising an African university requires a geographical imagination that extends well beyond the confines of the nation-state" (2016:36). Following Bongani's argument one can conclude that localising or

nationalising the idea or the project of decolonisation does not really do justice because this process will still facilitate certain elements of colonialism.

> I am all for Black people to be taught Black texts. To me it is not even clear, when the debate was that you are substituting eurocentrism with Afro-Centrism. For me I don't even have a problem with that because I feel like for us to be on the same level - …these are white people and this is where they are; we here always following; whatever will get us here to a point where we do not have to gaze at whiteness for how to live our lives … whatever will get me here, I am all for that. Even if it means do away with whiteness [do away with the cultural and values systems of white people and white scholarship] and advocate only for Blackness, it's fine. Bottom line is that we are not in the same lane and we are always gazing at white people and I feel like that should stop, if it means Afro-centrism then that is fine. **(Interview with Molebogeng: 27 September 2016)**

From the interview excerpts presented above, one could pick-up that the respondents are not fully confident in articulating their meanings of a decolonised curriculum and they sound uncertain especially Molebogeng. This uncertainty does not mean that what the respondents have said does not have value. At the heart of the testimonies is the call for the unity of African people in an attempt to decolonise not only the curriculum but the continent. This could also mean that the debate on decolonisation has not yet been deepened amongst certain students and they are still looking for the language to articulate their meanings and understandings for decolonising the curriculum. I draw this distinction because there are some students that I have interviewed especially PhD students who are very certain about what they mean by decolonising the curriculum.

### 5.3.2 Pan-Africanist Approach

Like decolonisation, Pan-Africanism is a highly contested terrain in relation to both its meaning and periodisation. Meanings of Pan-Africanism are resistance to racialism on the one hand and resistance to economic exploitation on the other. But both these interpretations of the term speak to liberation of the African people across three continents: Africa, the New World/Americas and Europe. Legum argues that Pan-Africanism "developed through what Dr. Shepperson described as `a complicated Atlantic triangle of influences' between the New World, Europe and Africa"

(1965:14). Legum (1965) also argues that the Pan-Africanist movement was developed through a variety of scholars which includes Claude McKay, W.E.B Du Bios, R. A. Armattoe, and Aime Cesaire and political leaders like the former president of Sengal Leopold Senghor. Legum (1965) claims that this movement started in the late nineteenth century. In contrast Nantambu (1998) argues that the Pan-Africanist movement started with the earlier resistances to white people's invasions of Africa which dates back to 1873 BC. He further argues that Pan-Africanism is not a result of racialisation of Black people but due to economic exploitation of Black people for both their labour and economic resources.

This thesis is not concerned with the periodisation of Pan-Africanism or the debate about whether Pan-Africanism was due to racialisation or economic exploitation. Suffice it to clarify that race remains central to any form of exploitation. I am more concerned with the definition of Pan-Africanism so as to show that from the participant's responses Pan Africanism is one of the approaches to decolonising the curriculum.

Nantumbu (1998) highlighted a number of definitions from scholars such as Rupert Emerson (1970), Olisanwuche Esedeke (1977), Robert Chrisman (1973) and George Padmore (1972). Legum (1965) on the other hand tries to highlight the concepts of Pan-Africanism that make-up the definition, nature and character of Pan-Africanism. From the definitions and concepts presented both by Nantumbu (1998) and Legum (1965) at the heart of Pan-Africanism is the unity of Africans around the world, for the liberation of the African people from both a mental and a physical slavery, and for the total achievement of African people's humanity which was denied by the white people. The unifying factor is common experiences of mental and physical oppression through dispossession or slavery, and social, economic, and political exclusion through colonialism. Decolonising the curriculum is an integral part of the mental liberation of the African people across the globe. Decolonising the curriculum, as will be showed in this section of the chapter can help us develop the necessary tools to adequately and accurately diagnose our problems in society and develop the necessary tools solve these problems. Sefako posits that:

> from the …perspective [of] African orders of knowledge we must take them as different modes which seek to understand the human condition... The only way in which we can understand the human

> condition under modernity… is through rooting our conceptual frameworks from the Black experience... We can't rely on theories that are rooted in the notion of the European subject because …if you check the European subject or the European normative values as critical modes of enquiry …they fail us …they have become useless as modes of understanding the human condition. So, what we are saying by participating in the Black radical tradition is that theories that are rooted in the Black experience, Black modes of existence you see that's where the importance of African spirituality, the chronology of African mythology comes in. What sort of meaning can we denote from these systems of thought? **(Interview with Sefako: 23 November 2016).**

Sefako also argues that by including African scholarship as part of decolonising the curriculum does not only help us with the theoretical, but it also helps with the empirical and the practical in an attempt to ameliorate the lives Black people in and outside the academy. For Sefako, decolonising the curriculum will help us with matters of governance and policy development issues. He suggests that without including African modes of thought we will not be able to correctly diagnose the problems of our society because the knowledge that we are provided with in the academy does not equip us with the necessary tools to do so. He elaborates that:

> If we are able to understand and to make the correct diagnosis of what is wrong with our society, what is wrong with the system therefore whatever it is that we are going to do even at the level of the concrete... The level of the concrete whatever the policy recommendations, the government, parliament to the state itself… They will be based on a proper understanding of what is it, that subject that we are dealing with. So …if you are informed about these theories of Marxism, class struggle of which they do not help us understand constitutionalism, they don't have any clue of understanding the subject that we are dealing with and the structures that we are dealing with., whatever it is that we are doing is futile. **(Interview with Sefako: 23 November 2016).**

It is clear from the above interview excerpt by Sefako that without the African systems of thought we will not be able to ameliorate the Black condition in South Africa and Africa at large. This simply means that we will not be able to improve the lives of the majority of Black people in South Africa. However, Sefako should not be mistaken for advocating the teaching of African systems of thought and theories that are rooted in the Black experience only. He does believe in participation of different realms of thought but he believes that Black people's condition under modernity can only ever be understood through the application of theories rooted in the Black

thought and experience. Furthermore, he should not be misunderstood to be saying that the Black condition can only be explained through theories rooted in the Black experience. He believes that the Eurocentric theories do have a role to play but they are not enough in explaining the Black condition and they cannot understand the Black condition. Sefako argues that one of the courses taught in Political Studies department added value to the department. He posits that:

> There is no tradition …the courses taught by Peter Hudson their value is undermined in [this] department. [His critics] …take them out and they say they want to do African studies which is not grounded in anything, that is not philosophically grounded, that is not grounded in any theoretics and methodology **(Interview with Sefako: 23 November 2016).**

He also argued in the interview that:

> So there are different materials, writings, and thoughts. We can go back to African mythologies; we can go back to Greek metaphysics but whatever scholarship has been doing is to try and understand the human condition. So all these different traditions, do they talk in Marxist language, Africanist language, form the Black Atlantic language, from the Black radical tradition, the German idealism, from French structuralism … These are ideas that have been in the history of ideas that have been seeking to understand the human condition. So you can be rooted in Eurocentric traditions, modes of analysis, it helps to understand them [Eurocentric traditions] because it's in the realm of ideas. It's a realm of ideas; it's the history of ideas. **(Interview with Sefako: 23 November 2016).**

The arguments made by Sefako show that a Pan-Africanist approach to decolonisation is not only about the inclusion of African systems of thought and African literature. It is about the prioritisation of African knowledge systems when dealing with African people. Sefako further argues that he believes in a system that has multiple centres of knowledge. As a result, this prioritisation of African systems of thought does not mean the exclusion of other systems of thoughts around the globe. Other systems of thought, including the Eurocentric knowledge also have a role to play in understanding the human condition but they are limited in explaining the Black people's condition.

The next section will focus on the introduction into the academy of knowledge systems of all people from all the continents that have been colonised and oppressed by the Europeans. The arguments echo what the coloniality/modernity scholars Boaventura de Sousa and Enrique Dussel term "pluriversity" and what Wa Thiong'o calls 'moving the centre' which means creating multiple centres of knowledge.

### 5.3.3 Moving the Centre and Pluriversity

The respondents argue that at the heart of decolonising the curriculum is the introduction of all knowledge systems that have been marginalized and oppressed by Europe in an attempt to question the concept 'universality' as constructed under European thought. 'Moving the centre' as it is used in this chapter is taken from Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1993). It actually means the creation of multiple centres of knowledge formed by Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East in an attempt to criticise the idea that there can only be one centre of knowledge that has the potential to be universal. 'Pluriversity' on the other hand comes from the Latin American scholars. By this they mean that "it is a process of knowledge production that is open to epistemic diversity" and "it does not necessarily abandon the notion of universal knowledge for humanity, but which embraces it via a horizontal strategy of openness to dialogue among different epistemic traditions" (Mbembe, 2016: 37). These concepts are reflected in the way that Omo Dudu understands decolonising the curriculum:

> For me a decolonised intellectual project or an investment in a decolonised curriculum means including Islamic political thought, means including Indian political thought, Latin American thought in Social Science …and if you are in Maths and Science, Egypt as a site of challenging who actually came up with the particular sciences is important. I mean a truly decolonised project has to include all marginalised, oppressed, and erased forms of knowledge and sites if knowledge which means it will be impossible for us not to [learn about] China, or Brazil or Colombia or Central America or Palestine… I don't blame where we are now as students because it's going to take time and South Africa is even worse. We talk about all these people, Tiro, Sankara, Sobukwe … but there is no [easily accessible] material on them. We need to develop our own epistemological perspectives, but I think we can do them at the same time. I don't think we should be like let's have this insulated process of just South Africa, Black African… Fanon was reading people like Cabral, Cesaire. 'We

> don't care about Britain it is European and now we just want to be South African' it is like but we can't just be South African. There is a world right and a world that has similar histories and contexts and relationships with whiteness and power and capital like we do **(Interview with Omo Dudu: 24 November 2016)**

'Moving the centre' and 'pluriversity' question the idea of one centre and a universality conceptualised through the Eurocentric lens. Boitumelo further elaborates on what Omo Dudu says:

> So that was our main argument. To say at a very basic level every department can take stock of what it teaches and why it teaches it and how it teaches that, and decolonise. It does not mean you don't consider what else is written in the world but also you consider it with Africa in mind and teach them alongside each other. I mean one of the arguments we made in the question of Blackness document was for subaltern studies. So even if you take things that have been written in Asia, in India, why are we not considering them seriously in our curriculum? India was colonised, India is democratic, a lot of Africa was colonised, and it is now democratic even though there is a strong similarity, yes you will pick apart the differences. But why are we not engaging different parts of the world that have been through what we have been through in different ways? **(Interview with Boitumelo: 14 December 2016).**

Boitumelo does not only address the question of epistemology but she also speaks to issue of pedagogy and ontology. She reiterates the argument of including all the oppressed and former oppressed people's knowledges as postulated by Omo Dudu. These respondents echo Mbembe's argument that "there is recognition of the exhaustion of the present academic model with its origins in the universalism of the Enlightenment" (2016:36). They suggest that knowledge can only be universal if it includes all systems of thought. Mbembe (2016) argues that according to the decoloniality/modernity scholars after the decolonisation process we will no longer have a university but a pluriversity.

Two of the respondents question the idea of a universal theory that is applicable to all societies by using two psychology theorists.

> I will give you Freud for example, the psychosocial development. I have always had questions about that as a Black South African I lived in a house where for some time I was raised by my grandmother … and this is common you know this people are raised by their grandmothers, people are raised by their aunts, so many things happen in Black families that cause people not to have both their parents the majority of time. So I read Freud as an ideal white development of the personality structure and how family influences this. It is out there, it does not have anything to do with me and we would raise these questions and be like hey but what about us? You are in South Africa where men migrate all the time. It is common for men to migrate to find work. What does Freud have to say about this? But then they will make excuses **(Interview with Mmathapelo: 24 October 2016).**

Nomfundo also questions Erik Erikson:

> In psychology you read Erikson's stages of development and then you see that Erikson was trying to understand an average child from a first world country. Some of those things they don't apply in Africa. Like you put things such as industry vs inferiority [stage four of Erikson's personality development stage], but those are some of the stages that poor children in Africa don't get to because at seven (7), eight (8), nine (9), ten (10) and eleven (11) they are already playing a role of a mother or a father [a] parent or guardian which is something that Erikson does not account for. And there are a whole lot of theories that are doing that and when you read them you fail to reconcile the [theory with your reality] **(Interview with Nomfundo: 30 November 2016).**

Nomfundo's view echoes Sefako's when he says that 'we cannot rely on theories that are rooted in European thought because they fail us' (Interview with Sefako: 23 November 2016). What is evident here is that European theories cannot comprehend and explain Black people's experiences and the Black condition. This suggests that a universality of theories cannot be achieved through a single theory that aims to explain all people's experiences, because experiences are not universal. To accept that European theories are universal implies that they can be applied to all societies and that where the theory does not work, that society has not fully assimilated into European-ness, and so is not fully human.

The introduction of subjugated knowledges should not be perceived as mere introduction of knowledges that are going to be subservient to the Eurocentric canon. In this vein, Mbembe argues that "pluriversity is not merely the extension throughout the world of a Eurocentric model

presumed to be universal and now being reproduced almost everywhere thanks to commercial internationalism" (2016:37). 'Pluriversity' guards against what Buck-Morss (2000) warns us against. That knowledges that serve as counter evidence to European thought are introduced as story of the other, meaning that they most probably be read by those who are oppressed and whose voices are marginalised. Such a practice prevents such knowledges from forming part of the mainstream curriculum. Mmathapelo also expresses discomfort with having counter evidence knowledges as supplementary or subservient to the Eurocentric canon. She posits that:

> Basically Mignolo was saying in that reading we don't abandon Marxism. We write Marxism from a perspective of an African. So, I am not really comfortable with the inclusion of African scholars, the inclusion of certain scholars just because they are de-colonial. Because they become a supplement, they become in addition to, then you can read them. So for me what it will take is …reforming the existing knowledge **(Interview with Mmathapelo: 24 October 2016).**

The introduction of these knowledges has serious implications for epistemology and pedagogy in the academy. One is that given the current cultural dominance of Eurocentric epistemologies and pedagogies the likelihood is that these knowledges will be subject to more violence Pluriversity recognises epistemic diversity. This conception of decolonising the curriculum could be a solution the question of dominant epistemologies. These respondents' views resonate with Bongani Nyoka's (2013) illustration, reviewed in chapter three of this thesis, that Western epistemes and the English language are inadequate for dealing with Black modes of being and existence.

## 5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I attempt to give the reader a sense of the different meanings that respondents give to the decolonisation project by focusing on three themes: liberation, a quest for humanity and the politics of knowledge production. I demonstrate that decolonising the curriculum is a contested terrain with striking differences and similarities I argue that decolonising the curriculum is a process which seeks to mentally liberate the formerly colonised, the oppressed and the dehumanised in an attempt to re-humanise or to rediscover humanity for the African people. This goal can be achieved by constructing a curriculum that includes subjugated

knowledges on an equal footing and in conversation with their dominant counterparts. The arguments for decolonising the curriculum presented by respondents reveal three curriculum strategies: Afrocentrism, Pan-Africanism and 'Moving the centre' or Pluriversity. I conclude that Afrocentrism can only help to Africanise the university. It cannot decolonise the institution. Both the Pan-Africanist approach and pluriversity have the potential to decolonise our universities. The best practice will be to combine pluriversity with Pan-Africanism for an African university.

The arguments presented in this chapter suggest that it is important to ask what implications decolonising the curriculum would have for the university considering that scholars with an awareness of the politics of knowledge production will be needed. What does this mean for the current generation of scholars who are invested in European scholarship as the only universal knowledge and as the ultimate form of knowledge? What will it mean for Black students if decolonising the curriculum does not take place? What will it mean for African scholarship and for Black thought? Does it mean that African orders of knowledge and other systems of knowing will continue to be marginalised? There is an urgent need to address these concerns as a way forward towards decolonising the curriculum. If these concerns are not addressed, they will be detrimental to the university and to students.

# Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this project is to unearth what decolonising the curriculum means for a small selection of students. My findings cannot be generalised. This study is both context specific and it criticises the concept of universality. I argue against the universalisation of experiences and of modes or systems of thought that analyse these experiences. This does not mean common experiences do not exist, it simply means that efforts taken to analyse and understand these experiences should take into cognisance context and pay attention to the cultural underpinning that produce these experiences. This study draws on three approaches to curriculum transformation to help understand respondents' calls for decolonising the curriculum: Afrocentrism which implies the removal of Eurocentric scholarship and the inclusion of African scholarship; Pan-Africanism which is used to explain the students' arguments to include African systems of thought and African modes of knowing and to criticise the limited, racist and inhuman Eurocentric curriculum. And, a combination of two systems of thought namely, African and South American systems of thought which emphasise moving the centre and modernity/coloniality. This combined curriculum strategy is used here to explain the need to include all subjugated knowledges and all systems of thought from formerly colonised people. The study addresses the need to create a new institutional culture which is more humane in the process of decolonisation.

The practice of decolonising the curriculum is an ongoing debate which requires extensive reading and genuine discussion. This study is a contribution to this ongoing debate. While this practice is a contested matter there are unifying factors that make it possible to develop a common understanding of what decolonising the curriculum is and its multiple dimensions means. The project of decolonisation with regards to the curriculum has put a lot of emphasis on the institutional structure and epistemology and paid little to pedagogy. This project too fell into that trap, but this opens a research opportunity to expand on pedagogy in relation to decolonisation. Drawing from "*Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*" by Gloria Ladson-Billings and Django Paris into *"Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy"* one cannot escape language when dealing with pedagogy. As a result, decolonising epistemology alone will not ameliorate the experiences Black students. Serious attention needs to be given to pedagogy.

The material that came out of the interviews proves that students are more than passive subjects who are waiting for knowledge to be imparted to them. They prove to be active agents that possess knowledge and are able to make meaning of their experiences. These interviews portray the university not only as a place for knowledge production but also as an instrument of violence vested in anti-Black racism. The fact that students are only formerly exposed to scholarship that questions the universality of European thought at postgraduate level is alarming and speaks to the concerted effort on the part of the university to maintain anti-Black curriculum. Moreover, the burning questions students carry with them regarding the curriculum are often dismissed at undergraduate level, a pedagogical practice that treats students as passive agents in the learning process. This speaks to the need to produce scholars that understand the value of plurality in knowledge production.

I also argue that if the culture of the university is not changed, any effort towards decolonising the curriculum will not bear the desired results. All the aspects that make up the curriculum, from the content, epistemology, pedagogy and competencies are embedded in this culture. The inclusion of subjugated knowledges will not ameliorate the Black condition, nor will it help us with decolonising the university under the current university culture. At worst, this might mean that these knowledges will be subjected to violent epistemic and pedagogical practices and that their premises will be misunderstood (purposefully or not) and subjected to dubious assessments in an attempt to measure their credibility and impact. This situation calls for more research to be conducted in an attempt to understand what implications this culture holds for decolonising the curriculum. This understanding will help us create a platform that will ensure subjugated knowledges are not introduced as the story of the other but as part of the mainstream curriculum.

The culture of the university treats Black students as disabled people who cannot or do not possess the ability to think or learn. This culture operates on the assumption that it is up to the white academics to infuse Black students with these qualities and that until they have done so, it becomes almost impossible for Black students to succeed unless they perform whiteness and negate their lived experiences of being Black. This means the forms of pedagogies tied up in this culture produces students who are not culturally competent in their own existence. So they hang

in limbo in this strata, this can be emotionally and mentally harmful. Staff who conform to this culture refuse to acknowledge and accept that their methods of teaching Black students are inadequate. However, their inadequacy is protected by the system, because it is culturally produced by the system and gives educators an opportunity not to care.

The value of this research is that it opens up the dialogue around decolonisation and decolonising the university curriculum and centres culture as an instrument of power. It deepens the dialogue to look at the micro-exchanges in the academy that work towards alienating Black students. It treats this culture as an inevitable part of the university because the university is founded and developed on this culture. It opens up an opportunity to interrogate the European Enlightenment as a project of rights and rationality, because for this project Africans were not human-beings and possess no form of consciousness. The role of the European Enlightenment was to eradicate Black modes of existence and of knowing, so it is not surprising that the university finds itself in the cultural production of negations of Blackness.

Decolonising the curriculum is understood as being about a quest for humanity and mental liberation reveals that these two ideals remain central to the struggle for freedom and for deepening South Africa's democratic process. These two concepts make us aware that decolonisation is a historical process and cannot be understood outside history. I am left with two questions for further research. Do children whose upbringing involved visiting a university frequently feel alienated by the university? How do the experiences of Black students at historically white universities compare with those at historically black universities?

# Reference List


Adelman, M. and Ruggi, L., 2016. *The Sociology of the Body.* Current Sociology Review, 64(6), pp. 907-930

Ahluwalia, P., and Zegeye, A., 2001. *Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko: Towards Liberation*, Social Identities, 7:3, 455-469, Routledge

Alatas, SH. 2000. Intellectual imperialism: definition, traits and problems. *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 28 (1), 23-45.

Ally, N. and Ally, S., 2008. Critical intellectualism: The role of black consciousness in reconfiguring the race-class problematic in South Africa. In: *Biko Lives!* (pp. 171-188). Palgrave Macmillan US.

Altbach, P., 2015. Knowledge and education as international commodities. International higher education, (28).

Arowosegbe, O.J., *Decolonising the social sciences in the global South: Claude Ake and the praxis of knowledge production in Africa*. openaccess.leidenuniv.nl

Asante, M.K. and Vandi, A.S. eds., 1980. *Contemporary Black thought: Alternative analyses in social and behavioral science* (No. 26). SAGE Publications, Incorporated.

Asante, M.K., 1992. *Kemet, Afrocentricity and knowledge*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Banks, C. and Banks, J., 2009. *Equity Pedagogy: An Essential Component of Multiculturalism Education.* Theory Into Practice, Francis and Taylor

Battaglia, M.P., 2008. Nonprobability sampling. *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*, pp.523-526.

Ben-Moshe, L., and Magaña, S., 2014. An introduction to race, gender, and disability: Intersectionality, disability studies, and families of color. Women, Gender, and Families of Color, 2(2), pp.105-114.

Bernard, M., Gebauer, J., and Maio, G., 2006. Cultural Estrangement: *The Role of Personal and Societal Value and Discrepancies.* Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, SAGE Publications. pp

Berger, R., 2015. Now I See it now I don't: *Researcher's Position and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research*: Qualitative Research, SAGE Publications.

Biko, B. S., 2004. I write What I like. 3 ed. Johannesburg: Picador Africa.

Bogues. A., 2003. Teaching Radical Africana Political Thought and Intellectual: *History Radical History Review*. Volume 2003, Number 87: 146-156

Bourdieu, P., 2011. The forms of Capital. (1986). *Cultural theory: An anthology*, *1*, pp.81-93

Bourdieu, P., 1977. The economics of linguistic exchanges. Information (International Social Science Council), 16(6), pp.645-668.

Bowles, S. and Gintis, H., 1976. *Schooling in capitalist America* (Vol. 57). New York: Basic Books.

Brandon. L., 2010. Remembering Cater Goodwin Woodson (1875-1920): *Curriculum Studies Handbook the next Moment*. Routledge, New York. 125-137

Bruce, S. and Yearly S., 2006. The SAGE Dictionary of Sociology, SAGE Publications, London

Bryman, A., 2001. *Ethnography.* SAGE Publication London.

Buck-Morss, Susan. 2000. "Hegel and Haiti". Critical Inquiry 26 (4). University of Chicago Press: 821–65.

Connell, R., 2007. Empire and the Creation of a Social Science. In: *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science.* Cambridge: Malden: Polity Press, pp. 3-26.

Connell, R., 2007. Morden General Theory and its Hidden Assumptions. *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science.* Cambridge: Malden: Polity Press, pp. 27-48.

Gaidzanwa, R., 2007. Alienation, Gender and Institutional Culture at the University of Zimbabwe, In: Feminist Africa 8: Rethinking Universities I, Issue 8: September 2007, African Gender Institute, Cape Town, 60-82

Green, L.J., 2012. Beyond South Africa's' indigenous knowledge-science' wars. *South African Journal of Science*, *108*(7-8), pp.44-54.

Escobar, A. 2007. Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise: The Latin American modernity/coloniality research program. *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2-3), 179-210

Fanon, F., 1963. Concerning Violence . In: *Wrethced of the Earth.* New York: Grove Press,

Fanon, F., 2008. *Black Skin White Masks*. Pluto Press, London

Fforrde, C., Bamblet, L. and Forgarty, W., 2013. *Discourse Deficit and Identity: Aboringinality, the Race Paradigm and the Language of Representation in Contemporary Australia*, Media International Australia Incorparating Culture and Policy, Vol. 149, 162-173

Gilroy, P., 1993. Masters, Mistresses, Slaves and theAntinomies of Modernity. In: *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness.* Cambridge: Harvard University , pp. 41-71.

Go, J. 2013. Introduction: *Entangling postcoloniality and sociological thought*. Go, J (ed) *Postcolonial Sociology*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing. 3-34.

Inglis, D. and Thorpe C., 2012. *An Invitation to Social Theory.* Cambrigde: Polity Press, pp. 62-73, 81-84.

Hill, D., 2001. State theory and the neo-liberal reconstruction of schooling and teacher education: *A structuralist neo-Marxist critique of postmodernist, quasi-postmodernist, and culturalist neo-Marxist theory*. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 22(1), pp.135-155.

Hokowhitu. B., 2004. Challenges to State Physical Education: *Tikanga Mäori, Physical Education Curricula, Historical Deconstruction, Inclusivism, and Decolonisation*. *Waikato Journal of Education.* Volume 10 p. 1-16

Hughes, B., and Paterson K., 1997. The Social Model of Disability and the Disappearing Body: *Towards a sociology of impairment*, Disability & Society, 12:3, 325-340,

Jackson, P. W. 1968. *Life in Classrooms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Janesick, V.J., 1994. The dance of qualitative research design: *Metaphor, methodolatry, and meaning.* SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks. pp.35-55

Jansen, J., (1998) *But our natives are different! Race, knowledge and power in the academy* Social Dynamics, 24:2, 106-116,.

King, D. 2008. Introduction. In: *African Americans and the Culture of Pain*. University of Virginia Press

Knowles, M., 1980. *Morden Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, Chicago Follet

Lawrence, S. and Sharma, U., 2002. Commodification of education and academic labour—using the balanced scorecard in a university setting. Critical perspectives on accounting, 13(5-6), pp.661-677.

Legum, C., 1965. *Pan Africanism A Short Political Guide,* Frederick A. Praeger Publishers New York.

Lewis, J. and Ritchie J., 2003. Generalising from Qualitative Research: *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*,2, SAGE Publications. London, PP.263-286

Louw, S., Todd, R. and Jimakorn, P., 2011. Active Listening in Qualitative Research Interviews. *Proceedings of the International Conference*: Doing Research in Applied Linguistics, pp. 71-72.

Magubane, Z. 2003. *Samians, Savages and Skulls, and Sex, Science and Colonial Militarism in Nineteenth-Century South Africa,* In: ed Moore, Kosek, Jake and Pandian, Race, Nature and the Politics of Difference, Duke Press, 99-121.

Mangcu, X., 2016 Decolonizing South African Sociology: *Building on a Shared "Text of Blackness"* Du Bois Review, 13. 145– 59.

Majeke, N., 1952. *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*. APDUSA, Cumberwood

Mamdani, M., 2001. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.

Margolis, E., Soldatenko, M., Acker, S. and Gair, M., 2001. Peekaboo. *The hidden curriculum in higher education*, pp.1-20.

Mauthner, N and Doucet, A., 2003. Reflexive Accounts and Accounts of Reflexivity in Qualitative Data Analysis

Mbembe, A.,2002. *African Modes of Self-Writing.* Duke University Press. Public Culture 14(1), pp. 239-273

Mbembe, A., 2015. *Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive*. Unpublished Paper.

Mbembe, A., 2016. Decolonizing the university: New directions. Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 15(1), pp.29-45.

McLaughlin. J. and Whatman S., (2007). *Embedding Indigenous Perspectives in University Teaching and Learning*: Lessons learnt and Possibilities of reforming / decolonising curriculum: Proceedings 4th International Conference on Indigenous Education: Asia/ Pacific, Vancouver, Canada. p. 1-16

Merryfield M.M and Subedi, B., 2006 Decolonizing the Mind for World-Centered Global Education: *The Social Studies Curriculum, Purposes, Problems, and Possibilities*. Ed, Wayne Ross. 3rd edition. State University of New York Press, Albany. 283-296.

McClintock, A., 2013. *Imperial leather: Race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest*. Routledge.

Mignolo, W. 2007. Introduction: Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking. *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2-3), 155-167.

Morgan, D.L., 1996. Focus groups. *Annual review of sociology*, pp.129-152.

Nantambu, K. 1998. *Pan Africanism vs Pan African Nationalism: An Afrocentric Analysis*, Journal of Black Studies, SAGE Publications.

Nyoka, B., 2014. Negation and Affirmation: a critique of sociology in South Africa. *African Sociological Review /Revue Africaine de Sociologie*, *17*(1), pp.2-24.

Ogunniyi, M.B., 2007. Teachers' stances and practical arguments regarding a science-indigenous knowledge curriculum: Part 1. *International Journal of Science Education*, *29*(8), pp.963-986.

Philipose, L., 2007. The Politics of Pain and the End of Empire, International Feminist Journal of Politics, Francis and Taylor, 9:1 March 2007, 60–81

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J. and Elam, G., 2003. Designing and selecting samples. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*, SAGE Publications, *2*, pp.111-145.

Söder, M., 1989. Disability as a social construct: the labelling approach revisited, European Journal of Special Needs Education, 4:2, 117-129

Stangor, C., 2011. *Research Methods for the Behavioural Sciences.* 4 ed. Belmont, CA :Wadsw*orth*

Tabata, B,. 1974 in his book *The Awakening of the People",* (1974). Spokesman Book, Nottingham

Tejeda, C., Espinoza, M. and Gutierrez, K., 2003. Toward a decolonizing pedagogy: Social justice reconsidered. *Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social change*, pp.9-38.

Trifonas, P., 2003. *Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social change*. Psychology Press.

Roberts, N., 2004. *Fanon, Sartre, Violence, and Freedom Source*: Sartre Studies International, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 139-160, Berghahn Books

Thiong'o. N., 1986. *Decolonizing the mind*. London: Heinemann educational Books. Nairobi.

Thiong'o. N., 1993. *Moving the centre*: The struggle for cultural freedom. East African Educational Publishers Ltd. Nairobi.

Quijano, A., 2007. Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality. *Globalisation and the Decolonisation Option.* Ed, Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar. London and New York: Routledge

Spreen, C.A. and Vally, S., 2006. Education rights, education policies and inequality in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *26*(4), pp.352-362.

Vally, S., 2007. Higher education in South Africa: market mill or public good?. *JHEA/RESA*, *5*(1), pp.17-28.

https://www.biznews.com/thought-leaders/2016/11/21/decolonisation-university-backwards/

accessed on 07 June 2017

https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/1330614/zille-mocks-decolonise-sa-activists-halloween/

accessed on 20 August 2017

# APPENDICES

# APENDIX I

**Consent Form for Participation in Study**

I, _____ am willing to participate in Sello Mashibini's research study. I understand that there will be no direct benefit for me in participating in this study and that there are not likely to be any risks involved. I understand that participation is voluntary, there will be no benefits for participation, and I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.

I have been guaranteed that the researcher will not identify me by name.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, my questions about participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, and I am aware of the risks and benefits of participating in the study.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

**Consent for Audio Taping of the Interview**

I_____hereby give the researcher Sello Mashibini permission to tape-record the interview.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

**APPENDIX: B**

**Participant Information Sheet**

Sello Mashibini
Private Bag X
WITS, 2050
Email: sellomashibini@gmail.com
Phone number: 076 344 5240

Dear Participant,

I am a student at Wits University and for my Masters research; I am conducting a study on decolonising the curriculum at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am interested in understanding what do you mean by advocating for a decolonised curriculum.

Participation involves making yourself available at a time and place of your preference for an in-depth face to face interview that I expect will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour. If you are interested and available, a further one to two interviews of similar duration would be helpful to me, but only if you are available and would like to.

Participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate in the study without any consequences. Participation will not be beneficial to you in any way. There will be no compensation. You can refuse to answer any questions, and to end the interview and your participation at any time, without any consequences. If you choose to participate, you will be assisting me, and I really appreciate it.

I will ensure that no one will know that you participated in this research, and I will not use your real name in transcribing the interviews, or reporting the results of my research.

Therefore, you will not be identifiable in any way. I will ensure that I send you an electronic link to my research report once it is deposited in the Wits university library and made public. I cannot guarantee that you will agree with my representation of you.

If you are willing to participate, I will be most grateful. You are welcome to contact me at the number listed above, and/or to contact my academic supervisor at the university at any time about this research: Zimitri Erasmus at 011 477 4583, Zimitri.Erasmus@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Sello Mashibini

**APPENDIX: III**




**Student No. 1277396**

**Sello mashibini**

**Department of Sociology**

**Masters Student**

**Permission to record the interview**

I will start with greetings and then introduce myself before the interview start.

1. Tell me, do you have any knowledge about the memorandum that was written by the Transform Wits Group? (for students in the politics department)
    - If you do not mind, can you tell me more about the contents of the memo?
    - Can you please share with me what were the major influences that led to development of the memo?
2. How familiar are you with the debates around decolonisation? (for students who are both in politics and sociology)
    - Where first did you encounter these debates?
    - What about that these encounters struck you the most?
3. What is your involvement in the project of decolonisation?
4. I want us to speak about your understanding of decolonisation. What is your understanding of decolonisation?
    - What would you say were the major influences that shaped your understanding of decolonisation? It could be anything between
        - ✓ A course
        - ✓ A Seminar
        - ✓ Conversations between fellow workers and students, or
        - ✓ Any other influence
5. Let us talk about spaces and sense of belonging. What I want to know is:

- Which spaces in the university gives you a sense of belonging?
- What about those spaces that gives you a sense of belonging?
- What other spaces gives a sense of belonging?

6. Now let us pay some attention to the spaces that you think do not give you a sense of belonging
    - Which spaces would you say challenges your sense of belonging?
    - What is it about those spaces that makes you feel that you do not belong here?

7. Let us focus more on the curriculum; can you think back to your first year and share with me some your experiences about your curriculum at?

    - Can you please share some of your reflections on the theoretical debates about decolonisation?

8. What for you makes decolonising the curriculum important?

9. In which ways do you think decolonising the curriculum will make a difference in your learning experience?

10. Do you have any specific ideas on how decolonising the curriculum can be achieved?

11. Do you have any questions for me?

12. Can you please, if you do not fill in the following questionnaire, its purpose to collect your demographic information?

**Thank you for your time**