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# Exploring the Role and Politics of Affect in Relation to a /the Call for Decolonization: A #Feesmustfall perspective

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

**Research Report**

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# Title: Exploring the Role and Politics of Affect in Relation to a/the Call for Decolonization: A #Feesmustfall perspective

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## Abstract

This study explored the role of affect in the #FeesMustFall movement, analysing how emotions such as alienation, frustration, and anger shape students' calls for decolonization in South African higher education. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's theory of affective economies and Margaret Wetherell's affective-discursive approach, this research examined how emotions circulate within the student body, transforming individual grievances into a collective social and political resistance. Using a thematic discourse analysis of public interviews and textual data, this study identified the socio-cultural and emotional dimensions linked to the demands associated with decolonization, highlighting how exclusion and institutional alienation unite students against having to endure colonial and apartheid legacies. In framing these emotions through language as the foundation of power, this study looked at this circulation of emotions and discourse as mandatory to expressing the structural and affective alienation that takes places in our modern day universities. Findings reveal that anger and frustration serve as unifying forces, intensifying the collective identity and demands of the #FeesMustFall movement. This study uncovered and unpacked the collective effects of financial as well as curriculum-based pains that affects students of a certain demographic, excluding them from an education promised to enrich their lives. The impact of failed promises that ultimately lead to emotions such as anger were often dismissed or deemed irrational by institutions. These institutions aimed to use these emotions as strategic and political weapons against students, which eventually lead students to confront authority figures.

This study underscored the critical importance of addressing affective experiences in any meaningful transformation of higher education, suggesting that students emotions are not only personal responses but also are deeply political acts that drive change and challenge institutional power structures. Much like their fore fathers, students were seeking restorative justice in their lifetime, not just for their generation but also for many generations to come.


Keywords: Decolonization, Anger, Frustration, Student protests, #FeesMustFall, Exclusion, Affective economies, Alienation, South Africa

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the fall of Apartheid, the South African education system has gone through many changes and transformations. From being a symbol of oppression, division, and disenfranchisement, the education system promised a future filled with unity, equality and educational growth for all South Africans. The journey to democracy and the access to quality education was not a smooth one, in fact many researchers have noted that despite the fact that South Africa has come so far, the education system is still far from perfect (Muswede, 2017 & Albertus, 2019). Events regarding the state of the education system played out during the 2015 #RhodesMustFall movement, which eventually coalesced into the #FeesMustFall movement (Ahmed, 2019 & Langa, 2017). These events which are reminiscent of the student led protests which opposed the Apartheid education share similarities in their goal for quality education for all (Postma, 2016). The student led protests from 2015 to 2016 uncovered a number of issues regarding the current state of the South African education system. Issues such as the decolonization of a euro-centric curriculum, as well as issues such as inequality, institutional racism and the increase in tuition which threatens to exclude the bulk of students who simply cannot afford to stay in school (Albertus, 2019).

Drawing on textual data produced from the #feesmustfall movement, almost 10 years later, this study attempted to explore the role and politics of affect, with a specific interest in the call for a decolonized curriculum as well as access to quality tertiary education. The analysis in this study drew on the combination of affect and discursive theory, presenting an 'unconventional' approach to how we understand collective movements that often have a common cause or goal. Research makes it clear that there are certain shortfalls and issues within the system but there still seems to be a gap in research that focuses on emotion and the culture and politics thereof (Muswede, 2017; Albertus, 2019). This study will attempt to unpack these emotions and/or affects that cause movement amongst the masses and leads them to protest.

Emotions in this study is not seen as just something that is personal, but more collective in its mandate to bring about mass social, structural and political change. By analyzing modern day textual data on public platforms, this study attempted to unearth metaphors, repetitive language and discursive emotions in protest speeches, media interviews and public declarations. Here we have an opportunity to observe how language and emotion are used to

describe interactions with structural powers, collective identities, and resistance to what can be seen as struggle between institutional transformation and maintaining the status quo.

Franz fanon (1961) speaks about decolonization as important to exposing the residual colonial powers that still impact our psyche, the way we as people relate to identity, belonging and power (Fanon, 1961). In fact, emotions within our affective economies are still ignored when it comes to political discourse despite evidence of the role it plays in how we perceive collectiveness, narrative resistance, as well as the shaping of modern day activism (Ahmed, 2004). By using Sara Ahmed (2004) and Margaret Wetherell (2012) combined theoretical frameworks, on affective economies and discourse, this research investigated emotions such as anger, frustration and alienation which seem to be overarching themes with in the shaping and continuation of the #FeesMustFall movement (Ahmed, 2004;Wetherell, 2012). In order to contribute to a contentious but still sought after conversation on decolonization, this study aimed to illustrate how affect is not in pursuit of individual emotions but more so in pursuit of what binds groups together and sustains movements over time (Ahmed, 2004).

**Rationale**

As presented in the literature review there seems to be a pool of research on the #FeesMustFall/post-apartheid movement(s), which speaks on the influence behind the call for decolonisation, as well as how this movement(s) emerged. This study aims to take the outcomes of previous research and data collected to explore the role that decolonisation played in continuing and keeping the movement together. The aim here is to understand the emotionality and/or affect behind the movement as well as understanding its role in connecting collective bodies (e.g. protesters, students). What makes this study useful is its theoretical approach to understanding data produced online. Both Ahmed (2004a,b and c) and Wetherell's (2012, 2013 and 2014) have developed approaches to emotion, affect and discourse, which will be used in this study to recognise the role of emotion and affect in relation to discourse.

**Research Aims and Objectives of the study**

The primary aim for this research was to explore the call for decolonisation and the role it played in creating a movement. In an attempt to understand 'what moves people to protest', this study analysed textual data in the form of online public interviews as well as public general assembly's/addresses. This study also used a unique combination of Ahmed's (2004a,b and c) analysis of emotion, as well as Wetherell's (2012, 2013 and 2014) approach to affect and discourse, as an attempt to explore the role and politics and affect, in relation to the call for

decolonisation based on the 2015-2016 #FeesMustFall movement. The objective of the study was to investigate the affective discursive practices that pertain to the #FeesMustFall movement, as part of the analysis to get a broader understanding of the affect and emotion (or feelings) /or the role and politics of affect, that took charge and relates to collective bodies that are 'moved' to take action, and form movements.

**Research Question(s)**

This research report aimed to answer three main questions, which are:

1) What influenced the call for decolonization in the post-apartheid state? How did this movement emerge and what kept it together?
2) What are the emotions (or feelings) and affect that took charge, in regards to the gathering of collective bodies, during the #FeesMustFall movement? How did we get here?
3) What does the affective-discursive practices, presented in the textual data tell us about the role and politics of affect?

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The advent of a post-colonial Apartheid regime, in the late 1940's and early 1950's solidified and brought forward many legislative Acts and constitutional laws, that purposefully aimed to oppress, racially discriminate and disenfranchise Black South Africans (Phatlane, 2008). It is important to note that the use of the word 'Black' in this literature review is to be understood as it was proclaimed under the apartheid era, when the Asian, Indian, Colored and Black people were subjectively known to fall under one race category for some time (Jackson et al., 2010). South Africa was one of the few countries that made use of 'moral, ethical and religious values' to validate and constitutionalize segregation and violence against black people (Fogle-Donmoyer, 2017 p 2). These structural influences were not just put in place to dominate society but it sought to override it by forcing groups of people to separate from their own identities, cultures and languages (wa Thiong'o, 1986). Fanon (1952) discusses in his book 'Black Skin, White Masks', on how Eurocentric and colonial systems attempt to alienate black people from their humanity, identity and culture, as a means to control and force them to assimilate, whilst treating them badly (Fanon, 1952).

### Segregation in Education

Formally instituted in 1948 by the national party, the proclamation of the Apartheid regime eventually came through the passing of Acts such as the Population registration Act No. 30 of 1950, The Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950 and the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953 to mention a few (Rakometsi, 2008; Johnson, 1982). Hendrik Verwoerd, the 'architect of apartheid' (Giliomee, 2003), introduced the Act that initially inspired racial segregation in the South African education system. Verwoerd vindicated this educational structure, by claiming that certain racial groups needed to be categorized into different factions of educational curricula, because it suited their innate roles in society (Hartshorne, 1992). This Apartheid education system was specifically constructed in a racially divided 'separatist structure', that Muswede (2017) argues 'perpetuated differentiated educational services' across races, especially between white and black students (Muswede, 2017, p 202).

This purposeful divide, driven by the post-colonial Apartheid regime, sought to create educational systems that aimed to oppress certain racial populations, in this case black students,

into educational spaces and capacities that mostly benefitted the socio-economic wellbeing of white people (Muswede, 2017). Since both educational institutions thrived off the 'inequalities derived from these differences', it was a known fact that these differences in educational mandates strived to discriminate, oppress and classify (or segregate) black people, as a form of control (Muswede, 2017, p202). The ways in which each Act contributed to this purposeful segregation, specifically in education, was mainly through classification and marginalization, firstly through the Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950. Although, racial segregation already existed at the time, this specific Act classified population groups according to four race categories, which were, White, Coloured, Indian and Black people which were also known as 'Bantu' peoples (Johnson, 1982). Ndimande (2013) notes that schools were separated according to these four race groups and were strictly allowed only to attend schools meant for their race group (Ndimande, 2013). Another legislative tool used to inforce racial segregation was the Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950, which further perpetuated this racial segregation by forcefully displacing black families, and peoples into areas chosen by government (Maylam, 1990). These geographical separations were crucial in sustaining the apartheid regime's goal of limiting Black educational and economic advancement, as they ensured that Black students had little to no access to quality education, professional careers, or economic mobility.

Thobejane (2013) argues that the Apartheid education system, specifically the Bantu education system, 'never prepared Blacks in the areas of technology and science in order for them to participate more proficiently in developing their country' (Thobejane, 2013, p4). The Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953 enforced this form of education to make sure that the Bantu people remained inferior to other races, by providing them with low standards of education which aimed to keep Black people in menial jobs and to limit their choices for stable work and economic mobility (Thobejane, 2013; Albertus, 2019). This Act, spearheaded by Hendrik Verwoerd, was intended to institutionalize educational inferiority among Black South Africans by removing mission schools that had previously provided some level of academic opportunity and replacing them with state-controlled institutions that offered a deliberately inferior curriculum (Hartshorne, 1992). Another way in which the Apartheid regime ensured an unequal distribution of quality in education was through teachers. In all white schools, students not only received quality education, but they were also taught by top certified teachers, whereas, Asian and Coloured schools were taught by teachers who had barely made the mark, and black schools received teaching from only about 15% of certified teachers (Albertus, 2019, p 4). In addition, to the segregation of races in schools, the displacement of racial groups as

well as the inequality evident in the quality of education, the regime continued to facilitate educational inequality, through funding (Albertus, 2019).

The segregation of schools and educational departments according to race meant, that each department/school received a set amount of funding, which most of the time was unequally distributed, with all white schools receiving the most funding (Albertus, 2019). This affected the student to teacher ratio and often forced some black schools to close down, leaving students at the mercy of church schools, which were also influenced by the Apartheid government (Albertus, 2019). Initially, Afrikaans and English tertiary education was only accessible to white students, but eventually the government allowed black students into universities (Davies, 1996). The government mostly allowed these students to attend black institutions, with the exception of a handful of black students being accepted into English universities (Davies 1996). Even so, the government and universities continued to make use of racial policies and lack of funding to discourage and limit access to higher education for black students (Albertus, 2019). The recognition of the explicit mandate that the government had for black students was one of the issues that inspired them to respond to these agenda's through anti-colonial/anti-apartheid resistance movements (Muswede, 2017). These resistance movements were not only a response to the quality of education for black students, but it was also a protest against the apartheid government as a whole (Brown, 2016). Perhaps a more constitutive way to look at the premise of these movements is to explore the events that led up to one of the first mass student protests which was the June 16 1976 Soweto uprisings (Brown, 2016).

**Mass Protest for Education**

There were a couple of key moments during the apartheid era, where students in tertiary institutions protested a multitude of student, staff or institutional issues. One notable instance where students protested on behalf of a black staff member was during the 'Mafeje affiar' (2008). Here students led a nine day sit in, where they protested the racial discrimination experienced by Archie Mafeje, an anthropologist, who was refused a job offer by the university because of pressure by the government at the time (Hendricks, 2008). Almost more than a decade after the establishment of the Apartheid era, another protest occurred called the Sharpeville Massacre. Organized by the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), the event was meant to form part of a peaceful anti-pass campaign, which sought to get as many people arrested to fill up the prisons as a form opposition against the pass laws (Clarke & Worger,

2016). Instead, this event that ended in bloodshed, as the police opened fire on the unarmed South Africans without warning or remorse, this would essentially change the course of history for South Africa and spark decades of protest (Evans, 2013). On the 30th of March 1960, just nine days after the Sharpeville massacre had claimed the lives of 69 black South Africans, the government had declared a state of emergency (Gurney, 2000). This declaration was a militarized tactic, aimed at restricting, and controlling the rise of political revolt against the apartheid regime (Gurney, 2000). Political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) and other anti-apartheid activists were either banned, arrested or forced into exile (Clarke & Worger, 2016). In addition, Merrett (2001) describes media censorship during this time as 'the need to suppress, as far as possible, knowledge of the nature and scale of the repression required to sustain apartheid' (Merrett, 2001, p 51). Despite, the state of emergency, the foreign media still managed to find ways to capture the police brutality and other volatile events happening in the country (Merrett, 2001). This exposure eventually caused an uproar of global condemnation of the Apartheid state, with the United Nation's officially condemning South Africa's racist policies, and certain countries sanctioning South Africa as well as excluding them from global events such as the Olympics (Malhotra, 1964; Weissbrodt & Mahoney, 1986).

Despite pressure from the global community, the Apartheid government continued to enforce its policies, and even more so through education. After years since the massacre, the country was in a constant state of protest, with black South African's being under attack consistently. During the rise of the black consciousness movement, students at the University of the Western Cape submitted a list of issues they experienced at the university. Some of these issues much like the #RhodesMustFall/#FeesMustFall movements called for a shift in institutional structures. Students wanted some sort of a reform during that time, a reform where they felt they were being represented to some degree (Becker, 2017). In 1976 the government changed the language of instruction from English to Afrikaans, forcing students to be taught certain subjects in this language (Brown, 2016). The response from the students was that they were dissatisfied with this decision, and they felt that the government was yet again trying to oppress black South African's by forcing them to succumb to the language of their oppressors (Brown, 2016). This led to the planning of a peaceful protest on the 16th of June 1976, in which students would march together in numbers, to Orlando stadium in hopes to draw up a memorandum and to gain the attention of the government, and then eventually negotiate these new policies (Johnson, 2016). Brown (2016) explains that was thought to be a peaceful march,

'turned into an insurrection when school-going students responded forcefully to the police's use of deadly violence' (Brown, 2016, p156). The plan for the march, was to organize for all schools within the Soweto area to gather and walk together to the Orlando stadium, but the police caught wind of these plans and stopped them dead in their tracks, essentially killing many school children, including a 13-year old boy named Hector Petersen (Brown, 2016). This killing would be the turning point in the history of education in South Africa, which would only formally change with the succession of a black democratic government in 1994.

**Post-Apartheid Education**

The transition from the Apartheid regime into a democratic government in 1994, brought about hope for South African students. After a long fight against racism, oppression and inequality, embedded in Apartheid education, students could now look forward to being educated in a manner that will deem them as equal to their white peers (Hammett & Staeheli, 2013). Almost immediately things seemed to have changed, the new democratic government had a vision of transformation, healing and change for their people. Despite this democratic victory which provided this window for change, the new government was also aware that they still had a long way to go. It was imperative that the new democratic government, make decisions and create policies, especially in education, that fell in line with the new constitution (Hammett & Staeheli, 2013). Although, Albertus (2019) argues that despite the implementation of a new government and constitution, nothing had really changed in regard to South Africa's education system (Albertus, 2019).

Despite the fact that black students were now allowed into previously white universities, the very same white colonial system was still in place (Albertus, 2019). Muswede (2017) notes that the government's effort to implement various 'transformative' strategies and plans, for example, though the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), [1]has made almost no difference, as the bulk of educational institutions, specifically universities seemed to have fallen victim to a 'same dog, different owner' connotation. The real issue seemed did not only lie within the formation and construction of what is known as a quality education or a decolonized education for that matter, but also within administration .It has been discovered that some institutions are still owned and controlled by former apartheid monopolies, which

[1] Introduced by the African National Congress (ANC), the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was an economic policy, meant to be the blueprint for transformation. The RDP aimed to meet the basic needs of ordinary South Africans through providing housing, water and sanitation, education, and a democratized state to mention a few.

could explain the systematic and institutionalized educational inequalities experienced by students even after Apartheid (Muswede, 2017).

In addition to the systemic issues still being dealt with in the administration of education, it seems that the access to this education, as stipulated in the constitution comes with a heavy responsibility (Koen et al, 2006). Many socio-economically disadvantaged students are still obligated to fund their studies or apply for funding, whilst fighting their way through poverty, and/or inadequate prior education (Hammett & Staeheli, 2013). A lot of recent studies and researchers seem to focus on the above mentioned narratives that universities and their administrations, are at the center of the problem when it comes to the shortfalls in Higher education (Albertus, 2019; Muswede, 2017). Koen et al (2006), argue that academic and financial exclusion is a consequence of governments attempt to 'democratize higher education' through accepting many disadvantaged students, passing through an 'inadequate schooling system' and who do not have the financial resources and academic skills to succeed at tertiary level (Koen et al, 2006, p 404). This contrasting argument seems to criticize the new governments approach, hinting that perhaps the government should have focused more on re-building and investing in communities, to ensure financial stability and access to quality primary and secondary education for its students (Koen et al, 2006).

**The #FeesMustFall Movement**

Despite differences between researchers on where to shift blame, it is still important to note that the same issues experienced under the apartheid regime, still continued to exist, resulting in multiple student protests even after the fall of Apartheid. Initially, these student protests mostly occurred in historically black universities such as Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Limpopo, where issues such as academic and financial exclusion, have been an on-going struggle for many students (Langa, 2017). Although, often times during these protests, institutions would turn a blind eye, while the media would portray these students delinquent, and often times enemies of progress (Langa, 2017). It was not until the 15$^{th}$ of October 2015 when the public started to take note of student struggles and started to show their support and solidarity for the cause.

But what made this movement unique, especially when there were similar movements to this one prior to 2015? Langa (2017) explains that there was nothing different about this specific movement, except for the fact that unlike previous movements, the #Rhodesmustfall and #FeesMustFall movements, had received far more media coverage then previous

movements (Langa, 2017). Students in this instance were also mostly in control of what was put out to the media, they had often used social media platforms to organize these events, whilst documenting and reporting on occurring events as a form of 'digital activism' (Albertus, 2019, p 2). The aim with these movements stemmed from the call for decolonization. Decolonization, of a euro-centric curriculum which has not changed since the fall of apartheid; Decolonization of the institutions and its ideals, which were engrained in the university's administration, and often times advertised in the universities infrastructure, for example, #Rhodesmustfall (Muswede, 2017). The #FeesMustFall movement stood for more than just a call for decolonization, but also for equality and access to a quality education without the academic and financial setbacks (Albertus, 2019). Much like the mass student protests from the 1970's under the Apartheid regime, the #feesmustfall movement, was supposed to be a peaceful protest, although due to the lack of cooperation from the universities administration as well as the presence and treatment by the police force, some students turned to violence (Albertus, 2019).

In his book, 'The Wretched of the Earth'(1961), Fanon speaks on violence as a response to oppression (Fanon, 1961). This oppression would create deep emotional and mental wounds, creating a foundation for emotions such as alienation and frustration. Eventually after a lot of pressure, the oppressed would have no choice but to turn to violence in order to reclaim their agency (Fanon, 1961). When we have a look at the #FeesMustFall movements timeline, you will see how gradually students have grown tired of being ignored or overlooked. Students assumed that they would be given a chance to commune with the institution or grab their attention regarding things that they felt needed to change, but this was not the case. Instead, a dismissive university management response, and institutional repression, turned what was peaceful protests into student anger (Booysen, 2016; Heleta, 2016). Fanon (1961), speaks on how important it is for a colonial powers, in a post-colonial society to continue exerting their power through neocolonism, as well as cultural and institutional dominance (Fanon, 1961). Overall, the institutional mandate still stands as Fanon (1952) describes it, that in the end it is about the control of knowledge systems in order to shape our collective consciousness (Fanon, 1952). We can see this in modern day research that navigate the influence of theories and ideologies from the global north, which continue to push aside the native and/or indigenious, and african knowledge systems, chipping away at it in the process (Mbembe, 2016). Modern day academic scholars are still held to western standards or paradigms in research, forcing them

to frame their work according to these frameworks in order to gain legitimacy in institutions (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

## Theoretical Framework

One of the theoretical frameworks applied in this study to analyze the political and cultural significance of emotions and affect is developed by scholar and writer Sara Ahmed (2004a, b, and c). For Ahmed, emotions circulate between people, signs, and objects creating this "stickiness" that moves, binds and attaches us to certain individuals and communities, often creating an "us vs. them" movement. Their motion constitutes what Ahmed (2004a) calls affective economies. As they circulate both sideways and backwards, they attain affective quality, value or resonance. In this way, they enable the constitution of our emotional or affective investments as well as identifications. To illustrate the way affective economies, operate, Ahmed (2004a) draws upon Marx's critique of capitalism, in particular commodity markets. The critique targets the logic of money-commodity-money (M-C-M) undergirding the commodity cycle in capitalist economies. We can conceptualize the logic driving this cycle as contingent on the commodity acquiring both financial and affective value if it is to survive or thrive in a capitalist economy. Similarly, affective economies also adhere to the logic of securing value or quality as an effect of the sideways and backwards circulation between significations and meanings materializing individual and collective bodies. The deployment of the critique essentially illumines the travel sideways, or relationally, between the objects, signs and meanings upon which individual and collective bodies are surfaced and the dynamics of affective economies are organized. Moreover, the movement not only entails just the affective values or resonances created through a proximal relation of bodies. They are also backwards or historical residues of their previous incarnation. As Ahmed (2004a) explains, the way they attach to bodies is a consequence of equally their foregoing and unfolding diffusion enabled through proximal as well as distal relation between bodies.

Conceptualized in this way, emotions are neither solely personal nor social, moving from the inside to the outside or from the outside to the inside. Rather they "mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social and between the individual and the collective" (Ahmed, 2004c, p.119). Emotions, then, do things. They provide us with our sense of belonging or place in the world by 'sticking' us together with others. We can even suggest that emotions structure the 'surfacing' of individual and collective bodies in making "the collective appear

as if it were a body in the first place" (Ahmed, 2004c, p. 27). One of the ways emotions attach and affix us to others is by defining us against *other others*. This means we can also consider emotions as instrumental in coalescing individual and collective bodies through "the way in which they read the bodies of others" (Ahmed, 2004c, p.27). What this perspective highlights, then, is the double work - *with* and *against* - performed by emotions. This perspective will broadly frame the approach taken for theorizing affects or emotions in this proposed study as it is useful for considering the cultural and political implications of emotions in bringing forth collective formations such as the *#FeesMustFall* protest movement. To actualize the analysis using this perspective, it will be productive to also think of the culture and political functions of emotions through an affective-discursive approach.

Wetherell (2013) broadly defines affect as a theory or approach that 'draws attention to the ways in which 'bodies' combine, assemble, articulate and shift into new formations, worked upon, as well as working on' (Wetherell, 2013, p 350). Indeed, Wetherell (2013) is more focused on the relationship between affect and discourse. Discourse studies focus on texts, representation, power relations as well semiotic events that involve aspects of language whether it be verbal, written or sign. For Wetherell (2013, p52) discourse speaks to the 'practical realm of language in action', that is weaved into our everyday lives through, 'the media, everyday talk and texts, words, utterances, conversations, stories, speeches, lectures, television programmes, web pages, messages on message boards, books, etc.' (Wetherell 2012, p 52). Wetherell (2012) argues that discourse 'makes affect powerful, makes it radical and provides the means for affect to travel' through discursive meaning-making (Wetherell, 2012, p 19-20).

The discussion above does well in explaining what emotion and affect does in relation to discourse, but how do we interpret this phenomena in relation this study, which focuses on the 2015 to 2016 #feesmustfall movement? Breeze (2019) gives an example of how to analyze textual data using Ahmed (2004a, b and c) as well as Wetherell's (2012, 2013 and 2014) approach , through recognizing the different cultures, through certain time periods where groups and communities tend to comply with 'the same norms for emotional expression and regulations' (Breeze, 2019 p 26-27). For this specific study, the aim will be to make use of these approaches to analyze online public interviews and general assembly's/addresses by #FeesMustFall activists focusing the emotion and/or affect that is displayed through the this data. This study will also look at the semiotic meanings behind the discourse/language used in this data.

# Chapter 3: Methods

## Research Design

This study made use of a qualitative research design. Lichtman (2017) refers to qualitative research as ‘a way to study the social interactions of humans in naturally occurring situations where the researcher plays a critical role in the process by gathering data and making sense of or interpreting the phenomena that are observed and revealed’ (Lichtman, 2017 p 7). Essentially, a qualitative research study will aim to capture rich and in-depth data that details the thoughts, feelings, perspectives and experiences of the participants (Sutton and Austin, 2015). As mentioned in the discussion on this study’s theoretical framework, the data was presented through Ahmed (2004a, b and c) and Wetherell’s (2012,2013 and 2014) approach to emotion, affect and discourse, while making use of thematic discourse analysis as an extraction tool for this data.

## Data Collection and Procedure

The source of the data collected for this study came from online public interviews and general assembly’s/addresses, posted on YouTube which is online video streaming service. This form of data is also better known as secondary data, which will enables the researcher to make use of pre-existing media interviews and public addresses. The secondary data method is defined as a method that uses pre-existing or previously collected primary data, such as data from questionnaires, focus group discussions, and/or material from in-depth-interviews that are usually made available by researchers or the media (Given, 2008). What will make the data for this study unique is that the source and content of the information received will come from conversation of the #feesmustfall events that happened at the University of Witwatersrand. A number of public interviews and general assembly’s/addresses was chosen based on a certain criteria, namely; the university of Witwatersrand, decolonisation, #feesmustfall and student protests between the years 2015 to 2016. Once this data was found based on the mentioned criteria, it was transcribed using audio to text transcribing software, which turns recorded interviews into verbatim text (Kvale, 2011). Once this the interviews were transcribed, they

were manually transcribed over the software produced texts to make sure that any missing words or data is accounted for (Kvale, 2011).

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis that was used in this study is thematic discourse analysis. Braun and Clarke (2014), describe thematic analysis as a method that is used to 'identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2014, p 79). This description of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2014), is not bound by any theoretical underpinning, which makes it flexible and user friendly and compatible with any qualitative research data/and or approach (Braun & Clarke, 2014). This allows researchers to make use of many approaches to this thematic experience, through the use of inductive and deductive coding and analysis as well as an experimental approach that recognises, individual realities and meaning making processes, to mention a few (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Breeze (2019) speaks on the use of a hybrid version of Braun and Clarke's original thematic analysis called thematic discourse analysis, which is implemented throughout this study (Breeze, 2019). This approach was well-suited to the dual focus of the study, as it encompassed both thematic patterns and discursive structures within the data, enabling a more in-depth analysis of how emotions circulate and how discourse shapes social realities (Breeze, 2019). Braun and Clarke (2014) argue that thematic discourse analysis bring about an ample amount of opportunities for researchers to interpret, describe or to even tell a story through their research, while giving their participants a voice (Braun & Clarke, 2014).

According to Braun and Clarke's (2013) there are six steps involved in thematic analysis procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The first step is 'familiarisation with the data', which requires the researcher to 'immerse themselves' in their data, the point is to not only get to know your data but to connect to (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 2). There are many ways in which you can achieve this by re-listening to the recording or re-reading the data, in some cases, the researcher may also research some of the language used in order to understand the meanings behind, certain phrases or terms (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In the case of this research it was important during this step to take note and start to identify the power relations discovered in the discourse, there may also be some recurring expressions of certain emotions which can be used in the next few steps. The second step is the 'coding' step, here the researcher identifies

code words or phrases that captures information that pertains to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 2). Codes capture the 'semantic and conceptual reading of the data', and it does not simply reduce the data, but it extracts meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p 2). In this study it's important to take note of discursive leads, such metaphors, repeated words or even emotionally charged language, especially when capturing codes. The third step is the 'searching for themes' step, here the researcher starts to look for themes and patterns, using the codes from step two as foundation (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 2). Once the data has been labelled to a theme, you will certain codes under the themes because of their similarities as well as meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The fourth step is to look over the established themes, to make sure your codes and themes relate and also to see wheatear or not themes are similar (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Usually when themes are similar, the researcher my merge these themes into one theme. The fifth step is to now name/label your themes, the names of the themes need to encapsulate the meaning behind the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The last step would be to 'write up' your analysis results and to create a discussion, the researcher is encouraged to interpret and tell a story about the themes that the researcher has found in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that because of the 'theoretical freedom' that comes from this form of analysis, this study can and is mostly likely to be driven by any theoretical framework due to its flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78). A thematic discourse analysis intentionally deviates from the usual course of action when it comes to finding themes, in fact, it focuses on how language becomes a site of power, sustaining movements and using emotions as tools of social and political resistance (Breeze, 2019). In the case of this study, thematic discourse analysis is best suited, because it allows the theoretical frameworks created by Ahmed (2004) and Wetherell (2012) to take its course with almost no restrictions.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical clearance for the specific study was obtained from the University of Witwatersrand non-medical ethics committee, after the necessary approval from supervisors, readers as well as the ethics committee. This study is making use of public information, but because the ethics surrounding the use of online secondary data , specifically televised interviews and general public assembly's, is not clear, this study will be adopting the same ethical framework used when conducting face-to-face interviews. The data collected from online public interviews will only be used with the informed consent of the hosts of these online

public interviews, as stipulated by the ethical guidelines and principles in this study that is based on the Human Sciences Research councils code of research ethics (2020), the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) 'guidelines for good practice in the health care professions' (HPCSA, 2008, Booklet 4) as well as Annexure 12 in the Health Professions Act No. 56 of 1974 (2006). The process of ethical consideration will be based around confidentiality, privacy / anonymity, the right to withdraw, informed consent, avoiding harm and ensuring that the data collected is safe and secure. In terms of informed consent, each host/owner of the online research will be contacted through, various platforms and will be sent a letter of consent once they have agreed to allow the researcher to use their data. Each host/owner of the online public interviews will get the opportunity to read through and perhaps negotiate the conditions on the letter of consent. This letter of consent will firstly remind the participant of the aims and objectives of the study as well as provide an overview of when, how and why the study is being conducted.

Rules in regards to the protection of identity, will change due to the fact that the data used and analyzed in this study is already available to the public via YouTube. Although the protection of the identity of the owner/host of this content will be attained if requested. In this case, the host/owner will not be credited by name, but by a pseudonym to protect their identity. In order to ensure that the data that has been collected is safe and secure, the data will be transcribed onto a computer and then stored on a password protected cloud database, all raw data will be destroyed once the research is completed and written up.

## Chapter 4: Results and discussion section

### Alienation

Under the first theme, we looked at how a sense of alienation was linked to the emergence and manifestation of the call for decolonisation. Alienation, which lends its origins to Roman law and Marxist theory on capitalism and labour relations, is a state or an experience that is equivocal, but commonly encompasses a range of emotions and feelings featuring exclusion, detachment, separation and even isolation (Kalekin-Fishman & Langman, 2015). The call for decolonisation is not merely a product of dissatisfaction with the quality and content of education, but more so a product of socio-economic, cultural and racial exclusion within the education system (Albertus, 2019). The socio-economic, cultural and racial exclusionary factors that are often experienced by students at universities or other institutions of higher learning, are displayed through the lack of financial resources for those who cannot

afford tuition, accommodation, books or registration (Albertus, 2019). Higher learning institutions with a deep historical past, especially contribute to issues regarding access. For example, in historically white institutions, research reveals that Black students are instinctively subjected to a sense of marginalization, and a struggle to cope with the academic, institutional and social demands of these institutions (Hlatshwayo & Fomunyam, 2019). Whereas, historically black institutions have become known for their inability to transform into stable environments without violence, protests, systemic corruption and staff workers protests to mention a few (Hlatshwayo & Fomunyam, 2019).

In addition, cultural exclusion, through the exclusion of certain African languages and methods of teaching and learning, is but a few factors that contribute to a sense of alienation (Mkhize & Balfour, 2017). Although, the concept of alienation is a broad one, it is important to note that in this study it will be interpreted using a Marxist inspired Fanonian approach to alienation.

Fanon re-envisions Marx's concept of alienation by linking it to the racial, economic, cultural and psychological 'alienation of the colonised black subject' (Fanon, 1952). The alienated subject(s) within South African tertiary institutions, are comprised of students who are a part of the majority population (e.g. Black, Indian/Asian or Coloured), and are often subject to the above-mentioned exclusionary factors, in both historically white and black universities. When using Fanon's (1952) approach to alienation within the South African context and within this study, it is important to note that the use of the term 'black' or 'black students/people', is specifically meant for a group or population of people that would be otherwise known as 'non-white' under the apartheid regime (Ndlovu, 2017; Fanon, 1952). Steve Biko (1978), who led the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa during the mid-60's defined 'blackness' as an identity and not a matter of pigmentation. He referred to black people, as people 'who see themselves as politically, socially and economically excluded by society, on the grounds that they are not white' (Ndlovu, 2017, p 1).

In this section of the analysis, we tackle the concept of alienation within the South African education system, as well the emotions that are associated with this concept of alienation, such as anger, estrangement, and fear, as students fight for their constitutional right to a free and quality education.

The first textual extract is from a televised interview broadcasted on a popular South African news channel. The interviewee, Themba Gamedze, a well known business man and

member of several boards had been invited to the televised interview to speak on decolonisation and the #FeesMustFall protests that had occurred almost a year prior. Aired on the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) new' segment called 'Real talk', Gamedze was asked by the interviewer where he stands in regards to the two extremes on decoloniality (e.g. getting rid of Eurocentric education versus not acknowledging that it exists), the Gamedze recognises that these extremes have existed for a long time. Although the difference or the 'issue' we face this time around is that the students that are now bringing up the call for decoloniality, are students that are more articulate in their call. Gamedze shares his thoughts on the call for decolonization by saying the following:

"The issue is that now people with the voice, people with the education are actually being able to articulate the problems of alienation. And largely it's because people who feel that they have done everything that's necessary to enter the club and they find that they still feel alienated".

In the above quotation the Gamedze speaks on the difference in articulation, perhaps between the students that have protested in the Apartheid and post-apartheid era. Whether, this sense of articulation is magnified by modern technology (social media) or a pellucid call for change is unclear. What we do know is that these students according to the Gamedze, have managed to articulate their 'problems of alienation', because of their struggle with fitting into a 'club', where they are still alienated. One of the biggest obstacles students in the Apartheid era have faced is the plight of the oppressive Apartheid government. The government during this time, sought to explicitly control the majority population by enforcing legislation and policies which put the students and the rest of the non-white population at a disadvantage (Badat, 1999). After the implementation of the Buntu Education Act. 47 of 1953, all non-white schools were taken over by the Department of Buntu/ Native Education (Bantu Education Act No.47 of 1953). The government was in control not only at a state level, but also at a school level. The government would be involved in choosing and overseeing school boards, to make sure that no other form of education was created by non-white people (Badat, 1999). The aim here was to cripple the youth by forcing them receive an education that will only help them secure low-income jobs, and to segregate them from the superior white class (Badat, 1999). Once this Act was implemented, there were many that was against it, but it was not until students and non-white communities started to take action in protests such as the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 and the Soweto uprisings in 1976, that things started to change (Gukelberger, 2020). During these times students were often silenced by police brutality, policies and the

government, until foreign media started to show the whole the truth behind the Apartheid regime (Van Dijk, 1990). Today, almost 27 years later, we now have a Bill of rights within a democratic constitution which allows its people the right to protest and speak up, compared to what non-white people experienced under the Apartheid regime.

For a long time after the end of Apartheid in 1994, there have been isolated students protests, standing for multiple issues across the country. It was not until recently, that students started to unify across the country in their call for an equal and decolonised education. Albertus (2019) explains that for a while after 1994, students were seen as the born-free [2]children of the 'struggle generation' (Albertus, 2019). Unable to deal with the shortcomings of the new government and the universities, students mobilised starting collective movements such as the #RhodesMustFall and the #FeesMustFall protests. Students made use of social media platforms, and word of mouth to congregate and share their stories on their experiences within the higher education system so far (Albertus, 2019). From these gatherings students started to recognise this gap in the system that they thought had been demolished by their parents after a democratic revolution, only to find that they may have inherited the very same giant that contributed to the same struggles faced under the apartheid regime (Langa, 2017).

Bridging this gap is not always as easy as it seems, as it requires more than just admitting that there are discrepancies between how and what education should be like in South Africa and what it really is. More than 20 years after the advent of a democratic government and a new constitution, many believe that nothing has changed in regards to access to an equal and decolonised education in South Africa. According to Albertus (2019, p2), "the social structures of colonialism and white privilege still manifest in the everyday experience of non-white university community members", leaving students with feelings of being isolated, ignored and estranged. What happens when this gap is left open?

An aperture between what we feel and what we are supposed to feel (often according to social norms) can stir up feelings/emotions associated with alienation, where these emotions create the affect that surfaces and travels among bodies, binding them in their likeness. The emotions that students feel such as estrangement, and isolation which are all components of alienation, are a part of an affective economy that move in a side-ways and backward motion, circulating while gaining an 'affective value over time' (Ahmed, 2004, p 120) . Ahmed (2004)

[2] A term used to describe a generation of children born after the advent of a new democracy and the fall of apartheid.

describes this sideways and backward motion within the affective economy as 'the rippling effect of emotions', where emotions are neither within nor without an object but rather forms part of the surfacing or the boundaries of collective bodies which are then bound by these emotions (Ahmed, 2004). Ahmed (2004), explains that the sideways sliding of emotion works by laterally sticking objects, figures and signs together, whereas the backwards sliding of emotions works by recognising that 'what sticks' is also rooted in the past (Ahmed, 2004). The emotions that travel among individual and collective bodies, are emotions such as frustration and anger at the education system, or the sense of alienation that students feel when attempting to get an education. Creating this community through which affect circulates not only among figures, but also among historic pathways, 'reopening past associations', where students are now able to revert to the root of their issues, taking them back to a time in the past where they or their elders had experienced the same struggles with education. These past associations are related to the struggles that students had faced under the Apartheid regime.

For many students, getting a qualification from a tertiary institution is an achievement and is believed to be the key to a good career, but many often feel disappointed when they are faced with challenges that get in the way of their dreams. In this case, it involves feelings of belonging and inclusion into a space where students have access to a quality and decolonised education. In this moment we become what Ahmed (2010) refers to as 'affect aliens', we become strangers who have been 'unseated by the table of happiness', this encourages activism which is 'often a matter of seats' (Ahmed et al., 2010, p1).

One other textual extract that relates to alienation in this study, was a speech made by, an academic from a well-known South African university. During the #FeesMustFall movement, and after the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand cancelled the general assembly, the students and allied academics had decided to hold their own general assembly. Aired by SABC, students and academics that supported the call. Here students had the opportunity to hear the academic speak on what a 'free decolonised' education means:

"It has been too long. With us going through an education that alienates us from our languages. It's been too long that we've gone through an education system that alienates us from our people. It's been too long that we've gone through an education system that alienates us from our cultures"

In the above quotation the academic speaks about the cultural alienation that students have been experiencing at higher education institutions, since the inception of western

education in South Africa. But how exactly does this form of alienation work to separate students from their cultural values or communities? It is important to note that the term 'culture' as used here is sociological, suggesting 'the ways of life of the members of society'. This includes the languages, the customs and the social norms that prevail amongst different groups in society (Ndlovu, 2017). Cultural alienation in Fanonian terms dates back to the colonial era when Europe aimed to change and deconstruct African and indigenous knowledge systems in order to replace them with Western ideologies to reflect those of Europe (Ndlovu, 2017). Understanding the depth of cultural alienation through this perspective explains what the academic means when he states that 'It has been too long', that the higher education system has so far not succeeded in reducing the sense of alienation from the colonial and apartheid eras even though South Africans have fought so hard for their 'freedom'. In another media except from Africa is a Country's Youtube page called "Shutting Down the rainbow Nation: #FeesMustFall", a student expanded on their opinions regarding the #Feesmustfall movement by commenting the following:

'It's very discriminating towards our students because we are fighting for a good cause. At the end of the day, if, if, if fees decrease, it benefits everyone. So I don't understand why we are being criminalized, when we are doing such a good thing'(Speaker 2).

In the statement above it is very clear that the student is worried about a matter that clearly should affect everyone studying at any institution. However, despite this worry, it is also clear that there is only a certain demographic that share these sentiments. Fanon (1961) speaks about the upkeep of colonial rule, through the labelling of resistance as 'violent, irrational or criminal', automatically categorising those who seek quality education as defiant even when they call out institutions on the promises made in the past (Fanon, 1961). It is just easier to alienate or segregate groups who share common interests, in order to manage them. Labelling these groups despite fighting for a good cause allows for the system to create this level of inequality, that perpetuate this sense of otherness.

A series of feelings promote a sense of "we" or "otherness" among students in relation to the dominant educational and cultural norms and practices in higher education institutions. Feelings such as estrangement, segregation and isolation create these mass social identities that unify the 'us' or the 'we' (which are the subjects of alienation), against the 'other', which the academic describes as 'the education system'. It is important to note how emotions play a part in the surfacing of both individual and collective bodies, signs and figures here. The emotional

reading of alienation in this context, is what secures the connection between the students and academics that are for the #FeesMustFall protest, versus those within 'the education system' (the opposing party) who are somewhat causing this sense of alienation. The academic alludes to the fact that the opposing object achieves this sense of alienation on the students by barring them from their languages, their people and their cultures, which eventually causes a detachment from the student and their identity. In the next few themes, we will unpack the themes that go hand in hand with the alienation that students feel, encouraging them to demand an accessible decolonised education.

**Frustration**

When unpacking frustration as a theme, it is important to note where it comes from. Rooted in Latin and late Middle English, the word frustration or 'frustrat'- means 'to deceive or disappoint', and is usually associated with negative emotions that result in negative actions such as anger and rage (Jeronimus and Laceulle, 2017). As stated in the beginning of this analysis, frustration and anger interlinked to alienation. Davids (2020) speaks on how frustration, disillusionment and alienation is often a result of the repression that students feel when they are alienated from their cultures, languages, ethic- identities and their personal identities (Davids, 2019). Under this theme we will look at what causes Frustration among students and how it is emulated in the narratives presented in this study.

Despite the noticeable transformations, that South Africa has witnessed in a post-apartheid education system, such as the rise in enrolment of students from diverse backgrounds into universities. Students participating in protests such as the #FeesMustFall protests, still feel disappointed by the post-apartheid government, which constitutionalised student's right to an education (Petersen et al., 2016). Bergin (2019) explains this sense of disappointment and frustration is mainly due to the 'unfulfilled promises and the dissonance that these unfulfilled promises have created', leading students to believe that there is nothing left to do but to protest, and fight for their constitutional right to education (Bergin, 2019, p..). In a series of interviews, students where asked about the #FeesMustFall protests and how they have come to be. A student had the following to say:

**"**Students are in a place where they've just had enough. We see it with UCT. We see it with Wits. We see it with Stellenbosch. You see it at Fort Hare. We see it just across the road from us at Midlands as well. There is a reality in our country that many students, majority part,

within the majority population of this country. Black student's uhm are barred access from getting education"

In the above quotation a student expresses the Frustrations that students have by expressing that they have 'had enough' of the academic exclusion and lack of access to higher education, that mainly affect the majority 'black students'. According to Ahmed's concept of affective economies, frustration here is not just an individual feeling, instead, it is a circulating emotion that attaches to the institutional structures and promises of post-apartheid reform. Frustration, shaped by experiences rooted in the past, of exclusion and unmet expectations, gains "stickiness" as it moves through communities, binding students across institutions and generations in a shared emotional economy (Ahmed, 2004). Although, it should be noted that this circulation of emotions operates amongst this intuitive separation between the born-free generation and the anti-apartheid generation. Bergin (2019) uncovers the disparities between these two generations by highlighting the tension that developed from a series of promises that are yet to be fulfilled in the post-apartheid state (Bergin, 2019). Students feel as though they are being ignored and underestimated, because the anti-apartheid generation, continue bury to their emotions with their belief that there is no need for a revolution or transformation of education, because they have already achieved 'democracy and political freedom' (Bergin, 2019, p 22). Students retaliate these opinions and argue based their personal experiences with the post-apartheid education system, which may have been eradicated in terms of historical value, but has not been eradicated on an institutional level. The following statement made by another student attempts to explain this notion:

**"**This is where the notion of institutional culture comes in. Because everything about the institutional culture, everything about the way the universities are set up. Not only just in their systems, but just in their environment and they and they texture. Everything about it says that you're not you're not supposed to be here".

The above quotation speaks on one of the experiences of students with higher education in South Africa. The Student explains that students who are victims of the institutional culture that exist in universities, are confronted with the reality that the system (as in the institutional culture) is not meant for them, giving the students a sense that they are 'not supposed to be here'. Here a sense of belonging is tied to what a student acquires or possesses in order to fit into the institutional culture, which affords them the opportunity to participate in these institutions. The institutional culture explained in the above narrative is unpacked by Davids

(2020) who regards institutional cultures as a system that is informed by the institutions relations to 'knowledge, research, teaching, community engagement, as well as policies pertaining to access, teacher and student bodies' (Davids, 2020, p 6). Davids (2020) claims that this sense of frustration with the existing institutional cultures that exist in universities is realised before students set foot on campus (Davids, 2020). When student get accepted into university, they are having to deal with understanding the basic characteristics or 'rules' that are in place so that they can achieve their goal of walking out of university with a degree.

The relationship between the minority/non-white students and institutional culture has been a contested one since the advent of our democracy in 1994. As mentioned in the literature presented in this study, admissions in post- apartheid high learning institutions have changed dramatically, but one could argue that the institution its self has not changed (Albertus, 2019). Therefore, causing a sense of frustration among the students that this culture is not designed for. Here the cultural effect of emotions creates an alignment with bodies and objects that are equally affected by institutional culture and the feelings of having enough of a system or a culture that purposefully excludes them.

It is often argued that social movements are born out of frustration, which is a response to oppression, causing the potential for violence if oppressed. In South Africa students' frustration could be clearly seen in their actions and forms of political protest or campaigns that were enacted, over time, to obtain their goals for an education of equal quality. A student from a famous public platform emphasises on this by stating:

'All we want to do is get answers. All we want to do is get access to the resources that we have been promised to be able to study in these spaces. We are in a space where we want to be able to get into. Um, and continue with our careers in higher education in order to be able to better ourselves as well. We're trying to break a cycle of poverty here and that's why we've mobilized and we've united our struggles in order to achieve this objective.'

Fanon (1952) describes the idea of frustration as one of the symptoms of institutional and systemic oppression (1952). People who are consistently marginalised at some point understand that there are certain limits placed on their agency as well (Fanon, 1961). The student speaks about a 'space' that they would like to get into, where they can learn and ultimately better themselves through a good career. There is an urgency to 'break a cycle of poverty' which lends to generational call that if often looked over by those in better financial

situations. Frustration in this case sticks to these groups by villainising them, painting them to be disruptors or enemies of progress.

By using Margaret Wetherell's affective-discursive approach to further investigate how frustration operates as both an emotion and a form of discourse, we are then drawn to the other ways in which students vocalise their frustration. Frustration during this movement was communicated through protest slogans, speeches, and social media, transforming the affective experience of frustration into a collective narrative of resistance. Evident in students' statements, such as "We've just had enough". Frustration is expressed through an embodied response to academic and cultural exclusion that resonates across institutions. Wetherell's framework helps illustrate how these discursive practices capture and express the shared disillusionment with an educational system perceived as exclusionary, creating a form of communal identity that challenges existing power structures. In the next section of this thematic analysis, we will be looking at a theme that coincides with a sense of alienation and frustration as discussed above.

**Anger**

In this study anger relates to the alienation, frustration and disenfranchisement that students have felt for a very long time. It is important to remember that the 'Fallist' movement was not something that established overnight. Mavunga (2019) explains that 'student's disgruntlement with a number of issues in the South African higher education had been boiling under the surface for a long time' (Mavunga, 2019, p 81). We see this with the sporadic protests that's occurred long before the #FeesMustFall movement at historically disadvantaged institutions, such as Tshwane University of technology (TUT), as well as the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and the University of Fort Hare to mention a few. The difference here though, would be the underpinning reasons why these protests would arise. Perhaps protests wold arise over a lack of resources and quality education, but these events were mostly isolated (Mathebula & Calitz, 2018). What famously united and amplified the voices of students for the #FeesMustFall movement, was the collective call for 'free' quality education, as well as the need for a transformed non-Eurocentric education (Booysen, 2016). Perhaps, this was the tipping point for students, because it lead to the creation of a movement that prompted students to realise and demand and the promise of a quality education since advent of democracy (Booysen, 2016; Langa, 2017). In the previous theme on Frustration, we have established that frustration is often associated with anger and rage. Bergin (2019) concludes that anger in terms

of the #FeesMustFall protest is a result of being undermined or ignored by the anti-apartheid generation (Bergin, 2019). During a live broadcast of a #FeesMustFall protest, a student confirms this idea by stating the following:

‘Why aren't VCs and other, um, divisions of management putting pressure on our government to fulfill a commitment of achieving education for, of, of the right rather to education for black students.’

The cognitive dissonance that takes place in tertiary settings managed by the very people who lived through, took part in and continue to pass on knowledge about the student struggle under the Apartheid regime is what angers students (Bergin, 2019). Growing up in a society where students are inspired by struggle heroes who faught hard to end apartheid, but somewhat refuse to participate or understand the students outcry is what angers students ( Bergin, 2019). Booysen (2016) and Heleta (2016) describe how university leaders’ and management responded to #FeesMustFall protests, by showing reluctance in fully addressing students' demands, reinforcing a sense of disenfranchisement. This perceived inaction from management—viewed by students as distant and dismissive—intensifies students' feelings of exclusion, leading them to believe that more actions that are physical are necessary to gain attention, with anger frequently escalating through these protests. These frustrations also reflect broader socio-political issues in South Africa, as universities increasingly symbolize larger struggles over inequality and representation in governance (Lancaster & Mulaudzi, 2020).

Furthermore, generational differences contribute to the disconnect: post-apartheid students, or "born-frees," see themselves as deserving of a decolonized education, whereas older generations, including university management, often view current student demands as unnecessary. John, Kaunda, and Madlala (2015) and Bergin (2019) observe that this generational divide is rooted in a belief among older South Africans that the core struggles ended with apartheid, causing them to perceive younger activists as ungrateful or reckless. Within university settings, where management is typically composed of individuals from this older generation, the resulting tension often exacerbates conflict. Consequently, when students feel that university leaders dismiss their calls for decolonization, frustration grows, sometimes manifesting as confrontational responses intended to prompt long-awaited change.

Students feel as though they had been fighting for an equal and Decolonial education ever since the advent of democracy and nothing has been done about it since. The violence and anger is seen in the way that the student’s protest go about damaging university property, and

demanding for the removal of colonial statues. A student confirms this idea by stating the following:

"So the violence really is a response in terms of barring students from access to education, but also barring them from the right to actually protest, and so what we're finding now is that this increased violence is actually threatening the lives of students and management has failed to step up and to protect the students".

Albertus (2019) assents to the failure to protect students by citing the inaction that led to students being angered (Albertus, 2019). This anger stems from a sense of alienation or the act of being barred from accessing education and the student's right to protest. The result of these actions seem to put both parties at risk, although students seem to suffer more. This comment invokes the idea that everyone is affected by one another's actions, creating this link between 'us' and them 'them' but also separating these bodies through uncommon beliefs on how and why students should protest.

Under the theme of anger using Ahmed's (2004) affective economy, we can start to see how anger sticks to symbols of power—like university management. Which has always been seen as dismissive to student demands, creating a united emotional front within #FeesMustFall. The longstanding disappointment and grievance vocalised by students are not isolated, rather they represent a deep-seated disillusionment with post-apartheid promises of educational equality, which has failed to translate into institutional change (Mavunga, 2019; Booysen, 2016). Another student confirms these sentiments by stating the following:

'Students in South Africa have always played a very critical role, historically, this is historical. So I think we must understand it, of course, with regards to the prevailing material conditions of students taking ownership of this struggle and being, and exercising their own agency. But also understanding that this is a historical issue in South Africa. This country has always been brought to its knees, or the unfair treatment that government has, you know, given to it. Meted out on people has always been brought up, brought to its knees by students. So you look at the students of 1976, you look at students later in 1978, you look at student protests and how students also had such a huge impact in the, you know, your community and trade union struggles and so on over the years. Students have always played a critical history, uh, critical role in the struggle. And so I think we are continuing with what has always been a historical pattern.'

Here the student gives us some context to the circulation of emotions through engaging past associations where emotions in this affective economy is seen to travel backwards with a sense of resistance from this past. Ultimately, this circulation causes somewhat of a disconnect between generations, almost pitting them against each other as if there struggles are just too different.

The next quote from an iconic television interview that was shot during the #FeesMustFall protests, looks at what took place between a figure of authority in one of the most prominent universities of South Africa and a student. In the interview, the student interrupts the interviewing by the reporter to ask her own questions. The students asks the figure of authority:

"So what exactly are you telling the nation? What narrative are you spinning out here…? You're not supposed to be presenting or speak on behalf of any of these students or trying to calm the situation. The situation is not calm the situation cannot be calm it will not calm. I'm curious".

Here the student asks the figure of authority, about the narrative that he and his colleagues -which form part of the institutions management- have been presenting to the broader society in regards to the national student protests. The student speaks on how the institution seems to have become this impermissible voice on behalf of students, seemly under the false pretense that they are trying to 'calm the situation', when nothing is in fact calm. Looking deeper into the context of the this interview, you are met with a student collective that is physically enraged about the fact that this figure of authority is bold enough to speak on behalf of them, when they themselves should be addressing the students.

The cultural politics of emotions in both encounters expressed under this theme, is deeply rooted in the 'doing' of emotions, where emotions work through bodies, exposing the differences between them, it's the students verses the institution. In a battle that is supposed to be unified in its purpose, but is rather portrayed through different views of reality. One where the institution seems to think that they know exactly what needs to be done, yet the student is not in agreement. The sideways movement of emotions within this affective economy, is what causes the sticky associations between the students that feel that violence is their only antidote to the displacement they may feel from not being allowed to have their voices heard.

In addition, the violence that is spoken about under this theme, and perhaps many other works on the #FeesMustFall movement, can be unpacked from two perspectives, which is the

perspective that there was violence because of the heavy police and private security presence, or the perspective that the source of violence came from the anger that students felt. Perhaps what the student in the first piece of textual extract under this theme is alluding to is the student's response to the police and private security presence on campuses during the uprising of the #FeesMustFall movement. Langa (2017) speaks on the deployment of police by both the state and sometimes the institution, as being the source of violence, where some students feel that they were physically denied their right to protest because they often faced these powers unarmed. The police and private security presence on campus, was viewed as intentional in the silencing of students, specifically 'black' students, when people started to compare the police and private security's response to protests, to protests where the population was predominantly white (Langa, 2017).

The other perception is that the student's anger is the source of violence. One of the most dominating narratives that relates to this notion, is that of 'outsiders' or non-students (the community), who think of students as 'partial to violence and disruptions' (Linden, 2017, p 8). Meanwhile, students seem to justify these acts of violence as a result of the 'archaic methods of communication (or destruction)' they have had to use in order to be heard (linden, 2017, p 29). The separation of the 'us' and 'them' is caused by this association between being 'barred' and this misrepresentation of students voices in order to 'calm the situation', therefore disregarding the anger felt by the students as just being unnecessary and dramatic. Another student further expands on this idea by stating the following:

'They're sending out, um, armed police against peaceful, unarmed students who simply want answers, who simply want to have access to funding to be able to live in the space. Whenever black bodies, uh, go outside of the bounds of, um, of colonial policing. That is the kind of response that you're going to get. This is 2015, but we feel like we're in the 1980s right now. Um, how can this be? How is it that we're in a society where when black students are saying, listen, we want to have access to education. We want to have access to our funding that we were promised to by NASFAS. And yet this is the response that is given.'

The framing of 'black bodies' as moving outside of the bounds of colonial policing, is what continues to perpetuate this sense of 'otherness' among students, against management and societies, ultimately keeping them stuck, turning anger into violence. Drawing from Wetherell's affective-discursive framework, we can see that anger here is not only an emotion but also a tool for resistance, voiced through public confrontations, slogans, and demands. For

example, when students openly challenge university officials, questioning their authority to speak for the collective, they employ anger as a means of reasserting their agency and expressing dissatisfaction with the institutional status quo. This anger, fueled by perceived management indifference, aligns with broader socio-political frustrations, as universities have come to symbolize the slow pace of transformation and the persistence of colonial values within South African education (Lancaster & Mulaudzi, 2020). A student had this to say about the 'slow pace' and resistance of university management to address issues:

'The excuse is that there's no time. You know, there's no time, there's no space for the conversation. Okay, so then let's paralyze everything else so that there's nothing but time and space to talk about this one thing. We're hoping that by doing this, there's not going to be the excuse of, um, we'd love to, but unfortunately, you know, the VC of Wits is busy doing something else. No, he isn't. No, he isn't. He's doing exactly what you're doing, and that's panicking.'

In the above statement, a student justifies the need for anger as they have attempted the mandatory channels of communication but has not seen any result. It seems the university had been putting off communication with students, making them feel like there only other choice was violence. Ahmed (2004) speaks about how these actions can lead to group's in unifying one group against another group (Ahmed, 2004). Through anger students allow for this flow or circulation of affect through bodies that do not house these emotions but rather create this affective economy where the movement of emotions gain some sort of value. It's the very sense of alienation, frustration and anger that keeps the movement together after what seems like a battle against the past and the present.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As much as this study focused on the role and politics of affect, in relation to the call for decolonization, there were still some area's the research did not cover that is still worthy of exploring. In order to build onto the findings of this study, research should expand on affective analysis specifically in regards to student activism where the focus is more on the impact and emotional toll sustained protest takes on the students. What are some of the residual psychological effects that students now struggle with?

Perhaps looking into institutional responses may be vital as well. Research should continue to look into the narratives and perspectives of university management. This will start to round out many of the sharp edges that students grapple with, as they find meaning behind

the detachment and lack of empathy from tertiary institutions. Research could also look into affective economies in the digital age, how do these emotions circulate among the masses online? What is the primary role of digital storytelling and how do these emotions shape collective identities across the globe.

### Limitations

While this study has done a great job at analyzing circulating emotions with in the discourse provided on public platforms, it is unfortunately not without its limitations. One such limitation is the reliance on secondary data for analysis. Whilst it is important to note that there was a need for this method of data collection during the Covid-19 pandemic, it still unfortunately takes away from the traditional forms of data collection, such as in-person interviews. This study would have been richer in context and flow has the researcher been able to sit down with some of the students to get there first hand lived experiences of what transpired during the #FeesMustFall campaign.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that the call for decolonization in South Africa's post-apartheid educational landscape extends beyond the desire to reform or “decolonize” our curriculum. Instead, it calls for an education that is free, accessible, and inclusive—one that honours the sacrifices of previous generations by truly integrating students from historically marginalized backgrounds. By examining secondary textual data, this study underscores how emotions of alienation, frustration, and anger serve not only as individual responses but also as shared, collective experiences that expose the entrenched resistance within institutional structures to transformative change. These emotions, explored through Sara Ahmed's concept of affective economies and Margaret Wetherell's affective-discursive framework, reveal the “stickiness” of affect as it binds students together in a united front against systemic exclusion.

The analysis highlights that this collective affect—circulating through feelings of alienation and resentment toward the symbolic and structural remnants of colonialism—sustained the #FeesMustFall movement and its momentum. Despite some progress, South African higher education remains an exclusionary space, often alienating Black students who feel disconnected from an institution their parents fought to transform. These feelings not only

fuel a continued sense of disenfranchisement but also spark the type of political engagement that defines social movements, indicating that affective-discursive practices are fundamental in sustaining collective agency and resistance.

Ultimately, this study contributes to an understanding of the #FeesMustFall movement as a reflection of both present and historical struggles against exclusion, urging the recognition of emotional and affective dimensions as critical to meaningful educational reform. It suggests that any genuine transformation must address the emotional, as well as structural, legacies embedded within South Africa's educational institutions. For future research, further exploration into how affect and discourse shape institutional responses and influence sustainable change would deepen the dialogue on creating an inclusive, decolonized educational landscape.

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