



An analysis of the ideological interventions during #FeesMustFall: A
Case study of the University of the Witwatersrand

Fiona Tafadzwa Chawana

Student number: 676254

Supervisor: Dr Ufuoma Akpojivi

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Declaration

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Abstract

This research set out to investigate the ideological contributions of the various actors during the #FeesMustFall protests in 2015 and 2016 at the University of the Witwatersrand. The research identified the ideological actors as the student activists, academic staff, University management and the South African government. The research identified the ideological contributors as key towards understanding the social movement ideologies emanating from the movement in a bid to map out the demands, the different approaches to free education and existing contestations within the movement. This highlights the significance of this study as it situates discussions that occurred during the protests on social media under the hashtag #FeesMustFall and interviews with the ideological actors to understand their ideological positions and their desired paths towards social change in higher education in South Africa. The research utilised a case study approach to narrow down the research site to the University of the Witwatersrand. Thematic analysis was conducted on data collected through semi-structured interviews with representatives from the four groups of actors. Additionally, a discourse analysis of tweets from the @WitsFMF Twitter page was conducted. Document analysis was further conducted to understand government positions on free education before, during and after the protests, as well as to understand the student proposal on how to achieve social change in higher education. The research found that there were ideological contestations based on the different interpretations of free education and the position that each actor occupied, which in turn influenced the different solutions that each actor proposed. The study also established that decolonial education played a critical role in achieving social change in higher education and the broader South African society. Furthermore, the study found that there were political contestations within the protests which led to splits in the actor groups, as well as the politicisation of free education. In line with the utilisation of social media by the students, the study found contesting narratives and representations of protests that mirrored existing tensions between protesters, government and broadcasters.

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Abbreviations

#FMF - #FeesMustFall

ANC – African National Congress

ASAWU – Academic Staff Association of the University of the Witwatersrand

BC – Black Consciousness

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training

EFF – Economic Freedom Fighters

FMF – FeesMustFall

NP – National Party

PAC – Pan- Africanist Congress

PYA – Progressive Youth Alliance

RDP – Reconstruction and Development Programme

SASO – South African Students Organisation

SECC – Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee

TAC – Treatment Action Campaign

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Digital activism usage has increased in Africa due to the perceived belief that it will lead to social change. Such belief was fuelled in recent years by the activities of digital movements across the globe which have been credited with toppling regimes, enabling political expression and paving the way for social change. For instance, the Arab Spring of 2011 saw regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya toppled by protesting citizens. Likewise, in Spain and Moldova digital movements have been credited for assisting in facilitating political change (Shirky, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012). Most studies on social movements and digital activism have not effectively explored the intersection between activism and social change, as current studies have looked at the activities of these movements and their advocacy. For instance, scholars have taken a case study approach to understanding the place of digital activism in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mutsvairo, 2016) and Africa as a whole. In Zimbabwe, Facebook and Twitter have provided gender and political activists with opportunities to disrupt hetero-normative ideologies perpetuated by the government through mainstream media (Mare, 2016; and Mhiripiri & Moyo, 2016). While in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia, social media have paved the way for political expression outside of the mainstream media (Gagliardone & Pohjonen, 2016; Aidi, 2018; and Kamau, 2016).

These studies highlight that digital platforms such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube are increasingly being used to mobilise, discuss and co-ordinate protests from smaller groups to larger groups across the world. The instantaneous nature of these platforms has allowed deliberation across continents, giving rise to hashtag movements which emanate from existing challenges of inequality, poverty and access to social and economic resources. Hashtag activism is a “discursive protest on social media united through a hashtagged word, phrase or sentence” (Yang, 2016:13). Yang (2016:14) adds that “a unique feature of hashtag activism on Twitter is that it starts, well, with a hashtag. Adding the hashtag sign # to a word, such as #change or #climate, makes it easier for other users on Twitter to search, link and interact with one another via the hashtagged word and to share stories related to it. Hashtags, particularly on Twitter, have a way of making it easier for people to search a specific topic or conversation that will be taking place on the platform. Hashtags are now also used across other platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, amongst others to gather people around specific topics or debates occurring on social media. For example, #FeesMustFall can be categorised

as a digital movement because of the utilisation of social media to spread the word, present demands and spark national debate on the need for free, decolonised education in South Africa. Therefore, this study aims to examine the intersection between activism and social change.

This study focuses on #FeesMustFall, a student movement which began in South Africa in 2015 because of high tuition fees, lack of scholarships and Eurocentric knowledge in universities and colleges. The protests followed the #RhodesMustFall protests where students at the University of Cape Town (UCT) were protesting against coloniality and its promotion of alienation and cultural exclusion. The movement was particularly focused on the removal of Cecil John Rhodes' statue from the university (Booyesen, 2016). The #FeesMustFall protests began as protests to scrap the 10.5% fee increase to be implemented on 14 October 2015 by the University of the Witwatersrand, but progressed as the students demanded free, quality, decolonised education. The protests continued into 2016 as calls for free decolonised education intensified at the University of the Witwatersrand. Existing literature on the student movement has laid out perspectives from the different actors involved in the movement, with a greater focus on the students and the role that government played in the protests. Booyesen (2016); Chinguno et al. (2017); and Daniels (2016) identify the core actors of the student movement as the students, University management and staff, and the government, particularly the Ministry of Higher Education and Training as the key. On the one hand, Chinguno et al. (2017) have chronicled the student narrative relating to the events surrounding the protests and the demands laid out by the students. Likewise, Booyesen (2016) presents a compilation of student and staff narratives which detail the demands of the protesters and the course of events during the protests. Some of the authors trace the rise of the protests from apartheid policy, while drawing parallels to other movements across Africa and in Arab countries. Gillespie & Naidoo (2019) provide a collaborative account of the protests and reflect on the years after the protests. Furthermore, Bosch (2016) conducts an analysis of social media data during the student protests and states that there is a need for research that triangulates interviews and social media data for an extensive understanding of ideologies and narratives of the movement. Bosch (2016:165) concludes that "hashtag played a central role in the national political discussions...amplifying attention from both citizens and the media".

Therefore, this research investigated the ideologies of four groups of key movement actors namely: the students of the University of Witwatersrand; staff at Wits; management at the

University of the Witwatersrand; and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The research also sought to understand the role of social movement ideology in ushering in social change in higher education. The University of the Witwatersrand became the epicentre of the protests in October 2015 and in 2016, with the hashtag #FeesMustFall trending on Twitter as the students utilised the social media platform for engagement between students and South Africans from all walks of life. In light of this, this research sought to ascertain how the various actors could bring about social change from their different ideological standpoints as students, University staff and management, and government. Fatton (1986) states that resistance in South Africa has always been tied to the means of livelihood, mode of production, ideological discourses and class interests. Thus, the quest for free education in South Africa is an attempt to restore the dignity of poor, marginalised black Africans that bore the brunt of apartheid (Langa et al., 2017). Habib & Bentley (2008) and Chisholm (2008) argue that racial redress has not happened in South Africa, particularly within the higher education sector due to unresolved tensions and dilemmas from the apartheid era. Langa et al. (2017) is of the view that citizen movements play an enormous role in leading social change. Thus, an analysis of the #FeesMustFall protests is critical in understanding whether the protests were successful in generating critical ideologies that would ultimately facilitate and bring about social change in South Africa's higher education institutions.

1.2 Research problem

2015 saw a rise in digital activism as a tool for protests in South African universities. These protests were geared towards addressing socio-economic, political and cultural issues such as inequality, transformation and decolonialisation. Consequently, then leading to the contestation of ideas and ideologies. Hence, this study seeks to examine this ideological contestation and the extent to which it has led to social change in higher education. Social, institutional and economic contexts provide the underlying motives and conditions for social movements; thus, it is important to interrogate the conditions that led to the rise of every social movement (Olenik, 2012). Joyce (2010) and Kaun & Uldam (2017) concur on the importance of context in order to understand the origins and successes of any digital movement. In addition, Mutsvairo (2016) and Mabweazara (2015) have argued that in the case of Africa, digital activism should be understood within the lived experiences of Africans that led to their appropriation, domestication and adaptation of digital technologies for protests. The #FeesMustFall protests presented a paradigm shift in the conduct of protest in

South Africa, as students adopted digital technologies in articulating their ideologies as they were not represented within mainstream media discourses. In addition, the students adopted technologies to deliberate and spread their ideologies. The digital activism component of the protests has been investigated by others, but this research goes beyond the acts by the students and investigates ideological contributions of different key actors during the 2015 and 2016 protests. The research seeks to understand the place of ideology in social movements and identify whether movement ideologies have a bearing on social change in higher education. This research is critical in that it contributes to existing literature in understanding the role that movement ideologies play in the fight for social change.

1.2.1 Research Aim

The main aim of this study is to understand the ideologies of different actors during #FeesMustFall movement in 2015 and 2016.

1.2.2. Research Objectives

- To identify the ideologies of different actors of #FeesMustFall at the University of the Witwatersrand.
- To analyse the different ideologies and proposals made by different actors.
- To understand how the ideologies of the students, University staff and management, and government have contributed to social change in higher education following the 2015 and 2016 protests.

1.2.3. Research Questions

1.2.3.1 Main research question

- What were the different political ideological interventions during the 2015 and 2016 #FeesMustFall protests?

1.2.3.2 Sub research question

- What change(s) has #FeesMustFall actors brought about in the Higher Education sector, especially at the University of the Witwatersrand, through different ideological interventions?
- What ideological discussions were conducted by different actors during the protests?
- How have these actors influenced or driven social change within Wits University using the hashtag #FeesMustFall?
- Have there been any social changes in higher education since 2016?

1.3 Research Methodology and Design

Research methodology expresses the means employed by the researcher to select relevant variables for the research and data collection. This research utilises a post-positivist research paradigm. Henderson (2011:342) describes post-positivism as qualitative research that “emphasizes the importance of subjective reality”. The post-positivist paradigm does not impose knowledge or criteria on to research, but allows multiplicity and complexity which is key in understanding ideologies; as ideologies can be both complex and multiple. This approach further allowed the researcher to engage with the findings on a theoretical basis.

1.3.1 Research Design

This research is qualitative in nature. Silverman (2011:5) states that qualitative research “studies phenomena in the contexts in which they arise through observation and recording, or the analysis of printed and internet material”. The use of the qualitative design allowed the researcher to move away from quantifying responses from interviews, and instead to engage with responses at a deeper level to provide rich data. This research follows a case study design, which allowed the researcher to focus particularly on the #FeesMustFall protests at the University of the Witwatersrand.

1.3.2 Population and Sampling Method

The research population is comprised of six student activists who participated in the 2015 and 2016 protests at the University of the Witwatersrand, two members of academic staff, two members of the University management and one representative from the Department of Higher Education and Training. All research participants were purposively sampled in line with their roles during the protests and the positions they occupied within the four ideological camps. In addition, the researcher purposively sampled documents from the DHET website, as well as tweets from @WitsFMF page, which was used by students in the 2015 and 2016 protests.

1.3.3 Data Collection Methods

The research utilised semi-structured interviews with the representatives from each ideological group or actor. Document analysis of policy documents by the DHET was conducted. Tweets were downloaded from Twitter using NCapture, an open source software that downloads social media data. The researcher used NVivo, an open source software used to sample 2367 tweets. Tweets that represented student ideologies on free education, funding

proposals and other themes were selected. The researcher purposively selected 50 tweets for analysis for this research.

1.3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis of interview data was conducted and the main recurring themes are presented in the findings chapter. Discourse analysis of tweets was conducted alongside an analysis of the documents. The data was combined and presented in the findings chapter.

1.4 Significance of the study

The use of digital activism by social movements has increased over the last decade and existing research has laid out the possibilities of successful implementation of change in over the long term. It is important to contextualise the possibilities that digital activism by social movements provides within the South African context. In addition, a comprehensive investigation into the ideological contributions of the #FeesMustFall movement incorporating the voices of different actors at the University of the Witwatersrand will reveal the place of ideology within movements and the role it plays in achieving social change. This study will contribute to existing literature on the #FeesMustFall movement and the place of ideology in the fight for free education.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

The study was limited to the University of the Witwatersrand which was the epicentre of the #FeesMustFall movement. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised across different universities in South Africa. Although some of the issues raised might be similar to what other actors might have encountered at other universities, there is need to recognise the different contexts of these universities and how this might have shaped their own particular ideological contestations during the 2015 and 2016 protests.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the study through highlighting the context of the research and it outlines the research focus, research questions and intended objectives of the study. Also, the chapter provides a brief discussion on the structure and methodology that the research followed, and the chapter concludes with an outline of the different chapters in the dissertation.

Chapter 2: This chapter outlines the literature relating to the research and provides a discussion of on-going debates on social movements and social change. This chapter provides

conceptual clarity on social movements, digital activism and the relationship between social movements, ideology and social change. It further contextualises existing literature on South African social movements and provides a brief background of the #FeesMustFall protests. Black Consciousness theory and Communication Power theory are also discussed and located within the larger discussion of social change and what it means in South Africa.

Chapter 3: This chapter outlines the research methodology followed by the researcher to respond to the research questions and aims articulated in chapter one. This section provides a detailed discussion on sampling methods, how data was collected through interviews, document analysis and online ethnography. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the ethical considerations and reflections of the researcher on the research process.

Chapter 4 and 5: These chapters articulate the main research findings in a thematic manner. The chapters drew parallels to existing research and findings were compared to those of earlier research, while at the same time linking to theories discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter 6: This chapter concludes the thesis with a summary of the key findings of the research. Recommendations for further study are also outlined.

Chapter 2

2.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides conceptual clarity of the key concepts of this research. Social movements and digital activism will be discussed detailing why people opt to protest and the dynamics of protest in the digital age. In addition, the researcher will discuss social change and what has led to increased demands for social change over the years in South Africa. For social movements to successfully mobilise, there needs to be agency within people in order to create collective identities leading to collective action. Social movements are born out of people's deep desires for a better world which they cannot grasp due to structural challenges embedded within states, and, thus, protest has become an avenue for people to express their agency by holding states accountable (Frueh, 2002). This research locates agency within the rise of social movements and the discussion leads to a contextual discussion of the history of protest in South Africa. The history of social change and protest in South Africa will provide the context for this research. This discussion will be situated within existing debates on social change in higher education. Finally, this research will make use of Communication power theory and Black Consciousness to explore the relationship between communication power and counter-power. The discussion will show that the student protesters were a form of counter-power that rose to express their consciousness, both online and offline.

2.1.1 Conceptual analysis of social movements and digital activism

Social movements are characterised by people coming together to protest against government, capital or against social ills. While they have evolved, their central tenets in mobilisation and the ways they are conducted are almost the same. However, due to the rise of networked technologies, social movements have transformed and now utilise digital media such as social networking sites to mobilise, strategise and ultimately to spread their ideologies. Zirakzadeh (2006) utilises the words social movements to discuss three political occurrences with overlapping characteristics. Firstly, he identifies a social movement as “a group of people who endeavour to build a radically new social order” (2006:4). Secondly, he identifies them as people bound by experiences of poverty and lack of resources, ‘non-elites’ who gather to advocate for change to their circumstances. Lastly, he identifies the disruptive tactics employed by actors to get the attention of the state (Zirakzadeh, 2006). While the three aspects that he identifies are critical in identifying what a social movement is, this research needs a more balanced definition that encompasses all characteristics of social movements

without the need to separate them. Hence, this research will utilise the definition by Thorn (2006) as it aptly highlights what social movements are, how they operate and the various relationships that come into play in social movements.

Thorn (2006:11) defines social movements as

a form of collective action that articulates social conflicts and ultimately aims at transforming a social order, it is a social order that is a process of action and interaction involving as a fundamental element the construction of a collective identity or a sense of community, of “us”, sharing a set of values and norms in opposition to “others” i.e. antagonistic actors or “enemies”.

Here, Thorn emphasises the existence of a collective identity as the main distinguishing factor of social movements and advocacy networks. In addition, he adds that a social movement is constituted of different aspects which include the sharing and dissemination of information and knowledge, and the mobilisation of resources, human and material (Thorn, 2006). Additionally, one of the main aspects is the performance of various public actions ranging from boycotts to sit-ins and mass action, this is in a bid to change the social order. The above description and conceptualisation of social movements by Thorn will be used as the framework for understanding social movements in this study.

While other researchers focus on the characteristics of social movements, their causes and how the various actors act to bring about social change, Jenkins and Klandermans (2004) argue for the need for research that investigates the relationship between the state and social movements. They argue that social movements thrive due to their opposition to the state and counter-hegemonic discourses, thus, there needs to be research on the “ultimate arbiter for the allocation of ‘socially valued goods’” (Jenkins & Klandermans, 2004:2). According to them, the state is an important entity because any form of social change that it does not support will not thrive. In addition, the state creates conditions for social movements to act and mobilise. This results because if the state does not fail, social movements would not thrive as they do globally today. Also, the state “creates opportunities for action”, while at the same time creating a restrictive environment for social movements to act through increased police surveillance, police brutality or, alternatively, laws that ensure social movement actors and leaders are arrested (Jenkins and Klandermans, 2004:8). While their research was mainly focused on European countries, this research does not neglect the importance of the state, but it considers the ideological contributions of the state; how the state could have contributed to

the emergence of social movements and the protests; how the state responded to the protests; and the course of action that the state has taken from the time the protests started to date.

There is rich and extensive research on social movements in America and Europe which has laid the ground work for researchers from all over the world. These include the early definition of social movements by Charles Tilly (1978) and early conceptualisations of new social movements in Europe by Kriesi (1989). McAdam et al. (1996) stipulate that political process theorists (Tilly, 1978; McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1983) “sought to explain the *emergence of a social movement on the basis of changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system*” (McAdam et al., 1996:3). Also, “European scholars have sought to account for *cross national differences in the structure, extent, and success of comparable movements based on differences in the political characteristics of the nation states in which they are embedded*” (McAdam et al., 1996:3). This research established that social movements anywhere in the world are guided by political challenges and opportunities particular to the national context where they arise. This is critical when one delves into the topic on the African continent and looks at the different dimensions, opportunities and challenges specific to Africa. While the above research might have been ground-breaking, it is important to note that they excluded African social movements, both colonial and post-colonial. The existence of this gap on African social movement research has also been highlighted by Aidi (2018).

Aidi (2018) proposes a new approach to social movements, where researchers move away from identifying social movements in the global context but prioritise the Africa context instead. Research on early African social movements focus heavily on South African anti-apartheid movements and labour movements. This, in turn, has meant other movements in Nigeria, Uganda, Malawi and Zimbabwe have been neglected. Aidi (2018) further highlights that this is being replicated by researchers who have become obsessed with the North African revolts of 2011. He identifies three waves of social movement protests in Africa: the first wave was the anti-colonial movements, which resulted in the attainment of independence by nationalist parties. The second wave came to be because of the imposition of one-party states by nationalist leaders, for instance in Kenya, Zambia and Malawi. People revolted and elections were held, often electing leaders of the same calibre as the ones that had been protested against. Finally, the third wave is the current wave of protests that Africa is experiencing, but which “has no unifying ideological vision yet” (Aidi, 2018:4). This is because the protests in Africa have different causes from those in Europe. For Mamdani

(2011), protests in Africa were fuelled by continued corruption and ignorance by nationalist leaders, and this might also have been influenced by the Tahrir Square protests in Egypt. Within the South African context, Peris & Kristian (2005:27) stipulate that “new movements have so far been issue based and fragmented with limited capacity to merge diverse issues and build a coherent movement” capable of contesting the state’s policy-making processes. However, this was prior to the manifestation of a movement with the magnitude and unique characteristics of those seen in the #FeesMustFall movement.

Mueller (2018) identifies two problems as causing protests in Africa. First, the political grievances which define the moment in which protests occur. For instance, the #FreeBobiWine movement in Uganda, where youths protested for the release of musician and Parliamentarian Robert Kyagulanyi from prison after he was arrested and tortured on fabricated charges. Bobi Wine became a target due to his anti-government ideologies and the fact that he openly challenged the change of the Presidential age-limit from 75 years in Uganda, which was eventually signed into law in early 2018. President Yoweri Museveni successfully signed the bill into law, allowing him to lengthen his stay in power. Namibiru (2018) stipulates that Bobi Wine has been able to challenge power from within government. While some people used social media to advocate for Bobi Wine, youth from poor communities identified him as a possible ‘ghetto president’ and were on the streets to protest his unfair treatment by the government. This is a clear demonstration of the changing dynamics of protests in Africa. While some of the causes might stem from the same social, political and economic challenges, social movements in Africa continue to evolve. Secondly, Mueller (2018) identifies material grievances which have led to unemployment and ultimately increased poverty. This aspect has a bearing on who participates in these protests. Aidi (2018) points out that these protests are comprised of educated and unemployed youth. Mueller differs in that she classifies the actors in the majority of protests in Africa as both young and middle class, protesting due to economic challenges, such as the high cost of living and low chances of them climbing up the class ladder. For example, she highlights that the protests in Niger between 2009 and 2010 which led to the ousting of President Mamadou Tandja, were the result of the youths’ realisation that the cost of living would keep accelerating, thereby furthering the already low expectations of upward mobility (Mueller, 2018). Mueller (2018) further states that middle class protesters have become the ‘generals’ of the protests as they have social media accounts and can afford to constantly engage in deliberations online and then share the same ideologies with their ‘foot soldiers’. The foot

soldiers of these movements are what she identifies as ‘underclass youths’ who are both poorly educated and economically excluded.

While some have laid out convincing arguments of how social movements started in different countries, Habib (2005) and Ballard (2005) concur that capitalism and neo-liberal policies are key reasons for the worsening poverty in South Africa, which ultimately led to an increase in protests in South Africa. Ballard (2005) adds that the revolutionary economic change that people expected to happen after independence never happened and this has fuelled anger among poor black people. This then led to an explosion of social movements at a time when people were failing to pay for basic services like water and electricity, while on the other hand government was failing to provide these essential services at affordable rates. According to Ballard (2005), social movements in South Africa manifest in different forms; some are against privatisation and cost recovery attempts by service providers (for example, SECC, Sikhula Sonke, Anti Privatisation Forum and the Concerned Citizen Forum). These social movements aim to create better living conditions for poor black families. Others, such as the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), emphasise health rights, particularly access to anti-retroviral drugs at a time when government policy was neglecting calls by the health industry to provide drugs for HIV infected people (Anciano, 2012).

In South Africa, there have been normative social movements that rose particularly around the late 1990’s. Unlike their apartheid predecessors, these social movements stemmed out of the increasing cost of living, and social and economic inequality between previously disadvantaged black communities and the economically privileged white community. Anciano (2012) identifies the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) and Sikhula Sonke (‘We Grow Together’ in IsiXhosa) as some of the early social movements in post-apartheid South Africa. The SECC is a Soweto based organization created after Eskom increased electricity tariffs that affected the over one million residents of the town. On the other hand, Sikhuka Sonke is a female driven social movement aimed at identifying and dealing with challenges faced by rural women. The social movement was unique because it became a hybrid of both a social movement and a trade union (Anciano, 2012).

Anciano assesses the impact of these social movements from four perspectives. Firstly, her research looks at the potential of the social movements in creating a new landscape for challenging the hegemony of the ANC. In the case of SECC, she identifies the radical leftist approach and ideologies of socialism as clear and legitimate efforts to challenge the

hegemony of the ANC and the state. The organisation successfully mobilised people and grievances which led to Eskom stopping power cuts on defaulting customers, as well as postponing a scheduled tariff increase. In addition, on the part of Sikhula Sonke, she states that the social movement challenged oppression in farms and acted as a union for poor farm workers whose concerns and calls for better working conditions had fallen on deaf ears. Secondly, she assesses the impact of these social movements through their ability to mass mobilise. For both movements, she highlights that these movements showed the immense possibilities of mass mobilisation. For instance, in Soweto, in its early stages SECC had over 5000 members who had united due to socio-economic concerns (Anciano, 2012). Though Sikhula Sonke had smaller numbers, this was because the farms are far from each other. Thirdly, she highlights the ability of each social movement to identify challenges faced by community members in urban or rural settings. Both movements were at the forefront of identifying challenges such as poverty, inequality, unfair labour relations and abuse. While one might argue that these challenges are purely economic, Anciano argues that identity issues are driven by socio-economic challenges in South African rural and urban communities. Bozzoli (2004) attributes the rise of post-apartheid social movements in South Africa to issues related to worsening living conditions of the poor, leading to the rise of service delivery protests from the late 1990's into the early 2000's (Peris & Kristian, 2005). This has consequently led to South Africa being labelled the protest capital of the world (Seekings & Nattrass, 2015). Finally, she argues that social movements play a critical role in strengthening democracy and civil society because they raise issues that the government would otherwise have swept under the carpet. McKinley (2004) adds that social movements, due to their mass mobilisation potential, increase the number of people engaging in meaningful democracy. The digital age has brought a new dimension to protests which was never incorporated in early social movements in South Africa.

The movements discussed above were largely normative in that they utilised normative forms of protesting such as blockades, occupying physical spaces and marching on the streets (Zirakzadeh, 2006). There has been a shift in how social movements mobilise, protest and spread information. The rise of digital technologies has led to the creation of a global village where people are untied not by a physical location but by social networking sites, websites, email and blogs bypassing geographical and physical barriers to communication. According to Hackett & Soares (2015:3) “media creation, circulation and consumption are now less

confined to local, regional and national contexts”. This has led to an upsurge in the use of digital activism by social movements.

Digital activism is a broad term that encompasses the use of computer mediated technologies to speak against governments or advocate for a cause that can be social, political or environmental. Gerbaudo (2017) defines digital activism as the use of digital devices for political purposes. The above definition is simplistic as it only looks at the political uses of digital tools, hence, it neglects other possibilities of environmental and economic uses of digital activism. This research utilises the definition by Joyce (2010:vii) who defines digital activism as “the use of mobile phones and internet enabled devices in campaigns for political, economic or social change”. This definition differs from that of Gerbaudo (2017) as it identifies the means and the purpose for using digital tools. The term is both exhaustive and exclusive as it encompasses any form of activism, while at the same time excluding any tools that are not digital.

According to Mora (2012:2), one of the main characteristics of network technologies that enable digital activism is that “it allows spontaneous collective intelligence expressed through user generated content”. Users can create and share content through blogs, email, social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, and vlogs. The channels allow digital activists to plot and mobilise for a cause or movement without gathering in one physical space. Oxlund (2016:1) identifies these social media sites as “important vehicles for mobilizing support, both inside and beyond”. Social movement actors adopt network technologies to spread anti-hegemonic ideologies through blogs, online chatrooms, emails, social networking sites and online chatrooms. For instance, Quawas (2014:182), in her analysis of Jordanian blogs in speaking back to patriarchal power, identifies digital platforms and tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs and emails as “transformative and emancipatory tools that offer alternative representations and a counter-hegemonic discourse”. Traditional conceptions of social movements articulate counter hegemonic discourses but the audiences are limited due to the methods of information disbursement which are usually radio, television, handing out posters and fliers. All these means have a risky potential of being intercepted by the state, but network technologies have created new opportunities for mobilisation and sharing ideologies. Christensen (2009), in her analysis of the aftermath of the Iranian elections in 2009, argues that digital media have facilitated alternative discourses to local and global audiences, challenging the orthodoxies of those in power.

Furthermore, Bennet (2017) stipulates that digital technologies are increasingly being used for activism in part due to increasing discontent among the youth, who grew up under dysfunctional corrupt governments that do not represent their interests. The common element in most of the research discussed in this section is the youth element. Youth are increasingly engaged in offline and online action against governments and big corporations. The increased accessibility of mobile communication and increasing dissatisfaction with government policy that fails to address the needs of the growing numbers of African youth has created opportunities for digital activism. According to Aker and Mbiti (2010:208) “mobile phones have greatly reduced communication costs, thereby allowing individuals and firms to send and to obtain information quickly and cheaply on a variety of economic, social, and political topics”. Lopes (2014) is of the view that social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube continuously provide opportunities for the youth to communicate, organise, mobilise, validate and enlarge their scope on the exclusionary politics of their governments. What youth movements in other countries have taught us is there can be no change without action on the ground. Clear examples such as #Spanishrevolution and Egyptian revolution prove that success can only be achieved when there is collective action between social media actors and actors on the streets (Gerbaudo, 2012). Additionally, Bennet (2017) highlights the increased political turbulence stemming from citizen discontent in the United States, Poland and Italy. He highlights that there is a continuous decline of confidence in the political institutions and the press. He traces the discontent in both developing and developed countries to a rise in inequality. This line of thought is supported by existing research on Italy (Gerbaudo, 2012) and Spain (Calvo et al., 2011), where the increase in digital movements can be attributed to a continued increase in the inability of governments to provide lasting solutions to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.

Mora (2012:4) posits that the “local lived experiences of social hardship, corrupt politics and poverty” works hand in hand with the global realities that youth are exposed to which provide new perceptions of life. While Caballero & Gravante (2018:24) have emphasised the need for one to understand the processes and circumstances that lead to revolt, they state that “understanding anger towards elites, rage and pain from repression” are some of the reasons why people appropriate digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. In Latin America, student movements such as #YoSoy132 in Mexico and the ‘Penguins Revolution’ in Chile were accelerated by students rising against subordination and non-recognition of their needs by their governments. Cammaerts (2015) concurs that social media has provided new

opportunities to youth led movements and subordinate groups in society, assisting them to escape state and capitalist restrictions leading to the construction of alternative identities.

De Witte (2015:207) stipulates that “electronic and digital media offer new possibilities for asserting public presence and attracting new audiences”. Lievrouw (2009:154) and Gerbaudo (2012) concur that the ability of digital technologies to assist in the planning of collective action, particularly “getting people on the streets”, plays a pivotal role in mass mobilisation for social movements. This is necessitated by the ability of one user to share information with hundreds of people within their networks, whether direct or indirect. The sharing and retweeting functions of Facebook and Twitter allow one user to share information, in video, image or text, with people on their friends or followers’ networks thus amplifying the reach of media messages created outside the confines of traditional structures. This aspect is also necessitated by accessibility in countries where costs of data are reasonably low. This ensures more access to information than people would normally have. According to Rohr Lopes (2014:2), social “media enables ordinary citizens to connect and organize themselves with little to no costs, and the world to bear witness”. This aspect enhances the emancipatory potential of digital technologies as they allow youth voices to be heard beyond geographical and ideological borders.

Along the same lines, Aday et al. (2010) state that other than for mobilisation, digital media are useful in ‘citizen journalism’. When, for example, they are used to broadcast cases of police brutality that would otherwise be quashed by typically state sponsored mainstream media; this was one of the many ways in which youth utilised Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Chebib & Sohail (2011:np) quote an anonymous protester who stated that “we mobilize people via Facebook, coordinate via Twitter and inform the world via YouTube”. This quote indicates the multiple uses of digital technologies implemented by social movement actors. The purpose of ‘informing the world via YouTube’ is not just to show the world how the movement was conducted, but it aids in documenting incidents of police brutality against activists. As highlighted earlier, the state plays a role in creating conditions for the rise of social movements, but at the same time plays a critical role in repressing the outburst of social movements. This usually ends in arrests and injuries, which if covered by the mainstream media alone would never come to the fore (Jenkins & Klandermans, 2004). Hence, the use of digital technologies can draw public attention to any violence against protesters by the government that is profiled on social media. However, attempts to publicise police brutality have not always been successful because governments are increasingly

adopting internet shutdowns and tracing of protesters locations through the same emancipating technologies.

Morozov (2011) argues that authoritarian governments have been provided with newer and better ways of quashing resistance as the internet enables them to track activists. He highlights the case of the Green Movement in Iran in 2009, where the youth utilised Twitter to challenge a 'fraudulent' election that had re-elected Ayatollah Khamenei (Sayyid Ali Hosseini Khamenei) the supreme leader of Iran from 1989. There was a lot of noise from activists outside the country praising the successful use of Twitter to challenge a dictatorial leader, however, "once the protests quieted down, the Iranian authorities embarked on a digital purge of their opponents" (Morozov, 2011:10). This was under the pretence of controlling the increase of people posting "lies and insults" about the government and events of the 2009 protests in Tehran. This operation utilised social media to gather video's and pictures of protesters who were later identified, leading to the arrests of over 40 protesters (Morozov, 2011: 10). These episodes of brutality by the government clearly illustrate their attempts to quash any form of dissent. These occur not only in the Middle East, but are also utilised by African leaders who have adopted such techniques.

In the case of Ethiopia, Gagliardone and Pohjonen (2016) note that, governments have often failed to strike a balance between embracing technology for development, protecting human rights and fighting against terror using restrictions on technology or censorship. In Africa, journalists and bloggers have been forced to censor due to the fear of arrest. In Ethiopia, the government equates any anti-state dialogue to terrorism. Six bloggers were arrested, as well as three journalists on account of 'terrorist' acts. The case of the "Zone9 bloggers represents a dramatic, but not uncommon, example of how forms of digital activism seeking to promote change from within these types of regimes are being severely affected" by arrests by their respective governments (Gagliardone and Pohjonen, 2016:40). These forms of intimidation highlight how governments in Africa and elsewhere will stop at nothing to silence the voices of dissent, particularly voices of social movement activists, both offline and online.

Aside from censorship and arrests, concerns have been raised by Nakamura (2008) and Morozov (2011) about the existence of a digital divide which is more prevalent in countries in the global South than the global North. According to Brodock (2010), the term digital divide is used to highlight differences in access to computers and digital devices. While Morozov (2011) uses the term to highlight poor infrastructure in third world countries.

Brodock (2010) and Reiss (2015) argue that the digital divide can be cultural or social as it is possible for existing societal inequalities to be mirrored through access to internet mediated technologies. For instance, Brodock (2010) posited that in Uganda, when students go to the computer lab, the boys run ahead while the girls are bound by cultural notions of how a lady should act and follow behind in an orderly fashion. When they get to the computers, all the stations are occupied by boys and they have to learn through watching the boys use the computers. This leads to both unequal skills and unequal access within this group of students, manifesting a digital divide for the girls. However, Reiss (2015) argues that at this point, a digital divide is not a strong argument against digital activism as it is a matter of process rather than lack of infrastructure. Additionally, Harlow (2011) found that though Guatemala had one of the lowest internet penetration rates in 2009, anti-government protesters managed to mobilise over 50 000 people through two Facebook pages. He states that the reason for such success was that the leaders took advantage of existing ties among people, where those who had access to social media spread the word through messaging and word of mouth, therefore bypassing state structures and the digital divide. Despite concerns of the digital divide in South Africa, Bosch (2016:170) argues that “Twitter is beginning to emerge in Africa as a virtual space to resist, challenge existing conditions and propose alternatives”, as was done by the students during the 2015 and 2016 student protests.

Additionally, the digital divide does not only refer to challenges caused by lack of access, but access in itself. Moyo (2018) argues for the need for a decolonial critique of the digital divide, focusing on the challenges caused by access to digital tools. He stipulates that we need to move away from the Northern approach to the digital divide which emphasises geography, literacy and skills as the key drivers of the digital divide in the global South. Moyo, advocates for an approach that investigates coloniality, race and culture as part of the problem because the challenges specific to the African context are aligned with the history of colonialism. He argues that the internet embodies virtual coloniality “part of a broader matrix of power of Western modernity...the internet reproduces colonialities of space, technology, power, knowledge, and culture that cut off meaningful participation” (Moyo, 2018:134). He further problematises the languages used on the internet as the main tool of exclusion. This is because the main language of the internet is English accompanied by Portuguese, French and Spanish (Internet World Stats, 2015).

For Moyo, language is critical in the decolonial critique of the internet because language is the way we make meaning of the world around us. Hence, if that language is exclusionary, it

defies the purpose of knowledge that it is supposed to be a custodian of. “The exclusion of African languages expresses something that is bigger than the digital divide, it is the exclusion of world views, identities and the creativity of Africans” (Moyo, 2018: 142). It is not coincidental that the student protesters of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movement advocated for the renaming of higher learning institutions and changes to the language of instruction, as well as changes to the curriculum within these institutions to include more African scholarship as part of the decolonial project. The students emphasised the importance of language in shaping knowledge. Therefore, Moyo’s argument is valid as it advocates for the global sphere to embrace African languages and end the ‘othering’ of indigenous African languages. While the argument is valid, the value of the internet as a tool for protests is highlighted by the fact that the student movements utilised the internet as a platform for challenging government hegemony, mobilisation, discussions of their demands and citizen journalism.

This research categorises #FeesMustFall as a social movement that utilised digital activism due to the utilisation of social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, to speak out and protest inequality of access to higher education and the coloniality of education curricula. Chinguno et al. (2017) and Daniels (2016) contend that the students’ use of digital media emanated from the need to circumvent state ideologies which were broadcast on mainstream media. Facebook and Twitter enabled the students to bypass state mechanisms such as the mainstream media coverage that presented the students as violent. In a bid to evade the bias, the protesting students became active producers of content by posting videos of police brutality and sharing their stories on sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Chinguno et al., 2017). The #FeesMustFall movement presented a paradigm shift through its use of online and offline strategies to get their messages across. The adoption of social media sites by the students as platforms to air grievances and resist government intervention made #FeesMustFall unique. In addition to online mobilisation, the utilisation of conventional social movement strategies such as sit-ins and marches to block entrances to the University of the Witwatersrand as a way of getting the attention of university management, helped the movement gain traction over a short period of time (Oxlund, 2016).

Existing literature on the #FeesMustFall movement brings to the fore issues of youth disgruntlement with government politics and narrates the events of the protests (Chinguno et al., 2017). While other research traces the issues of deep-seated inequality in South Africa raised by the students and events of the 2015 protests (Booyesen, 2016). Additional research

papers and books narrate the events and attempt to conduct ideological interpretations of the events (Langa et al., 2017; Chinguno et al., 2017). However, there is a lack of comprehensive research that juxtaposes the demands made by the students in 2015 and 2016 and the degree of action taken by the University and government. In addition, there is no research that combines the different ideological contributions of the different stakeholders involved in the protests at Wits University. This research provides a case study approach of the ideologies of different actors involved. The actors being the students, the Wits University staff and management, and the government. While Bosch (2016) has conducted extensive research on the #FeesMustFall movement, she does not trace the ideological contestations within the movement among the various actors on Twitter. Acknowledging that shortcoming in her research, she recommends that other research should “triangulate social media data with qualitative interviews with students” (Bosch, 2016:162). This research goes a step further in filling this gap through conducting interviews with different ideological contributors, that is, the Department of Higher Education and Training, and University of the Witwatersrand management, staff and students.

The above discussion provided a conceptual analysis of social movements and digital activism. Social movements have begun to use digital tools for digital activism as a means to bypass hegemonic state ideologies. The state-social movement relationship is characterised by opposition and challenging of ideologies, which in turn leads to violence and police brutality. However, social media tools have made it easier to conduct protests, mobilise and expose acts of violence by protesters and or government security forces and in the case of South African Universities, private security. In addition, this study does not seek to be technologically deterministic and thus a discussion of different contexts and circumstances leading to the rise of social movements and ultimately digital activism have been included, looking at the West, Africa and finally South Africa. To provide balanced discussion, the following section will offer a discussion on the relationship between protests and social change.

2.1.2 Social Movement Strategies: Framing and Ideology

Ideology and framing are critical components of social movement engagement, mobilisation of resources and action. Ideas drive the movement and form discourses of the movement but how they are articulated impacts on how many people the movement can mobilise, and this is where framing comes into play. Hence, this section will provide a discussion on the interplay

between ideology and framing to understand notions of collective identity and collective action. This research will utilise the definition of ideology by Herbele (1951:23-24) which identifies ideology as “the entire complex of ideas, theories, doctrines, values and strategic and tactical principles that is characteristic of the movement”. This definition is essential as it is neither limiting nor technical and, thus, it encompasses ideas, strategies and actions of the movements without excluding any critical notion of the entirety of the movement. Building on this definition, Wilson (1973:91-92) states that “an ideology is both a cognitive map of sets of expectations and a scale of values in which standards and imperatives are proclaimed. Ideology thus serves both as a clue to understanding and as a guide to action, developing in the mind of its adherents an image of the process by which desired changes can best be achieved”. Ideology is central to any movement as it maps directions for the mobilisation and cultivation of ideas within social movements.

The centrality of ideology to social movements identified by Wilson above is interrelated to Manuel Castells (2007) notion of communication power. For Castells (2007; 2011) communication allows the engagement of ideas and ideologies articulated by social movement actors in their roles as agents resisting the power of the state. Castells (2007) categorises all actors fighting against state ideologies as engaging in counter-power, and it is their ability to continuously challenge power that strengthens their hold over the human mind through continuous engagement with the people.

Consequently, movement ideology is framed to express demands to actors they intend to mobilize as well as state/ government actors or corporations they are challenging. Such ideology is framed ‘strategically’ so that the movement can achieve its set goals. Jenkins (1981:135) defines strategy as the “overall plan for action, the blueprint of activities with regard to the mobilization of resources and the series of collective actions that movements designate as necessary for bringing about desired social changes”. This definition identifies strategy as a key element of protest movement as it lays the ground work for what is to be done and how it is to be done for the successful implementation of protest action. According to Meyer & Staggenborg (2012:3) “social movement strategy sits at the intersection of structure and agency, as activists seek to respond to changing political and cultural circumstances and maximize their impact”. The intersection mentioned above signifies the point where actors have ideologies and seek to attain the numbers to make their movement a success. In other words, this is a place where action meets ideology, agency and framing.

Meyer & Staggenborg (2012:3) add that “for activists, strategy refers to choices about claims, issues, allies, frames, identity and presentation of self, resources, and tactics”. Each choice is debated and justified as each choice has a bearing on the rate at which people join, participate and stay within the movement. Strategies are employed to nurture collective identities, and plan how and where they take place. They can be thought of as actions the group takes to position itself in relation to allies and opponents.

Framing is the meaning making process where ideologies are cultivated and nurtured to suit social movements’ goals. When discussing framing in social movements, it is important to discuss the place of ideology in the framing process. Oliver & Johnston (2000:37) argue that “ideology is of central importance in understanding social movements and other political formations, and it is trivialized when it is seen only as a frame”. This is critical in that it separates the two and situates ideology within the realm of ideas leaving frames to perform their role of translating ideas into action. According to Smithey (2009), framing is needed to align the identities of individual actors to those of the whole movement and this can be effectively done through face to face interaction between actors, but this process can only start with a top-down circulation of ideas. Tufte (2017) indicates that social movement communication has evolved from the 1950’s where liberation fighters used top-down communication to mobilise against colonialism. He further stipulates that frames became more nuanced in the 1990’s due to an increase of social movements that were not aligned to industrial movements. According to Oliver & Johnston (2000:45) “frame points to similar processes that occur not only in social movements, but in everyday interaction, to processes that transcend content”, while “ideology points to the specifics of content, and to the processes whereby that specific system of meaning has constructed”. According to Benford & Snow (2000:614) “frames help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action”. They further highlight that frames are critical in selling the movement to the outside world. Protest is a collective action; thus, it is key for any movement to adopt key collective action frames. Frames play the critical role of socialising movement actors. According to Jenkins (1983:538), “movement supporters act in terms of internalized values and sentiments as well as calculations of self-interest”. This means that movement actors have to identify with the goals of the movement and reflect on how they would in turn benefit if the overall goal of the movement is achieved. Furthermore, frames maintain shared identities and form networks of actors united for a common good, ultimately strengthening the groups’ collective identity. This highlights that within a

movement, one cannot do without the other and it is important for social movements to have clearly defined goals they adhere to, guided by ideologies and the ways in which they will achieve those goals.

Snow et al. (1986:464) identify frames on an individual intellectual level, as they argue that frames are located “within the black box of mental life”, where they guide the way one experiences life. While, Snow & Benford (1992:137) are of the notion that frames “enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences”. This places frames within a mental scope where frames act to guide the way social actors identify what is important to them and how they can get others to see reality through their lenses. Frames enhance participatory communication as they build networks and enhance citizen power; they allow movement actors to identify their needs and shared goals, which helps the movement move forward. Framing of messages and discourses allows for people to unite in a movement towards a particular goal. Benford & Snow (2000:614) define collective action frames as “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization”. Similarly, Gamson (1992:11) sees collective action frames as “not merely aggregations of individual attitudes and perceptions but also the outcome of negotiating shared meaning”. This highlights the role that frames play in getting the movement to think and act as one.

According to Benford & Snow (1988), there are three core framing tasks. These are diagnostic framing, prognostic framing and motivational framing. They argue that these three core tasks are important in understanding the emergence of a social movement and their strategy. This is because diagnostic frames play the critical role of identifying the societal problem that people seek to change, while the prognostic frames assist in laying out a plan of action to achieve the goals, and motivational frames are used to get people onto the streets. Arguably, these are not different from Klandermans’ (1984) consensus mobilisation and action mobilisation identified in his examination of the 15M movement in Spain because the three play the same roles: consensus mobilisation “facilitates agreement” while action mobilisation “fosters action, moving people from the balcony to the barricades (Benford & Snow, 2000:615). Gerbaudo (2014) stipulates that Eastern European anti-austerity movements utilised collective action frames particularly centred around citizenship to unite the have-nots into cohorts of radical citizenry against state power.

Messages circulated during the Spanish Indignados protests particularly united people along their citizenship to foster beliefs of unity among them, while at the same time making the anti-austerity movement a citizen-duty. Oliver & Johnston (2000:41) argue that, “frames become important in analysing collective action insofar as they are shared by enough individuals to channel individual behaviours into patterned social ones”. A case of this is the gathering of Spanish youth in the streets of Madrid from 15 May 2011 against austerity measures, where resistance became the collective ideology. The ‘collective’ begins when ideas of a few are translated into the ideas of a collective, particularly within the normative social movement. Framing takes advantage of existing inequality, exploiting already existing cultural beliefs and grievances in what Oliver & Johnston (2000) term as marketing the movement, where ideas are usually circulated in a one way, top-down process. Therefore, it is important to consider the argument made by Harper & Leicht (2007:5) that social change is not an individual experience, but it is guided by “social processes, powerful sources and networks or relationships surrounding the experiences”.

The social processes of social movements lead to strategic acts of collective action which, Meyer & Staggenborg (2012:6) identify as “collective action demands, arenas, and tactics”, as the key elements of strategy. They argue that these are critical as they represent the entirety of decisions that a movement makes. Ganz (2004:181) buttresses the above argues by noting that “targeting, timing, and tactics” are key elements of strategy. While these elements are valid, targeting and timing are encompassed within the realm of demands and platforms which movement actors utilise. Meyer & Staggenborg (2012:8) state that when movement actors make demands, they aim to engage with a multiplicity of organisations, “supporters called upon to mobilize in response to threats or opportunities; potential allies asked to support movement claims; mass media encouraged to cover movement issues; opponents challenged by the demands; and authorities or other targets pressed to respond”. In order to do this successfully, the movement has to have clearly defined goals to attract or challenge the masses. These can be framed in open ways that identify with a variety of other groups or more narrowly to identify with a specific target.

Gamson (1992) highlights injustice frames as core movement frames because they help identify victims of an injustice and a perpetrator who becomes the target of action. According to Gamson (1992:68), “collective action frames are injustice frames”. However, Benford & Snow (2000) argue that this statement is yet to be proven by research findings. Instead

Benford & Snow (2000:616) believe that “injustice frames appear to be fairly ubiquitous across movements advocating some form of political and/ or economic change”. This is because most social movements identify problems which lead to the apportioning of blame to an entity, for example, the government or a corporate entity. These strategies and frames have also been adopted on digital platforms to foster collective identity and action through social media platforms.

While the above discussion has mainly focused on normative social movements, the evolution of digital technologies has led to the adoption of more advanced strategies, bypassing state and traditional media. Martin-Barbero (2002) argues that the appropriation of new digital tools goes beyond simply the use of these tools for collective action, but rather extends to the ability of a group of people to redesign the tool so it suits their diversified reality. In light of this, Caballero & Gravante (2018:29) state that “creating a hashtag or name of a Facebook group allows protesters to redefine the reality in which they live and reinvent a relatively autonomous media area organized using its horizontal anti-authoritarian practices that temporarily elude hegemonic structures of organization and social control”. Therefore, shifting power into the hands of the majority and ultimately strengthening public engagement.

According to Cammaerts (2015:5), social media blurs the relationship between the private and the public, enabling “activists and protest movements to self-mediate and to distribute movement goals or frames more easily”. This characteristic enables actors to reach more people and deliberate in spaces that transcend mainstream methods used by normative movements such as distributing fliers and posters, and holding community meetings. This, however, does not mean that normative ways of spreading ideology are out-dated, but social media have provided new avenues for mobilisation and debate. For Eltantawy & Wiest (2011), social media introduces speed and interactivity that were lacking in traditional mobilisation techniques which generally included the use of posters and alternative platforms such as community radio.

The above discussion articulated the place of ideology, framing and strategy in social movements. This is important as it provides conceptual clarity on the different activities social movements orchestrate in order to share their ideologies that ultimately lead to collective action.

2.1.3 Unpacking the co-relationship between protest and social change

The term social change is conceived differently as people ascribe different meanings to it. Mutekwe (2012) considers social change in the lenses of William Ogburns theory of social change, which dictates that social change emanates from advancements in technology. While Harper & Leicht (2007:5) define social change as “the significant alteration in social structure and cultural patterns through time”. To Massey (2015), social change is the sum total of people’s personal changes in social context, undergoing change through social processes, powerful forces and networks of relationships surrounding the experiences. Unlike the definitions by Mutekwe, and Harper & Leicht, Massey’s definition recognises that social change is not a destination but a process that happens over time. Thus, this definition will be adopted for this research because it identifies that social change stems from social changes that the people identify as important for them, but not without key networks among themselves and concerns that bring them together. For social movements to successfully identify the challenges and needs of the people they represent, they need to have an awareness of the challenges that people face and how to successfully organizes around these challenges. This will also assist in understanding how social change works and how it can be fully achieved in higher education tracing from the emergence of the #FeesMustFall protests.

The need for social change emanates from processes of social exclusion, whereby particular individuals, groups and communities experience disconnection from the workforce and social institutions, on bases as diverse as the lack of formal education, personal circumstances (illness, addiction, criminal conviction), urban or regional location, or discrimination based upon race or ethnicity (Oleinik, 2012). According to Rohr Lopes (2014:11) “people are motivated to organize out of a sense of deprivation or inequality brought forth by a comparison to others or in relation to their own expectations”. Therefore, Frueh (2002:17) posits that “social change, is largely made up of the accumulation of everyday adaptations, applications of existing rules to the progression of lived events”. Thus, motivating people to stand together against the state. To achieve explicit social change, there should be a critical mass of society that chooses to change the rules for a greater good.

Haferkamp & Smelser (1992) argue that any notion of change should take into consideration three elements of social change. Firstly, structural determinants such as population changes, strains and contradictions. Secondly, processes and mechanisms of social change which are mostly social movements, conflict, accommodation and entrepreneurial activity. Lastly, the directions of social change which include structural changes, effects and consequences. They

further indicate that these elements must be considered as one unit and should not be considered separately. In simpler terms, they believe that the process of social change should begin with structural determinants on the path people want to take, followed by processes and mechanisms on how to achieve the change that people require. This research considers social change in South Africa as a process and the starting point as dissatisfaction of the people by the policies implemented by the government since independence.

O'Malley & Nelson (2013:41) highlight that social movements employ various "strategies to educate and engage wider and stratified audiences" and sometimes share information from specific perspectives through the media, protests, graffiti and meetings (informal and formal). These strategies are employed to spread awareness and get more people to act in unison with the initial members of a group. O'Malley & Nelson provide an account of the Chile 2006 'Penguins' revolution', where over 800 000 students took to the streets to "protest against inequities in Chile's neoliberal and significantly privatized educational system which students said disadvantaged low-income students" (2013:42). The students employed student protests and public strikes on the streets but were met by a militarised arm of the police which chased them off the streets. This led the students to resort to occupying different schools within Santiago, the capital city. The protests were highly co-ordinated, as "parents were able to bring food into the schools and students were able to rotate their time in occupying the sites" (O'Malley & Nelson, 2013:42). Within three weeks of the standing battles between the police and the students, the government executed a series of reforms which included "a USD 138 million per annum increase in the education budget, the introduction of a school lunch program for low income students, income-based elimination of the college entrance exam fee for 80% of students" (O'Malley & Nelson, 2013:42). The highly organised nature of the protests and unity between the students and the public put enough pressure on the government to consider education reforms. This case highlights that protest action has the potential to put pressure on governments, leading to the people acquiring their demands.

According to Castells (2007:249), the rise of 'mass self-communication' through social media offers an exceptional medium "for social movements and the rebellious to build their own autonomy", while at the same time challenging state institutions on their own terms. For instance, Calvo et al. (2011) investigated the Indignados anti-austerity protests in Spain in 2011 (also known as the 15M). They found that the social movement successfully utilised digital technologies to campaign against anti-austerity measures through the use of text messages. Seventy-five percent of the 250 focus group participants attended the protests at

Puerta del Sol Square along with thousands of other protesters. Thirty-five percent of the people confirmed that they were invited to the protests by people who had received text messages rallying them to attend the protests (Calvo et al., 2011). Tufekci (2011) states that digital technologies can be successfully used by social movement actors because they unite large pools of weaker ties, ultimately increasing the reach of media messages and accelerating mobilization of large numbers of participants.

The #YoSoy132 protests in Mexico in 2012 were a clear example of the use of social media to bypass and challenge hegemonic state discourses through social media by a group of 131 University students. “The movement emerged after the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Spanish: Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) candidate, Enrique Peña Nieto, visited the private University Iberoamericana in Mexico City on 11 May 2012, where students confronted him and contested his record as governor of Mexico State” (Garcia & Trere, 2014:499). The students were dismissed as impostors from opposition parties while some media houses did not give them any attention. In turn, the students released a YouTube video dismissing the argument that they were impostors. This led to it becoming “a trending topic on Twitter, but then it became a powerful banner and name to one of the most powerful student movements around the country” (Garcia & Trere, 2014:500). The protests spread throughout the country with deliberations across social media platforms leading to offline protests. Garcia & Trere (2014:501) argue that “the movement catapulted the issue of the democratization of the Mexican media system to the forefront of the public and political agendas”. This was an important issue because there was no equal coverage of campaign information for all the parties involved in the election. Additionally, the students managed to persuade “the two major TV networks to broadcast the second presidential candidates’ debate nationally – Televisa and TV Azteca had broadcast the first one only via their minor affiliate networks, resulting in parts of the country not being able to see the debate” (Garcia & Trere, 2014:501). The protests continued for over a month with online deliberations and mobilisation across the country leading to violent clashes between police and students. An important aspect is that even though the PRI candidate won the election, the protests successfully united the people.

In addition, Tufte (2017) highlights the importance of already existing community networks for movements as they help create awareness and visibility for movements through existing media channels like community radio. He highlights the case of Brazil, where there was an explosion of protests in June 2013 as a result of bus price increases where activists where

questioning “the ability of power holders to provide social justice, health and education for all” (Tufte, 2017:8). The protesters used an online platform called Midia NINJA, which “is a network of media activists and citizen journalists committed to giving voice and a fairer representation of ordinary citizens” (Tufte, 2017:8). He adds that these protests were highly successful as they took advantage of the already existing community networks of activists and the over 10 000 community radio stations in the country. This enabled the protests to spread to over 400 cities in the country within a short period of time. Tufte (2017: 9) further highlights that “media activism by disconnected urban youth in Brazil represents the variety in citizen responses to contemporary development challenges”, as such the media lies at the heart of their movement strategies. While daily challenges were the motivating factor behind the protests, the use of the mainstream media to rally support in poor communities enabled more people to join the protests, creating a visibility that the government could not ignore. This was the case not only in Sao Paulo where they started but also the rest of the country where people were also protesting. The success of these protests relied heavily on the co-existence of challenges, the correct implementation of media tools and on-the-ground action.

While critics of digital technologies have argued about the existence of the digital divide (Morozov, 2011; and Moyo, 2018) in ‘third world’ countries. There has been other research arguing that social movements’ use of digital activism does not guarantee successful outcomes or bring about social change. For instance, Akpojivi (2018) argues that digital activism has had limited impact on social change, as he attributes the failure of the #ZumaMustFall protests to the elitist nature of the movement. He stipulates that a large number of both online and offline protesters were mostly white middle class citizens who were protecting their own interests and, thus, the protests failed to mount enough pressure on Jacob Zuma to leave office. Akpojivi (2018) opines that context and offline action are critical to the success of any digital movement. Building on arguments by Gladwell (2010) and Morozov (2009) of smart mobs and click-based activism, Akpojivi (2018) argues that the protests failed because the tweets did not match reality and, thus, there was not enough pressure on the ground to push the then President Jacob Zuma out of office. However, this did not affect #FeesMustFall protests as the students backed up their demands and conversations online with on-the-ground protests, blockades of University entrances and the Union Building in Pretoria according to Chinguno et al. (2017). The ability of the students to utilise both offline and online tactics assisted in the protests, gaining national news coverage and sparking debates among University students, University management and government.

Some scholars have argued that social change is a problematic concept as it cannot be measured (Haferkamp & Smelser, 1992), however, this is not the case with this research. The level of social change that this research seeks to measure is based on the demands that the students presented during the protests. Hence, this research will conduct an analysis of what has been done to date by the state and other relevant actors to meet the demands presented by the students. It is important to narrow down social change to specific demands set by the students during the protests. The issues raised during the protests were 0% fee increase for the year 2016, which escalated to free decolonised education in 2016. In addition, the University needed to address gender inequalities within teaching and non-teaching staff. The student protest was also embedded within the worker's movement to end outsourcing of non-academic staff. The students demanded that the University employ all staff that they were outsourcing from private companies to guarantee that the children of those staff members would get benefits to study at the University for free (Langa et al., 2017; and Chinguno et al., 2017).

Cammaerts (2015:24) attributes the need for social change to the feeling of rage towards the ruling class, when people see that the reality conveyed by the mainstream media does not coincide with the reality that they experience daily. In a bid to align with government, the mainstream media in South Africa might have been pushing the agenda for unity, love and forgiveness to align with the dream for a rainbow nation, as well as to align with the goals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In doing so, they might have unwittingly neglected realities of poverty, crime and protest that were ongoing in black communities (MacDonald, 2006). This possibly led to what Frueh (2002) identifies as a point of alienation where the people feel rage, fuelled by the need for better livelihoods. In the case of South Africa, that ranges from the delivery of basic services such as water, electricity, health infrastructure and ultimately education which they were deprived access to during apartheid. As indicated in the discussion of social movements in South Africa, there have been movements protesting tariff increases such as the SECC. These demands are born out of the sheer need of the people to have their needs taken care of. The ANC government promised free access to education, free health and affordable services like water and electricity. However, as February (2018) notes, incessant corruption coupled with the neo-liberal project that the government embarked on soon after independence worsened the plight of the poor black African, who is still waiting for radical economic transformation promised in 1994 by a black-led government.

Furthermore, “a feeling of indignation that emerges when people feel that their dignity has been defiled causing them to break away from their condition as victims and shift towards another action” motivates social movements to fight for social change (Cammaerts, 2015:24). In this instance, it is important to echo the sentiments of Biko (1978), that black people lost their dignity during apartheid and it could only be gained back through fighting against physical and mental oppression. This could have been made possible by an education system that acknowledged black knowledge but in this case the students were calling for the decolonisation of curricula to accept and accommodate indigenous knowledge. Flew (2002:71) argues that “inequalities are increasingly based around the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion”. In this case of the student led protests, these inequalities were evident in the exclusion of local knowledge within the curricula, and the exclusion of women, transgender and non-binary individuals in top positions within academia (Chinguno et al., 2017). For instance, Langa et al. (2017) argues that students in various institutions expressed disgruntlement with the fact that their course work was based on theorists such as Karl Marx and Raymond Williams. While those in catering colleges were calling for change in the European meals that they had to prepare despite the fact that once they got into the field, their customers would be mostly local South Africans. The exclusion of indigenous knowledge was one of the underlying issues that were raised by the students during #FeesMustFall.

Social change is a change that is visible in the daily lives of people. In the case of South Africa, social change was expected as a result of radical economic transformation promised by the ANC when they stepped into power in 1994. However, the increase in protests in South Africa paints a different picture, with protests almost becoming a daily occurrence in the country. Ranging from service delivery protests, education, low wages and inequality, the protests do not seem to have had the desired impact. The following section will look at social movement recruitment methodologies and the place of agency in protests.

2.1.3.1 The place of agency in the fight for social change

It is important to understand that resistance and agency play a critical role in the organisation, implementation and eventual success of any movement advocating for social change. Resistance is bound by the historical and social contexts in which it originates and matures. Mora (2012:2) is of the view that we need to move away from contextualising protests within the confines of new media as “technology has allowed the creation of knowledge within particular contexts and provides channels for building networks and connections through which knowledge can flow”. Joyce (2010) places an emphasis on the different contexts in

which digital activism occurs as they provide the direction for which the digital tools are used. In addition, Mutsvairo (2016:7) states that “understanding digital activism in Africa requires contextualizing the concept within a broad and diverse framework that underpins the continents cultural, economic, geopolitical and historical backgrounds”. This is important because, as indicated by Joyce (2010) and Kaun & Uldam (2017), the interaction between political, social and economic factors leads to different outcomes. It is important to acknowledge that the #FeesMustFall protests were inherently black, in that they were led by black students and mostly black students participated (Chinguno et al., 2017; and Booysen, 2016), thus, the demographic of the protesters alone provides an important context for the demands that were made.

Researchers on social change have articulated that agency is the driving force for protest and demands for social change. This is due to the self-reflection on one’s own desires which brings to the fore issues and challenges embedded in our daily lives that we can change and that have to be delivered by others, for instance, the state providing basic services for people. Emirbayer & Mische (1998:1) “conceptualize agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past but also oriented toward the future (as a “projective” capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present”. This conceptualisation is aligned to the conceptualisation of agency by Taylor (1985:42), who stipulates that agency is born out of a radical evaluation of the self. He holds that “radical evaluation is a deep reflection, and a self-reflection in a special sense: it is a reflection about the self, its most fundamental issues, and a reflection which engages the self-most wholly and deeply” (Taylor, 1985:42). This self-evaluation is born out of one member of society reflecting on their position and their desires or aspirations. One might call it a reflection on a better future that is born out of the need to grow and live a better life.

Frankfurt (1971:6) is of the view that, “human beings are not alone in having desires and motives, or in making choices. They share these things with members of certain other species, some of which even appear to engage in deliberation and to make decisions based on prior thought”. This ability of humans to share thought and desires allows us to collaborate and work together. When one shares frustrations related to livelihood and social status with an individual, they are not just sharing with one person but a collective of people who the other person then shares this with. Thereby creating a collective of people who identify with challenges they might have been going through in silence. For Frankfurt (1971), this is the rise of collective action, where different people confronted by challenges of poverty,

inequality and lack of service delivery consciously make the decision to deliberate and exercise their human agency in calling for social, economic or political change. This research conceptualises agency along the lines of deep desires of the South African people to rewrite history and emerge out of structural inequality which has caused continued poverty among poor black people. According to Ebrahim (2018:361), “the fallists drew critical attention to high fees, lack of transformation, and the desire for a decolonised curriculum in SA higher education”. The demands of the student activists mirror deep seated desires to change the living conditions of poor black South Africans who have continuously lived under the poverty line, regardless of the fact that the country is independent. The protests were a reflection of the agency within the youth to rewrite history through increasing access to tertiary education, thereby paving the way for social change in higher education. According to Frueh (2002:16), agency is “the perceived ability to purposefully change some part of social or material reality in a creative way”. This highlights the existence of a desire to change one’s own position for the better, coupled with a willingness to change from one position to another. He further states that this agency is a form of awareness to the reality that current conditions of life could be made better by actors working collectively to bring about change. In the case of #FeesMustFall, the students used social media to amplify their agency and unite the movement across University campuses in South Africa. Arguably, what made each person participate was a deep desire within them to become an agent of social change, ushering in a better tomorrow for future generations.

Discourse plays a critical role in expressing agency in social movements, particularly in their early phases where they are still recruiting and cultivating human agency. For protests to be successful, leaders of the movements need to recruit followers and fellow actors. This is done through framing messages that more people can identify with, making it easier to harness the agency within and ultimately mass mobilise the numbers they need to make an impact. Benford & Snow (2000) posit that framing is a key aspect of social movements, as it is how they communicate with external audiences. Framing of media messages, offline or online, is critical as it enables social movement actors to act out their agency as well as spread ideologies which will help in mobilisation. Agency as the expression of one’s own desires is what drives people to protest or join social movements. A lack in circumstance motivates people to act and when a government continuously fails to provide for its people, people act on their agency by protesting.

2.1.4 History of protest in South Africa's Higher Education

The apartheid era laid the foundation for the situation South Africa currently finds itself in due to the fact that economic and social inequalities were not addressed at the dawn of independence. This section will discuss the history of protests in South Africa. Furthermore, this section will trace the emergence of black-led protests to understand where they emanated from, who were at the forefront, and their ideological contributions towards bringing about social change and development in the country. A discussion on apartheid era protests will allow the researcher to understand the continuities and discontinuities that influenced the outbreak of the protests in 2015. Habib & Bentley (2008) posit that there has been little to no transformation in relation to advancement or equality within tertiary institutions, considering that education during apartheid was heavily controlled by the state. Hirson (1979) concurs that education was heavily controlled by the state and this subsequently led to various youth uprisings during apartheid. Therefore, Chisholm (2008) argues that to assess the level of social change achieved by the post-apartheid government since 1994, it is critical to understand the extent to which social and racial inequalities which form the basis of exclusion under apartheid have been overcome, and who the beneficiaries or victims are throughout the process.

Inequality in South African education can be traced to the early 1900's during the pre-apartheid era when the country was under British rule (Maylan, 2016). Maylan further posits that education was key in instilling subordinate values into the mind of the black African, "schools were opened and entrusted with the task of instilling new cultural norms of African pupils" (Maylan, 2016:108). A problematic piece of legislation was the School Boards Act of 1905, which officially introduced segregation in public schools. Missionary officials were entrusted with the education of blacks, particularly to prepare the black child for his entry into the highly segregated employment sector, where blacks occupied the lowest jobs. While basic education was geared towards creating a more submissive black person, tertiary education was also divided along racial lines. In 1916 the South African Native College (now the University of Fort Hare) was opened to cater for native education in the Cape (Maylan, 2016). However, the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Cape Town were open to all races in the pre-apartheid era. Life for black people took a turn for the worst as the British, who were somewhat concerned with assimilation of black people, lost the 1948 election to the Afrikaner-led National Party (NP).

Key legislation in the perpetuation of racialised political exclusion and disenfranchisement such as the Bantu Authorities Act (1951) and the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act (1959) were enacted. These laws ensure that black people stayed away from urban areas and white farms. This was problematic in that it perpetuated oppression, leading to unemployment and ultimately inequality of access to resources for the development of the black race. In terms of education, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 perpetuated and accelerated the training of blacks for subservient menial roles within the economy. There was no means for blacks to acquire enlightenment of the same level as other races as they were strategically placed at the bottom of the food chain. According to Maylan (2016:182) “the continuing disenfranchisement of black people at the local government level meant that defiance, protest and resistance became the only means to challenge the urban apartheid system”. This was the birth of resistance in South Africa; the beginning of an era of protest and mass action against the apartheid government which has seeped into post-apartheid South Africa.

Early protests against inequality in South Africa can be attributed to the rise in the working class who were educated property owners in the Cape (Lodge, 1983), where legislation was less harsh and allowed them to vote¹. Lodge (1983) further states that frustration of being stripped of voting rights, unfair wages and working conditions led to an increase in class-consciousness and ultimately the creation of worker’s unions. A prominent example of the largest strikes by black workers were the Durban strikes of 1973. The strikes involved up to “30 000 non-unionized black workers” (Ryman, 1974:59). While workers protested for needs that were ‘reasonably achievable’ from their employers and government, strikes were generally peaceful (Beinart & Dawson, 2010). Hyman adds that, due to lack of solid unions and fear of victimisation, the workers were not willing to risk their jobs by pushing the state too hard (1974:60). Even though they were successful in addressing immediate needs, the strikes were not successful in making the lives of black workers more bearable. Frankel et al. (1988:94) describe the “deteriorating living conditions, housing shortages, increase in rent, poor services and tightening urban controls” which led to the rise of a younger and more vibrant generation of protesters that refused to negotiate with the apartheid government. However, these strikes became increasingly violent, when violence was being meted out by

¹ The Cape was colonised by the British and they were more concerned with assimilation, though they were not assimilationist in other colonies. Sir George Grey was High Commissioner and Governor of the Cape between 1854 and 1862, and was one of the assimilationist governors (Maylan, 2016). Property owning black males could vote until 1936 (Thompson, 2001).

the police in a bid to quash resistance. According to Beinart & Dawson (2010), violent confrontations between the state and the people were systemic of the fight against apartheid, marked with police brutality and the people targeting sites where they knew the media would have access.

A brutal example of police brutality during apartheid was in March 1960. The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), which was one of the African political parties, staged a protest against pass laws. According to Thompson (2001:210), “large numbers of Africans assembled at police stations without passes, inviting arrest in the hope of clogging the machinery of justice”. Unfortunately, this did not go as planned, as the police “opened fire, killing 67 Africans and wounding 186, most of whom were shot in the back” (Thompson, 2001:210). As if this was not enough,

The government struck back fiercely. It declared a state of emergency, mobilized the army reserves, outlawed the ANC and the PAC, and arrested 98 Whites, 90 Indians, 36 Coloureds, and 11,279 Africans. (Thompson, 2001:210)

This was a turn for the worst for South Africa, as the political parties resolved that a peaceful response was not guaranteed from the government and the people had to act, although the police were determined to quash any form of resistance from the people. This was a turning point for South African protest, as students rallied behind exiled and arrested ANC and PAC cadres to restore the dignity of black people by any means necessary.

Before Sharpeville, students had generally stayed in the background, providing support as the movement was largely dominated by workers. Students played a critical role in the spread of consciousness and mobilisation for protest action in the 1950's. In 1953, an ANC conference resolved to create a ‘Freedom Charter’ that would collect and document the demands and freedoms that Africans were entitled to in the South Africa they envisioned (Suttner & Cronin, 1986). From January 1955, students, mine workers, farm workers and industrial workers were rallied to volunteer in spreading the word about the ‘Freedom Charter’ and how people’s participation was paramount in compiling a document that would represent the African voice. According to Suttner & Cronin (1986:64), students were called to “speak of the light that comes with learning and the ways we are kept in darkness”. This signals an awareness of the way education was used to enforce values of honesty, hard work and subordination and, thus, students were being called on to spread discourses of freedom. The union of students and workers could possibly have been one of the most successful here.

Student ideologies were critical in anti-apartheid movements. Frankel et al. (1988:94) are of the view that “Black Consciousness created heightened political awareness amongst strata in the urban population, notably students and the petty bourgeoisie”. Fatton (1986:1) adds that “forms of African resistance were determined by changes and consciousness, and by the structural transformations in the economic and political systems”. Hence, the concessions that striking workers accepted in the 1950’s could not possibly have been enough for the generation of African youth that had realised the immediate need for social change in South Africa. Additionally, students were increasingly conscious of the relationship between Bantu education and the subordinate roles carved out for them by the government. Budding academics sought to re-educate their parents on the role of education in further oppression and domination of blacks, and this was necessitated by the creation of the South African Students’ Organization (SASO) in 1969 under the Presidency of Steve Biko (Biko, 1978). UNESCO (1974:103) identified four main categories of protest in 1973 and 1974: working class protest against low wages; Black Consciousness which was incorporating Indians and Coloureds; “white protest, mainly centred around the white student movements”; and liberation movements.

Thompson (2001) states that Black Consciousness found its way to urban schools, leading to another moment of protest and violence etched in South African history in the Soweto Uprising of 1976. This had emanated from the 1975 announcement by the then Minister of Bantu Education that Mathematics and Social Studies were to be taught in Afrikaans (Barbarin & Ritcher, 2001). The Soweto Uprising saw violent clashes between students and the police leading to the deaths of over 575 people and a further 2400 being injured (Hirson, 1979). The violent and deadly clashes saw the reversal of the policy, but African blood had been spilt in the process. However, the remnants of apartheid attitudes prevail as indicated by the release of a documentary titled ‘Luister’ in 2015 by students at Stellenbosch University in protest of the use of Afrikaans as the language of instruction. In addition, Seekings & Nattrass (2015) and Habib & Bentley (2008) argue that the challenges that the nation is facing today stem from deep seated issues to do with institutionalised racism. Booysen (2016) and Chinguno et al. (2017) concur that racism in South Africa is deeply embedded in private and public institutions, and the battle to resolve inequality is far from being won

At the onset of independence in 1994, the South African government was burdened with the choice between providing essential services, and addressing inequality and opening up the country to investors (Thompson, 2001). In a bid to address unemployment and ensure land

redistribution to blacks, the late President Nelson Mandela's government adopted the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The terms of the agreement were the following:

Government and the private sector were to cooperate in creating jobs through public works; three hundred thousand houses were to be built each year; all South Africans were to have access to clean water, sanitation, and electricity; health, education, and welfare services were to be improved; and 30 percent of the land was to be redistributed to Blacks (Thompson, 2001:279).

Expectations were raised, but the government failed to deliver as this program was ambitious and the government did not have the capacity to fulfil even half of the promises stipulated by the RDP (Koelble, 1998). According to Mandela & Langa (2017), the state had not realised that implementing policy to address the challenges of the people would take more time, and this, coupled with the lack of financial resources, would present the state with a challenging task. The failure of the government to deliver radical economic transformation which had been promised to the people by the ANC sparked outrage among the youth and the elderly who were ready to reap the benefits of a black-led government. February (2018:157) adds that "rising levels of inequality and high unemployment in particular create an environment ripe for blaming the 'other' while competing for scarce resources".

Though the demographic of the protesters has not really changed, the 2015-2016 protests by students at South African higher education institutions presented a paradigm shift through the use of social media to organise, discuss and inform the rest of the nation. Daniels (2018) and Bosch (2018) state that #FeesMustFall presented new challenges and avenues for speaking out through social media networks, particularly Twitter. One of the greatest positives for the movement could be that it was not associated directly with any political party, but they had the support of university staff, particularly non-academic staff who were fighting against insourcing. Thus, one can argue that the #FeesMustFall protests were a step in the right direction towards using digital platforms to bypass hegemonic mainstream media while fostering ideological engagement with different stakeholders. With this dimension in mind, it is important to analyse the contributions and new opportunities that digital platforms provided for the students in challenging dominant ideologies within the educational institutions. Questions arise on whether the change of strategy in South Africa could have contributed to different outcomes in the road to social change. The following section

discusses the emergence of the student protests in 2015 and strategies employed by the students.

2.1.5 Birth of the FeesMustFall Movement

The #FeesMustFall protests erupted in South Africa in 2015 against the background of fee increases and underlying issues of growing poverty among the black population in the country. According to Naidoo (2016:180), “in 2015 students were resisting the commodification of education by calling for free, quality, decolonized education and expressing dissatisfaction with the rate and depth of change two decades after South Africa’s democratization”. The protests emanated from #RhodesMustFall protests at the University of Cape Town, where students were protesting the removal of a Cecil John Rhodes statue as it was a harsh reminder of colonialism. Among other issues, the students demanded decolonisation of the curriculum and an end to outsourcing of general employees (Booyesen, 2016). These demands were enlarged to a national call across universities such as the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Johannesburg, the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Pretoria. While the protests may have had different names, there remained a unity of purpose in their demands.

While these protests were vibrant and unique in peculiar ways, they were not the first protests in the country relating to higher education. Earlier protests emanated particularly in what Morrow (2008:264) identifies as “historically disadvantaged universities or campuses of new, merged institutions” that are still riddled with challenges ranging from shortage of accommodation, poor quality of courses and shortage of resources. Morrow (2008) chronicles the continuous disturbances by students at the University of Pretoria’s Mamelodi Campus, as well as protests which led to the temporary shutdown of the Mafikeng Campus of North West University in 2006. The same disturbances have also occurred at the University of Zululand and the University of Fort Hare relating to curriculum. According to Swartz et al. (2018:3) the media only “publicizes calls for free, quality, decolonized university education coming from two dominant Universities, University of Cape Town and University of the Witwatersrand”. This is important in discussing the history of the movement at the institution because it shows how existing bias in the media played a role in the exaggerated coverage of protests at University of the Witwatersrand.

The protests began at the University of the Witwatersrand on 14 October 2015, after the announcement of a 10.5% fee increase by the University. Due to existing tensions between

the university, students and the #Endoutsourcing protests that were already underway, the movement easily became the centre of attention, with students coordinating blockades to university entrances and sit-ins at the concourse in Solomon Mahlangu House (formerly Senate House). One of the most dramatic events was the night when university management spent the night on the concourse in dialogue with the students. According to Ndlovu (2017:30), “the events of that day marked the shift of power dynamics both at the University and nationally, from the University management to students and workers and from the state to the masses”. This was a defining moment for the movement because this had never been done at any institution and the students were demanding to be taken seriously. Ndlovu (2017) further states that this was a uniting moment for the students and workers in their fight against academic and financial exclusion at the university.

Discussions between the students and university management did not yield much that evening and the students resolved to submit a memorandum at Luthuli House, the national party office of the African National Congress (ANC). Ideological contestations started emerging at this point, however, this event also led to the march at the Union Buildings, the Presidents official office on 23 October 2015. The events of that day led to the announcement by President Jacob Zuma of a nationwide 0% fee increase (Langa et al., 2017). While this announcement was a success for the students, this was not enough as it did not address the root of the challenges students all over the nation were battling with. Ndlovu (2017:35) argues that the announcement did not address “issues of inequality, corporatization of the academy, commoditization of the academy and exploitation of workers through outsourcing”. This translates as an explanation to the demographic of the protesters. However, authors concur that the protesters were predominantly poor black students (Booyesen, 2016; Langa et al., 2017; and Chinguno et al., 2017). There is yet to be an investigation that indicates whether all the participants fell under the R350 000 family income bracket who qualify for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). This investigation is critical because it would explain further why protests did not end after the 0% fee increase was announced and why they continue to this day.

Soon after the 0% fee increase was announced, the protests were more defined, the students escalated their demands. They demanded free decolonised education, an end to outsourcing and addressing gender policy to cater for equal promotion of staff in universities (Chinguno et al., 2017). These protests were characterised by debates on social media and offline at the university campus. Students used #FeesMustFall to publicise their demands and turn the

movement into a national movement. According to Maggs (2015) Media Tenor found that #FeesMustFall generated over “1.3 million tweets during the last 2 weeks of October”. Another hashtag used to engage with peers across South African universities and mobilise support across the world was #WitsFeesMustFall. Protests were planned and coordinated using digital tools such as Facebook and Twitter, and the students also utilised these platforms to hold debates and discussions, thus, unifying the protests among various universities at the time. Hence, the need to ascertain how the movement has been able to facilitate or bring about social change. The use of digital activism by the students presented a paradigm shift in discourses of change and the way protests are conducted.

The students anchored their demands for free education in a section within the Freedom Charter. The students based their demands on a section in the freedom chapter titled “The doors of learning and culture shall be opened”; the students argued that free education was promised to the people in the Freedom Charter (Chinguno et al., 2017). The Freedom Charter states:

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children;

Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit (Freedom Charter, 1955).

However, the students, by basing their demands on this part of the charter, were exposing the movement to ridicule as the Charter clearly stipulates that higher education funding would be based on academic merit. In response, the students argued that existing social and economic inequality was hindering them from performing on the same level with white and Indian students who went to private schools and mostly used English as their home language (Langa et al., 2017).

Additionally, the student protesters identified the movement as an anti-capital project aimed at decolonizing the neo-liberal project within the University of the Witwatersrand (Motimele, 2019). Motimele argues that the university is more concerned with throughput subsidy, hence, it continues to churn out students keen on meeting deadlines at the expense of the mental stability of the students. She further argues that the neo-liberal project at the university has entrenched anger among the students as it disregards existing social inequality in the country and ultimately black students are at a disadvantage, expected to compete against time and finish their degrees in record time, while government and the university had not addressed issues of accommodation, historic debt and the curriculum. There is no arguing

that the concerns raised by the students were legitimate, however, there have been a lot of disagreements as to whose ideologies led to what and how the actor's ideologies might have impacted on the stage where the nation is at this point, and the extent to which such ideological contestations can lead to social change.

Furthermore, there has been a lot of debate surrounding the events of 2015 and 2016 when the #FeesMustFall protests happened at Wits University. However, there is a general consensus among researchers and authors that the protests should be considered within a broader background of declining government funding for higher education together with the widespread socio-economic inequalities and racial conflicts in South Africa (Chinguno et al., 2017; Langa, 2018; February, 2018; and Booysen, 2016). Oxlund (2016:7) states that "in the 2012–2013 budget year, the South African government spent only 2.3 percent of its total budget on universities, which amounts to as little as 0.76 percent of the nation's GDP". In addition, government subsidy continues to drop with at least a nine percent drop over the last ten years. This has in turn continued to put pressure on an already disadvantaged black population.

The #FeesMustFall protests were an extension of protests in the country and they exploded at the University uncovering deep issues that black South Africans have been battling with since independence. The general consensus is that growing protests in the country are born out of promises of economic transformation that are yet to be delivered. However, issues of inequalities within the university space also came to the fore indicating that the #FeesMustFall protests of 2015 and 2016 were part of a larger campaign to address economic and social inequalities that are stalling the progress of black Africans.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Communication Power Theory

Communication power is a social movement theory propounded by Manuel Castells (2007; 2011; 2013) to explain the relationship between power, communication and social change in the digital age. According to Castells, the battle of the human mind is played out through communication (Castells, 2007). In Castells' view, "if a majority of people think in ways that are contradictory to the values and norms institutionalized in the state and enshrined in the law and regulations, ultimately the system will change, although not necessarily to fulfil the hopes of the agents of social change. But change will happen" (Castells, 2007:238-239). This assertion ties in with the argument of this research in that it outlines that when different stakeholders interact, ultimately change is bound to happen. In the case of #FeesMustFall, this research situates the online and offline discussions conducted by students among themselves, university management, university staff and government actors as the guiding discussions on the route to social change. Thus, this research intends to use this theory to understand the place of power and ideology in the movement and its guiding influences.

This theory is relevant to this discussion as it situates power within communication, as one cannot do without the other. According to Castells (2011:3), "power is more than communication, and communication is more than power". This is due to the fact that power has to be communicated if it is to be felt or exercised, and this is done through utilising communication channels. Before digital tools, power was situated within the channels of mainstream media, where states and corporations could easily reach and manipulate information for their own benefit. However, in the digital age, power in communication channels easily shift positions into the hands of citizens who were previously excluded from communication channels (Joyce, 2010). This is necessitated by social network sites, blogs, websites and discussion platforms which cannot be circumvented by the state. Boyd (2010) states that the persistence, replicability and searchability of information online opens up communication channels locally, regionally and globally. Mora (2012) adds that social networking sites play a critical role as a 'third place' where people can engage without restriction, thereby, facilitating engagement of the human mind between thousands.

Digital technologies have created new opportunities that upset the imbalance of power which favoured elites and the state who have always had control of communication. According to Miskimmon et al. (2013), Castells' contribution is critical as it opens up new avenues to understand how the network society has reconfigured power relations as communication

access has been shifted from the hands of a few to the hands of many. Furthermore, Castells (2013:xix) states that “the foundations of the institutions that organize society are largely constructed in people’s minds through communication process”. This aligns with Althusser’s theory of ideology, particularly how it exists in the human mind, creating subjects who conform unconsciously to state ideologies. When communication as a principal tool is used to enforce and reinforce power, it plays a critical role in educating or pacifying the people. However, Castells (2007) attributes the weakening of the state’s power to three changes in the modern world: globalisation; market forces pushing for deregulation; and weakening political legitimacy. Increases in protests globally are a clear indication of the failure of governments to maintain political legitimacy. Digital technologies have spread all over the world as a result of modernisation, which in turn has accelerated globalisation. In addition, democracy is being stifled by states and, thus, social movements have adopted digital tools to challenge existing structures.

Chantal Mouffe (interview in Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006) identifies communication in a radical democracy as agonistic spaces where actors challenge each other in debate, exchanging ideas that will benefit all the people. Mouffe, in an interview with Carpentier & Cammaerts (2006), pointed out that when a society suppresses agonistic spaces there will be an emergence of antagonistic forms of conflict. These forms of conflict have manifested themselves in South Africa prior to independence through protests against the apartheid government. Fatton (1986) states that resistance in South Africa has always been tied to ones means of livelihood, mode of production, ideological discourses and class interests. In recent years, protests have become so common in the country to the extent that Seekings & Nattrass (2015) have labelled South Africa the protest capital of the world. Bruns et al. (2015:25) stipulate that “power does not reside in a vacuum, but in a social locus where actors (potentially) exercise their power”.

The notion of counter-power to highlight “the capacity of social actors to challenge and eventually change power relations institutionalized in society” is highlighted by Castells (2007:248). He does not seek to place counter-power only on social media sites, he argues that counter-power has always existed because when there is domination, there is always resistance to that domination. For instance, social movements have always existed, but digital technologies have amplified their voices and the same can be said for counter-power. He adds that today, social movements “think local, rooted in their society, and act global, confronting the power where the power holders are, in the global networks of power and in the

communication sphere” (Castells, 2007:248). Therefore, counter-power has always existed, but it was transformed to suit the times, embracing new forms of technologies. The core values of social movements have not changed, but it is the way they mobilise resources and express messages that has morphed to reflect an adaptation of new forms of communication.

Accordingly, “for new social movements, the Internet provides the essential platform for debate, their means of acting on people’s mind, and ultimately serves as their most potent political weapon” (Castells, 2007:250). Bosch (2016), in her paper on #movements in South Africa in 2015, found that the hashtag played a pivotal role in facilitating a national political discussion on free education as the starting point towards addressing inequality. In the case of the student protests at University of the Witwatersrand, the students represented counter-power through their ability to circumvent the hegemonic power of the mainstream media. The use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter by the students to challenge the authority of the government and university management proves the applicability of communication power theory to this research. Castells (2007:239) understands counter-power is born out of the ability of social actors to resist and challenge institutionalised power relations. Castells acknowledges the existence of a plurality of social actors whose values and interests are not aligned. This plurality of social actors enables engagement on online platforms which does not necessarily exist in the mainstream media.

Moreover, for Castells (2009), processes of power involve two elements. Firstly, is where communication technologies are used to enforce domination within unequal structures, for instance the tracking and arresting of activists in Iran and Ethiopia. Secondly, “there also exist countervailing processes that resist established domination on behalf of the interests, values, and projects that are excluded or under-represented” in digital platforms; some are excluded due to the digital divide which comes in many forms or the inability to access sites (Castells, 2009:47). Resistance to power works through the programmes within the network society and interactions between different sites as actors utilise tools that best work for them. In the network society, power still exists and so do social struggles. What changes are the tools and means of domination; meaning that counter-power can still exist, just as University of the Witwatersrand students represented counter-power in the #FeesMustFall movement fighting against power structures of the university and government.

In the case of South Africa, one can argue that digital media have facilitated the disruption of strategic narratives that were adopted by the state since independence. These were narratives of equality and the country being a rainbow nation, while the majority of the population who

are black continue to get poorer due to unresolved inequality. Castells (2007) holds that communication changes how power works, as access to communication channels can open up platforms that were previously closed to the public. Communication power theory maintains that the battle of ideas is crucial for change regardless of how agonising it can be to finally achieve change. In addition, for Castells, communication platforms are a battlefield for ideas, where different stakeholders battle to have their ideas heard and accepted by others. This is the greatest power one could ever wield, the ability to shape views, thoughts and directions towards social change. This research seeks to understand the ideological positions of the #FeesMustFall actors and their contributions towards the realisation of social change in terms of higher education. Through the use of digital technologies, voices are amplified in what Castells (2011) terms ‘mass self-communication’, where consumers are both receivers and producers of communication.

This is in line with what Mouffe (2005) labels as ‘agonistic spaces’, which, for Mouffe, exist where legitimate adversaries fight for their ideas to be heard within the symbolic spaces in a democracy. This ties in with Castells ‘mass self-communication’, where communication is a two-way process where receivers and producers are on both ends of the line. This enables the creation of agonistic spaces where there is interplay of ideas. Daniels (2016) argues that the mainstream media in South Africa have been captured by the state and capital, but the existence of alternative media such as Facebook and Twitter have paved the way for more voices, ultimately contributing towards more diversity. Furthermore, Daniels identifies the different legitimate adversaries in the South African case. She identifies the protesting students, political parties (EFF, ANC and DA) and the government as legitimate adversaries that could share ideologies towards achieving social change in higher education and South Africa as a whole. When legitimate adversaries acknowledge each other, there is an acceptance of ideological difference, which in turn contributes to growth and ultimately change because shared ideas contribute to development.

This theory is suited for this research as it situates discussions within digital platforms as places of power that can no longer be ignored; while at the same time acknowledging the power of individuals through their articulation of ideas. Communication power theory acknowledges the plurality of social actors and how their interactions will shape the path towards social change (Bruns et al., 2015). Castells has been criticised by Fuchs (2009) for adopting a technocentric approach towards social movements. Fuchs argues that Castells (2007) uses metaphors deduced from computer science and technologies but this is not the

case. Castells (2007:249) explicitly highlights that “for new social movements, the Internet provides the essential platform for debate, their means of acting on people’s mind, and ultimately serves as their most potent political weapon. But social movements do not exist only in the Internet”. He further states that social movements are “not originated by technology, they use technology” (Castells, 2007:250) as a multidimensional tool for broadcasting their messages, facilitating global or national debate, planning protests and recruiting followers all around the world.

The theory acknowledges the importance of context and the human mind in shaping discussions towards change. As indicated above, this theory is suited for the discussion of ideologies during #FeesMustFall as some of the discussions that were conducted were online and the protests were a clear example of the power of communication in the digital age. Furthermore, Castells proves that social movements are not located within the digital platforms they utilise to mobilise but have escaped confinement in spaces and locations to join the world and take the challenges to locations of power within and beyond their borders.

2.2.2 Black Consciousness

Black Consciousness is a black resistance theory which emanated from the writings of Steve Biko particularly in the 1960’s during the fight against apartheid in South Africa. According to Biko (1978:53) Black Consciousness is “in essence the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude”. This theory details that for black people to emerge from the shadows of white domination, they need to accept their blackness first as it is the main reason for their oppression. Biko explains that for white domination to be rid of, black people must unite and stand together. Black Consciousness was identified as a contributory factor to the student protests during apartheid to an extent that it had to be banned in 1977 (Fatton, 1986). In relation to this research, the student’s movements of 2015 and 2016 were dominated by black students as they were those most affected by historical oppression in South Africa (Chinguno et al., 2017; and Booysen, 2016). The protests united black students and workers which means that the movement ideologies and workers conditions led to the adoption of a unifying ideology that united blacks through a consciousness to deny the existing conditions of high tuition fees and outsourcing (Mabasa, 2017:132).

Manganyi (1973:18) states that “black consciousness should be understood to mean that there is mutuality of knowledge with respect to the ‘totality’ of impressions thoughts and feelings

of all black people”. He adds that the blackness of Black Consciousness does not only refer to the colour of skin but the sociological schema of the black body and the place in which black people occupy because of the colour of their skin. It is this blackness that people are being called to be aware of and the place it has led people to. This is a place of pain and suffering due to slavery and colonialism; “we are being called to change the negative sociological schema imposed upon us by whites” (Manganyi, 1973:18). They should move away from ideologies that alienate black thought, culture or religion. In relation to culture, he adds that the past alienated black culture so it is the duty of the black person to live their culture in their present. However, black consciousness should not only be associated with black culture as it would run the risk of being represented as ‘ancestor worship’.

Biko (1978) laments the loss of a sense of community in the African leading to an erosion of solidarity. This stemmed from homelands which were organised on tribal lines while at the same time having university education separated along tribal lines, with universities designated specifically for Zulu and Xhosa people at Forth Hare, Turfloop and Ngoye (Hirson, 1979). Manganyi (1973:20) adds that, “our spirit of communalism was gradually eroded until we were left with individualism and its stable-mate materialism”. Furthermore, Black Consciousness seeks to deal with the loss of communalism in the past through black solidarity; sharing pain, suffering and material things; and a future joy of black people. For Biko, once we start sharing ideas, culture and material things, it is easier to share ideologies with our brothers and sisters, leading to an awareness of the position that the black person occupies in society and endeavouring to change it.

While mutual knowledge and solidarity are critical for black consciousness to thrive, the awareness should come hand in hand with action because only those who are aware of the problem, have the ability to find solutions. Biko continuously called for the unity of black university students as the future of South Africa was in their hands as they occupied a privileged position having managed to escape structural inequalities that limited the number of blacks in tertiary institutions. Mangayi (1973) stipulates that while awareness and action should go hand in hand, the architects of change must be equipped with several alternative choices for the people. The students in the #FeesMustFall movement demanded free decolonised education and they came with their own alternatives for how this was to be achieved (Chinguno et al., 2017). The mutual knowledge and solidarity by the students, coupled with awareness of the position that black students occupied in universities gave the protests momentum as they were not just demanding free education, but also managed to

collate alternative funding models, which they submitted to the Heher Commission which was investigating the feasibility of free education.

Mutual knowledge, solidarity and action come with possibilities for action, however, unless the one who needs the freedom consciously resolves to fight there will be no change. For Mangayi (1973:23), “theoretically it should be possible for the slave to adopt the attitude that he is going to fight his master in order to regain his freedom”. However, it is important to realise that the battle in apartheid South Africa was not only against physical inequality but ideological inequality as the colonisers had managed to erase black culture and perpetually imprison the minds of the black man through education. For Biko, knowledge was the cornerstone for black oppression, as education was in the hands of the white colonial master. Maylan (2016:165) states that education for Africans was meant to reinforce “existent social, economic and political relations”, education was meant to inculcate “moral values of obedience, punctuality, honesty, respect, industry – the qualities that employers demand of workers”. These values were problematic in that they ensured that the majority of Africans would blindly follow white ideology. A UNESCO (1974:62) report on apartheid quotes Prime Minister Hendrik Vorwoerd’s remarks on education in 1954 “our school system must not mislead the Bantu by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze”. This statement is critical in highlighting the role that education played in subordinating blacks, as well as ensuring that their dreams were limited to those that ultimately worked in favour of the state. Furthermore, that statement proves the need for a form of consciousness that would awaken Africans into realising that their problems were not just physical, but ideological as well.

According to Therborn (1980), ideology consists of a three-fold interpellation as it seeks to naturalise inequality and oppression. Firstly, there is ideological formation which “tells individuals what exists, who they are, how the world is and how they are related to the world” (Therborn, 1980:55). At this level, there exists a struggle for meaning and being. One form of knowledge is placed superior to another. According to Enwezor (1997:375), “the struggle for meaning hinges on who controls the representational intentionality of the body politic, especially its archive of images: symbolic and literal”. In other words, education was used during apartheid to create an ideologically passive being who was taught to follow instructions and fear challenging authority. This is tied with the second aspect of ideological interpellation, “ideology tells what is possible, providing varying types of quantities of self-confidence and ambition, and different levels of aspiration” (Therborn, 1980:55). This is

what Black Consciousness seeks to unravel as it emphasises black participation and rejects black visibility as it only creates false hopes of success. According to Biko (1978), SASO was created to provide a platform for blacks to formulate their own thinking, unpolluted by ideas emerging from the white academy which had a lot to lose if apartheid was toppled. Therefore, “black consciousness was a philosophy of praxis that attempted to eradicate from the black intellect the inculcated submissiveness that contributed to its own enslavement” (Fatton, 1986:57). This mirrors the argument by Motimele (2018) that university education in South Africa needed a complete overhaul due to the role it played in pacifying blacks and creating illusions of success, freedom and independence.

A theory on consciousness is apt for this research as it paves the way for discussions on the guiding theory for the student movement. Fatton (1986:39) states that, “consciousness is a place of moral anger and self-affirmation which embodies an ethical and political standard that condemns the existing social order and offers the vision of an alternative society”. The protesting students presented demands which highlight that they were conscious of the oppression and difference within the education sector. Education in South Africa is a point of much debate as it is one way of creating a better and brighter future for South Africans. This is as a result of the fact that independence did not facilitate a redistribution of wealth to cater for disadvantaged blacks and this generational inequality of wealth and access to resources was continually perpetuated. Thus, the ability of the students to rise up and speak for past and future generations signifies an awareness and willingness to change towards a better society that provides for the nation regardless of race.

When speaking on the deficiency of ideology in national liberation movements Cabral (1966:no page) argues that the deficiency of ideology “is basically due to ignorance of the historical reality which these movements claim to transform — constitutes one of the greatest weaknesses of our struggle against imperialism”. In light of this, he is arguing for the need of an epistemological grounding of liberation movements which would take into cognizance that colonialism came in through knowledge and unless liberation movements became aware of the place of knowledge in challenging white hegemony, they were doomed to achieve a limited independence due to the lack of a revolutionary theory. For Cabral (1966:np), the fight for liberation does not end when the national flag is raised in celebration of the ousting of colonial masters, “national liberation exists only when the national productive forces have been completely freed from every kind of foreign domination”. This domination is mostly ideological as it leads to the inheritance and acceptance of the capitalist economy which in

turn relies in maintaining existing economic inequality. In the context of South Africa, a radical transformation of society should have embraced socialist ideology which political parties had advocated for during apartheid in order to ensure redistribution of wealth to address inequality perpetuated by the apartheid government.

Furthermore, Cabral emphasises the importance of history and historical process, he argues that the class consciousness of the working class must align with an ideological awareness that Africans were robbed of their systems and there was a need to return to a path of ideological awareness where our values are important. He adds that, “the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected” (Cabral, 1966:np). This regaining of historical personality could only happen if ideologies such as Black Consciousness were embraced and shared on all levels after independence. Black Consciousness would have assisted in the creation of an awareness by the black populace that independence, a new constitution and the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were not the final destination for South African independence. An awareness of this could possibly have assisted in solidarity and moving away from tribal conflicts created by apartheid due to their separatist policies and homelands. An education that embraced the values of consciousness would have led to a realisation of the true meaning of freedom after 1994. A freedom that provided for disadvantaged people and catered to the rediscovery of communal values and solidarity, an education designed to awaken the consciousness of the African and of his own identity separate from the one designed by the architects of colonialism and apartheid.

Black Consciousness emphasises black cultural and psychological emancipation from white hegemony through solidarity, economic and political liberation. In the case of the student protests at Wits in 2015 and 2016, the movement might have been fragmented (Chinguno et.al., 2017), but there was unity towards the achievement of free decolonised education, which also transcended to calls of equality in academia, particularly equal opportunities for women. The movement fused decolonial thought and Black Consciousness according to Mpofu-Walsh (2016) as the guiding principles. This acceptance of ideologies of black resistance and black unity could only work to make the movement a formidable one. In relation to social change in higher education, Black Consciousness acknowledges the importance of deliberation which can be linked to Castells’ theory of communication power.

The fusion of these two theories strengthens this research as they both acknowledge the power of deliberation and the human mind towards social change. The use of digital technologies expanded the reach of the ideologies of the movement giving a platform for all blacks to speak out and participate in the movement.

Black Consciousness is critical for this research as it explains the start of the student protests. The key tenets of Black Consciousness are the ability of the black man to rise and claim his emancipation via communication, as communication is power. This research argues that by protesting inequality, the students are beginning to identify that the liberation of the African mind is in their hands. Among the demands of the students, was the need to decolonise tertiary education, this demand aligns with what Biko stood for. The need for an education for black people by black people. What better way to do this than to decolonise tertiary education which is the gateway to resolving poverty and inequality in South Africa.

Categorically, the link between Black Consciousness and communication power theory is situated within the domain of power contestations between people in power and forms of counter-power such as the student activism. Black Consciousness holds that the ability of the black man to challenge the status quo lies in an awareness of the ways in which the system is keeping him subjugated and this therefore aligns with the potential that communication technologies provide for rallying large numbers of people whose views align. In the case of the 2015 and 2016 student protests, digital tools were enlisted to allow the students to communicate their displeasure of exclusionary funding structures and high cost of education across South African universities. Biko (1978), echoes the importance of unity among black people which in the digital age was magnified by the use of digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The students, through use of unifying ideologies discussed on hashtags such as #FeesMustFall were able to recruit, mobilize and discuss with other students across the country who could not gather in one place to express their unity. The students' unity signifies the existence of conscious counter-publics fully aware of the place of education in emancipation of the South African black population. This research argues that ideology plays a critical role on the impact that movements make and as indicated in the above discussion, power shifts occur in the minds of the people and the ability to communicate ideologies and challenge the status quo is middle ground for communication power theory and Black Consciousness. Both theories situate the mind as a conduit for change through engagement of challenging ideologies for superior one's to emanate and create a better future.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter conceptualised digital activism and social movements to lay out existing debates on the relations of social movements and how they utilise digital technologies to protest. This research maintains that social movements are not restricted to online spaces, but they utilise these spaces to mobilise, interact and broadcast events in real time. The accessibility of digital media has enabled the rise of the communication power theory explaining the rise of counter-power, which exists to circumvent state ideologies and challenge existing inequality on online spaces. For Castells, digital tools have transformed the way social movements engage with the masses, offering more possibilities for countering power as they now have tools that make normative protest methods better. A discussion on the dynamics of protest was conducted, laying out existing debates on how protests can lead to social change. Furthermore, this section delved into the dynamics of protest in South Africa due to the central role that context plays in any social movement. The following chapter discusses the methodology that was utilised by the researcher to collect data, analyse it as well as the research approach and paradigm.

Chapter 3

3.1 Methodology

This research traces the different contributions from the various actors, and the ideological contestations involved during the #FeesMustFall protests at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa in 2015 and 2016. This section of the research discusses the methodology utilised by the researcher in answering the research questions. The chapter outlines how and why research methods and the specific paradigm were chosen to produce valid research. According to Silverman (2011), the methodology section needs to anticipate and answer any questions that the reader or assessor of the thesis might have while reading the work. The researcher has taken care herein to ensure that all concepts are explained. This research takes a qualitative approach to understand the ideologies of the different actors involved in the 2015-2016 student protests at Wits University. This section provides a report on methods of data generation used by the researcher, as well as a description of the tools used. In addition to research paradigm and approach, sampling and methods of data analysis will also be discussed in detail. The researcher applied for ethical clearance as set out by the ethics committee at the University of the Witwatersrand and these ethical processes were followed throughout the research process.

3.1.1 Research approach

The approach of a researcher will impact on how data is collected and analysed, and it is the duty of the researcher to find an approach that assists in answering the research questions as best as possible. For this piece of work, the researcher considered the qualitative research approach and discovered that it was the best possible approach for this research. The important value of qualitative research approach, “lies in achieving in-depth understanding of social reality in a specific context” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011:109). Similarly, Bryman (2016) states that qualitative methodology enables the research to acquire ‘ontological authenticity’ which is the ability of the research to increase understanding of a social problem or phenomena. Bryman (2016) adds that the best methodology for research is a methodology that reflects differences within the people being investigated. This was critical for this research because the researcher had to investigate differing ideologies among different actors involved in the #FeesMustFall protests in 2015 and 2016.

Qualitative research “studies phenomena in the contexts in which they arise through observation and recording, recording or the analysis of printed and internet material”

(Silverman, 2011:5). This approach was relevant to this study as it enabled the researcher to analyse the ideologies of the movement thus providing a theoretical contribution to studies on digital activism. Context is key for qualitative research as it investigates phenomena in the natural environments in which they occur. This permits the researcher to probe deeper into the data and gain more knowledge which could be used to cement or dispute theory. In qualitative methodology, the world's view of the research is more important as it allows the researcher to see the world from the view of the participants (Du Plooy, 2001).

The centrality of the research participant facilitates conversation between the researcher and the participant where the participants' voice is not overshadowed. According to Bryman (2016:399), "the epistemology underlying qualitative research involves face-to-face interaction" as the best condition of engaging with the mind of another human. This leads the researcher to "acquire social knowledge" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995 cited in Bryman, 2016:399). The ability to engage with participants enables the qualitative researcher to study phenomena which are simply unavailable elsewhere (Silverman, 2011). In the case of this study, the researcher got an opportunity to interview participants of the protests who played critical roles within the 2015, 2016 protests. In addition, the researcher had a unique opportunity to gather additional data through analysing tweets that were posted during the protests and policy documents created by government before and after the protests. This gave the researcher a large pool of data to investigate different ideologies which is one of the aims of this research.

This research did not take a quantitative approach because numeric data generated through the quantitative approach would not have been able to answer the research questions posed in chapter two. As this research specifically lies in an area of social reality, statistics would not provide reliable and replicable data. Additionally, the quantitative approach does not question the authority and credibility of top management. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to question authority and credibility of top management unless there is evidence that they are transparent (Du Plooy, 2001). This approach enabled the researcher to question the ideologies of the 'authorities', in this case being the university management and government representatives as well as the students. This also enabled the researcher to question all the data that was collected to deduce findings that would contribute to the larger body of work on social movements and social change.

In conclusion, this research utilised the qualitative research approach as it enabled the researcher to engage with the research participants to understand their ideologies. This research traced the contributions of the different actors during the #FeesMustFall protests in order to understand their contribution(s) towards social change in higher education. Furthermore, this research discovered whether there has been any social change in higher education from the perspective of the research participants. These questions could not have been addressed satisfactorily using a quantitative approach but could only be answered from a qualitative approach which allows the research participants to share their knowledge with the researcher. This approach allowed the researcher to search for data in an inward process of interacting with data and research subjects unlike the quantitative approach that adopts a more observational approach in gathering data which is mostly statistics.

3.1.2 Research paradigm

This research follows the post-positivist paradigm as it aptly helps navigate the terrain of research on ideologies. Post-positivism emphasises the creation of new knowledge and meaning. According to Ryan (2006:12) the ability of post-positivist approaches to research is to foster the creation of meaning and new knowledge makes the approach useful for understanding social movements “that aspire to change the world and contribute towards social justice”. This aligns with the aim of this research, to understand the contribution of different ideologies towards social change in higher education. Corman (2005:21) defines post-positivists as “people who value a scientific approach to explaining social phenomena, but who also accept many of the different positivisms and have developed positions that transcend them”. Post-positivism moves beyond the positivist quantitative research to qualitative research that is circular or spiral or cumulative.

In addition, Ryan (2006:12) lists characteristics of post-positivist research. Firstly, it is not specialised but covers broad areas of research and thus cannot be confined to a strict area. Secondly, theory and practise are important as they guide research, and this aligns with one of the key characteristics of qualitative methods as theory can be deduced from qualitative research findings. Lastly, she highlights that post-positivist research does not subscribe to the right or wrong ways of doing research but believes in utilising all methods that are best to answer the research questions in a valid and transparent manner. Moreover, she adds that post-positivism moves away from dualistic thinking towards embracing multiplicity and complexity as realities of all human experiences. This is relevant in the study of ideologies as social change is a result of multiple voices sharing ideas to map the road for social change. In

the case of this research, a roadmap towards free higher education because of engagement of different actors during the protests.

Most research that has been branded interpretivist does not align to the ontological and epistemological premises of interpretivism but aligns more with the premise of post-positivism (Samdahl, 1999). Henderson (2011:342) further describes post-positivism as qualitative research that “emphasizes the importance of subjective reality” (Samdahl, 1999:342). This highlights that post-positivism does not impose realities on research subjects but seeks to understand different truths in a chosen area of research. This research views knowledge of events and ideologies as critical in understanding the movement and ultimately strides taken towards social change in higher/ tertiary education. According to Henderson (2011:342), “knowledge is not neutral, and all knowledge is socially constructed”. This notion makes post-positivism relevant for this research as it identifies the value of knowledge in society and the importance of knowledge in understanding social realities.

Furthermore, this research utilises an approach that places knowledge at the core of social change and the value of social realities. Through an interrogation of ideologies of students, Wits management, staff and the Department of Higher Education and Training. To attain balanced and well-informed results, this research used multiple methods, which is one of the tenets of the post-positivist paradigm. According to Lindlof & Taylor (2002) and Bertrand & Hughes (2005), one of the best characteristics of post-positivism is that it allows the researcher to use multiple methods of data collection. Research findings produced from multiple methods of data collection improves the accuracy of the research (Denscombe, 2008). In addition, Lindloff & Taylor (2002) state that by comparing outcomes from various sources of data collection, research is better able to explain complex phenomena. The goal of any researcher is to provide accurate and truthful findings that can be replicated, and post-positivist paradigm increases those chances. This research utilised tweets (posted during the protests), semi-structured interviews and document analysis; this multiple methods approach enabled the researcher to produce truthful and accurate findings.

Additionally, Ryan (2006:22) lists four key tools at the disposal of the post-positivist researcher namely: “the concept of discourse, concern with power, the value of narrative and the need to be reflexive”. In relation to discourse and power, Ryan (2006) argues that discourse shapes the world we live in and sets precedence for how people interact and view each other. On power, she is of the view that power emerges from narratives and discourses.

Discourses have the power to shape how we respond to phenomena. She further highlights the importance of discursive power which may not be visible and yet shapes the world we live in and how we live in it. This research is concerned with power relations between Wits students and people in power (University of Witwatersrand management and the government). The different discourses presented by each party was a form of power that shaped the discussions of what could or could not be discussed. Furthermore, through the utilisation of communication power theory, this research highlights the importance of engagement on various levels to facilitate any form of change in society. This is in associated with the principles of post-positivism as this research digs deep into ideology to understand how the various contributions shaped the status quo in higher education in South Africa.

On narrative, Ryan (2006:24) states that “narratives show how people actively take up positions in certain discourses”, this also works the same way with how they are placed in positions by other parties. These exchanges have to do with how people relate to each other and they also have to do with the way government treats its subjects and South Africa is rich with discourses of race, poverty and social change. Understanding narrative assisted the researcher in writing up this thesis as the researcher understood that a post-positivist does not write from a place of authority, but acknowledges the existence of narratives within discourses that have power to make or break relationships. This is where the reflexivity element of post-positivism comes in. Lindlof & Taylor (2002) agree with Ryan (2006) that reflexivity allows the researcher to stick to contradictions and tensions that arise during research. This, in turn, enables the researcher to discover underlying explanations of phenomena without trying to control or resolve the tensions.

In a nutshell, the discussion above has made a case for why the researcher utilised the post-positivist paradigm. This paradigm enabled an understanding of the events surrounding the students’ protest of 2015-2016 through an analysis of the different ideologies of the various actors that were involved. This paradigm allowed the researcher to be reflexive while also allowing the research subjects to tell their stories without any prejudices. In addition, an important element of this paradigm is that it allows the researcher to follow the path that the research leads instead of following strict and narrow guidelines imposed by other paradigms. In a quest to understand the ideological contributions of the different actors, the research interrogated the contributions of the actors objectively. The open-minded post-positivist does not seek to shape the structure of interviews with stringent questions but engages in the social

construction of narrative with the participants being interviewed. The post-positivist paradigm enabled the researcher to engage with multiple views on multiple levels without any prejudices, ultimately ensuring that the views and ideologies of the ideological actors were reflected within the findings.

3.1.3 Research design

This study focused on the case of #FeesMustFall protests of 2015, and 2016 at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. A case study research design was used as the study seeks to provide a qualitative analysis of the ideological contributions by the various actors involved in the protests. The University of the Witwatersrand was the ‘epicentre’ of the protest and became the best suited case for this exploratory research into ideologies and social change in higher education. However, the unique aspects of the case study were not ignored. For instance, the fact that Wits was a historically white university with its own complex structures. For Bryman (2016), a typical case study is when the case is the sole object of the study due to its unique complexities which would bring out results that can or cannot be replicated for other similar cases. These complexities are what make the case a preferred object of research and in this research as indicated above, the history and complexities of the university were not ignored. Yin (2004:16) defines a case study as, “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context”. This definition points to one of the best elements of this design: allowing the researcher to thoroughly investigate a single case while allowing the case to mirror a larger reality. While Gerring (2007:20) states that the case study approach is an “intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases which forms a population of the study”. Additionally, Du Plooy (2001:162) posits that, “a case study involves the observation of a single system”. The above definitions highlight how the case study design, as a single system approach, allows the researcher flexibility to study one case which is representative of a bigger picture in order to better understand social life. This design enabled the researcher to select a specific population for the research avoiding the risk of collecting irrelevant data outside of the research area.

One of the main objectives of case studies is to collect qualitative data; this aligns with the research approach taken by this study. According to Kumar (2014), for a research to be called a case study, it must consider all the aspects of the research as one entity. A case study is

flexible as it allows the research to be structured depending on available resources; that is, funds, time and research participants available in the setting (Du Plooy, 2001). In addition, a case study allowed the researcher to access a specific population and use various sources of data. This meant only choosing data which was relevant to the Wits case study, thereby, controlling the parameters and control of the research design (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Authors on qualitative research concur that context is one of the most important elements of qualitative research as it allows the researcher to probe for information that helps the research better understand society (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; 2011; Du Plooy, 2001; Bryman, 2016). This emphasis on context is enhanced by a case study research design as it allows the researcher to handpick the elements they want to include and exclude in the research, thereby, excluding irrelevant aspects of the case study. “In a case study design the case you select becomes the basis of a thorough, holistic and in-depth exploration of the aspect[s] that you want to find out about” (Kumar, 2014:155). The research should be a bounded object, and focusing on Wits University bounded the study to a confined space and location making it easier to filter through the data online and offline. This also helped the researcher in selecting participants to interview. Furthermore, Kumar (2014) adds that, the main assumption of a case study is that the case can reflect ideologies, events or phenomena of the larger group that it has been selected from. This research assumed that the findings can help reflect the ideologies of four entities (i.e. the students, government, members of University staff and management) which could be representative of the universities in the country.

3.2 Method of data collection

3.2.1 Sampling

Sampling is the selection of a smaller group of objects or subjects for research that represents a larger population (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005). A sample allows the researcher to engage with a smaller number of research subjects that represent the larger population and the subjects are selected in a way that if the research is replicated, similar results can be generated. Additionally, studying the full population of protest actors would overwhelm the researcher with too much information and from a practical point of view would be impossible to do. This research utilised purposive sampling, which Bryman (2016:416) states is “essentially to do with selection of units, with reference to the research questions being asked”. That is, the research questions will guide the researcher on the units to be sampled. Bertrand & Hughes (2005) add that, in humanities the sample needs to be selected in a way that is applicable to the question in mind. For this research, in order to ascertain whether there

has been social change in higher education, the researcher had to generate a sample that represented all the actors involved during the protests in 2015 and 2016.

The accuracy of research findings relies on the selection of the sample, so the researcher must be aware of all the characteristics of the target population to objectively select a sample that will provide the best possible findings (Kumar, 2014). In qualitative research the sample is used to gain in-depth knowledge about a phenomenon, society or event. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to purposefully pick out the research participants who played ideological roles during the protests from the different categories of stakeholders i.e. students, university management, academic community, and department of higher education. This assisted the researcher in only selecting the best possible research subjects and data to avoid generalisations and an overly large research sample.

Purposive sampling does not allow generalisations of population; thus the sample of this research was 6 students who were enrolled at the university in 2015 and 2016, and they were selected since they were at the centre of the protest, and their ideas and ideologies helped shaped the direction and speed of the protest. The initial problem during the research was identifying key participants during the protests who would fit the sample. The researcher got in touch with a PhD student at the university who was vocal during the protests. The student was willing to provide details and contacts of former students who were part of the movement and might be willing to participate in the research. In order to refine the list of participants, the researcher did a brief background check on the social media pages of the students to understand their positioning within the movement.

In addition, the researcher met with a vocal student who is now part of the Student Representative Council (SRC) to do a preliminary interview to get more information on some of the students who participated in the protests. The total number of students in this research was six: three male and three female, which enabled the researcher to gather data on different gender perspectives, as there were tensions between male and female students during the protests. The researcher also purposively selected two participants from the University of the Witwatersrand management: the Vice Chancellor and the Vice Principal who were best placed to give more information on their ideologies as well as the ideologies of the University. The researcher intended to maintain a balance on the voices that were speaking out during the protests and thus selected two members of the academic staff who were members of the Academic Staff Association at Wits University (ASAWU). The selected

members were actively involved in the protest with one being the President of ASAWU at the time of the protests and the other was actively involved with the students. Furthermore, the researcher selected one member from the Department of Higher Education and Training because the department is a key stakeholder in higher education and excluding them would have weakened the research as the department is responsible for the management of universities/higher education in South Africa.

The researcher also purposively sampled data from a Twitter page which was used by students from October 2015 to the end of 2016. The page @WitsFMF posted a total of 3787 tweets from the beginning of the protests. Sampling tweets from the page allowed the researcher to trace online discourses and ideologies in relation to protests at the university. The researcher specifically narrowed the search of tweets from 8 to 20 October 2015 and 19 September to 11 October 2016, considering that these were peak times for the protests; though there were deliberations happening outside of these dates on the page. The analysed tweets were purposively selected because generally not all tweets reflected ideologies. Twitter data was relevant for this researcher as Twitter was used as both a platform for planning of protests and the dissemination of ideologies by the students. The researcher used NCapture to collect tweets from the Wits Twitter page. The app downloads all the tweets on the page onto a spreadsheet document. This includes tags and retweets which were also relevant for this research. The researcher filtered the data by using the above-mentioned data on NVivo, a data analysis software. This allowed the researcher to purposively select tweets that would respond to research questions. As alluded to earlier, purposive sampling enables the researcher to select research participants or data based on the research questions (Bryman, 2016).

The above discussion explained how the researcher selected the requisite sample for this research which included all variables of the population. The differences on standpoints being investigated by this research could only be investigated by having a representative sample of all the actors whose ideological contributions could have led to the adoption of changes in higher education. The purposively sampled data and research participants enabled the researcher to conduct data collection using various methods to be discussed below. In addition, purposive sampling enabled the researcher to consciously select a research target based on the aim of this research. While there are numerous methods of sampling, the researcher had three key focus areas: select people who contributed ideologically; choose government documents which bear ideologies and strategies for resolving the issues raised by

the students; and select social media data from the days of the protests to come up with a sample that would enable data saturation. Hence, purposive sampling was the best suited method for this research.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are purposive conversations which provide the researcher with an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of an event, society or a topic being studied (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005). Face to face interviews enable the researcher to read more than just the language but read emotion and expressions that could otherwise not be seen if the researcher had administered questionnaires. This research utilised semi-structured interviews as they were best suited for a research that investigated ideologies. Semi-structured interviews are conducted using an interview guide. The guide is a list of topics or questions, is often to guide the interviewer on questions they can ask in a variety of ways. An interview guide “offer a more informal and flexible approach”, therefore the researcher is not restricted by a strict guide of questions but can ask follow-up questions for clarity and understanding (Lindlof & Taylor 2011:200).

Semi-structured interviews were best suited for this research because using an interview permitted the researcher to focus on the goals of the research while maintaining ethical conduct. According to Bryman (2016), qualitative interviews enable the researcher to see the world through the eyes of the research subjects and thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the object of research. Interviews work best when the interviewee is relaxed and is aware that there will be no harmful or damaging effects for participating in the research (Silverman, 2011). However, some authors have criticised interviews for having the potential to provide biased or inaccurate information (Lindlof, 1995). They have illustrated that interview questions could easily confuse the interviewee if ambiguous words are used by this research. To avoid this, the researcher used an interview guide which provided guidelines on the areas to focus on and, thus, the researcher probed deeper and was able to explain the questions to the interviewees. Lindlof (1995) further argues that interviewees can provide information that they believe the researcher wants to hear, however, the researcher had background of the events before engaging with the research participants. This allowed the researcher to ask for clarity whenever the interviewee was giving information that could prove controversial.

The researcher interviewed 11 respondents: six student activists, two members of the university management, one representative from the Department of Higher Education and

Training and two members of academic staff who were members of ASAWU. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher created a relaxed atmosphere by engaging in small talk with each interviewee. This also allowed the researcher to gain composure before starting the interview and familiarise herself with the interviewee. Once the researcher had established rapport, the interview process began. Refer to Appendix 9 – 12 for the interview guides with each group of actors. Each interview ranged between 40 minutes to one hour, depending on how much time the interviewee had, as well as the researcher being satisfied with the responses being given. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gather more detail and understand the complexities and differences of ideologies which could not have been established had the researcher used any other form of interviewing. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to collect data that would specifically answer the research questions. In addition, this method gave the researcher an opportunity to engage with the various actors on a one-on-one basis to get all the information that was relevant for the research. A method that allows the researcher to ask the who, what and why of events or situations was best suited for this research and semi-structured interviews made that possible. The following sections will discuss how other data was collected and analysed.

3.2.3 Document analysis

Documents are rich sources of information; they are both “contextually relevant and grounded in the context they represent” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011:254). This research utilised documents sourced from the Department of Higher Education and Training’s website. These documents include policy documents and policy statements particularly on Higher Education funding. According to Bertrand & Hughes (2005), documents are easily available and affordable sources of information, particularly if they are from official sources or archives for companies and governments. Silverman (2011) holds that the government produces documents in the form of policy statements and research done on proposed policies in abundance and some of them are accessible in archives or on their online platforms. The researcher sought policy documents from the DHET website as there is an archive of policy documents and ministerial statements. The research specifically searched documents relating to free education and education funding documents before the protests, during the time of the protests and after the protests. The researcher focused specifically on the following documents to understanding policy ideology on the government: ‘The Presidential Task Team Report on Student Funding Challenges at Universities’ (DHET, 2015), ‘Report of the working group on fee free education University education for the poor in South Africa’

(DHET, 2013) and ANC conference resolutions for the years 2007 and 2015, with a particular focus on the resolutions on higher education. Additional documents were acquired from an interview conducted with an official at the Department of Higher Education. The documents were vital for the research as they articulated funding frameworks that the government was proposing, as well as investigations that were being conducted by the government into the feasibility of free education. Furthermore, the researcher accessed a document from the @WitsFMF page titled 'Thuto ke Lesedi' (Education is the light), which was a policy proposal by the students towards addressing existing funding challenges and the feasibility of free education. The documents allowed the researcher to trace government ideology from a period before the student protests, thereby providing a wealth of information on government ideology relating to free higher education.

3.2.4 Online ethnography

Online ethnography “entails the study of online discussion groups such as online support groups and discussions boards” as primary or secondary data (Bryman, 2016:663). Online platforms provide non-invasive, accessible and long-lasting archive of research data that can be continually accessed in online archives which provides for relatively affordable research (Jupp, 2006). According to Markham (2011:121) “linguistic and social structures emerging through social interaction via the internet provide the opportunity for researchers to track and analyse how language builds and sustains social reality”. This factor enabled the researcher to analyse the realities expressed by the students through their social media posts about why free education was critical for them and the role free, decolonised education would play in the development of the country, as well as other narratives that emanated from the protests.

Online ethnography was conducted through downloading tweets from the University of the Witwatersrand official #FeesMustFall page: @WitsFMF. The researcher specifically focused on tweets from 8 to 20 October 2015 and 19 September to 11 October 2016 as these were peak periods during the protests. To narrow down to these dates, the research filtered the tweets on the NVivo software down to 2678 tweets which were also narrowed down through keyword searches of #FeesMustFall, free education and decolonise education. From there, the researcher identified tweets that contributed to ideological discourses on free education, discourses of inequality and discourses relating to social change in higher education. The research still had over 1000 tweets after this filtering. The researcher then purposively selects 50 tweets which had the highest number of retweets and likes. This allowed the researcher to

focus on just 50 tweets and these are the tweets that are analysed in the following chapters. These tweets helped the researcher understand the demands for free education and the actions of students towards that. The tweets were incorporated into the larger discussion alongside interview data and documents relating to free education.

3.4 Methods of data analysis

3.4.1 Thematic analysis

To gain a deeper understanding of the collected data from interviews and documents, the researcher conducted thematic analysis of transcribed data to identify and analyse recurring themes. Bryman (2016:580) identifies a theme as “a category identified by the analyst through his/her data”. Additionally, Jupp (2006:186) recognises one of the key characteristics of thematic analysis, “emphasis is on the content of a text, ‘what’ is said more than ‘how’ it is said, the ‘told’ rather than the ‘telling’”. This research focused on what was said by each actor, keeping in mind that each actor was placed in a different position vis-à-vis the other actors, thus, what they said was most important. Therefore, the researcher had to look through the collected data for common and reoccurring themes. These themes were not just random information that the researcher picked out, but in the case of interview data they were recurring responses (themes), such as the ideological contestations of free education, the politicisation of the movement and the place of education in achieving social change. This will be discussed further in the following chapters. This process entailed noting responses from different respondents which amount to varying similarities or differences in ideas or viewpoints. This is substantiated by Ravitch & Carl (2016:222) who note that, “thematic analysis involves noting relationships, similarities, and differences in the data”. These three aspects were critical for this research on ideological contributions, as they assisted the researcher to identify elements from individual members of different groups that responded to the research questions.

The same method of analysis was employed on the documents that the researcher collected. Juxtaposing the interview data and documents collected allowed the researcher to compare policy perspectives versus the reality on the ground. This was done from the first document which the students used to back their demands, the Freedom Charter; to the Ministerial statements released in the two years preceding the protests. These documents were critical for the research, as they allowed the researcher to evaluate social change processes in South Africa’s higher education from 1994 to date. In addition, the researcher analysed the progress that the university and government have made in addressing the demands of students.

According to Du Plooy (2001:197), “a thematic analysis consists of a description of main ideas in a message”. The researcher noted the main ideas in each document that related to addressing free education and making education financially accessible to more black students. These were important in understanding the role that the social movement played in getting the government to fulfil promises that had been made before and after the end of apartheid.

Gibson & Brown (2009:129) problematise thematic analysis as they note that, themes may only highlight important elements in the data but might also lead to what they call “a generalized feature of a data set”. This is because the data that is neglected as unimportant in thematic analysis might be the data that captures the essence of individual experiences and their intricacies. However, this research was more interested in ideologies and could possibly not have overlooked the different contexts and standpoints of everyone who was interviewed as well as the context within which each document was drafted. Jupp (2006) adds that, thematic analysis is particularly useful if one is analysing data from different cases to deduce common and uncommon elements within the research. This was useful for the research as the researcher could easily identify which themes disputed or supported theory which ultimately increased the validity of this research.

3.4.2 Discourse analysis

This research utilised discourse analysis to analyse the tweets that were collected. Jupp (2006:74) defines discourse analysis as “primarily a qualitative method of ‘reading’ texts, conversations and documents which explores the connections between language, communication, knowledge, power and social practices. In short, it focuses upon the meaning and structure (whether overt or hidden) of acts of communication in context”. This is particularly important for this research as it is particularly interested in ideologies of the different actors that were involved in the protests. Discourse analysis was critical to understand the social media discourses articulated by the students. For Somekh & Lewin (2005) discourse is embedded in language, which is the focus of discourse analysis as it allows a researcher to immerse themselves in the world of the research subject. Experience, emotion and context are relayed through language, thus, it is critical to understand the positionality of the writer or speaker through using discourse analysis as a tool for untapping meaning from a research object. The researcher utilised discourse analysis to analyse 50 tweets which were filtered from a large pool of 3787 tweets data mined from the Wits #FeesMustFall Twitter page (@WitsFMF).

Somekh & Lewin (2005) posit that, the more a researcher appreciates “sociohistorical situation of a text”, the easier it is for them to view the world through the eyes of the writer or speaker. This in turn would make their interpretation of the text more insightful for anyone who will engage with their findings. According to Lai & To (2015) analysis of social media data should emanate from a ground up position that is influenced by a ground up approach that situates the data as the core focus and allows for the research to deduce meaning from the data based not only on impressions but the content within the post. They add that, this also helps in identifying emergent concepts from the actual posts and how they are interlinked to existing debates under particular hashtags or discussions. Along these lines, the researcher analysed the tweets through looking at the discourses that each tweet represented, the researcher was particularly interested in tweets that reflected on: how the students viewed free education; what they meant by free education; and what types of resolutions were they willing to accept from the government. These questions allowed the researcher to identify important tweets from the set time periods that addressed specific elements aligned to the research questions.

3.5 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are important elements of research as they represent whether a research contributes to a large body of knowledge and theory. To achieve this, the researcher utilised triangulation. Triangulation occurs when a researcher utilises two or more methods of data collection to ensure that each method complements the other in order to enhance validity of findings. Lindlof & Taylor (2011:274) identify triangulation as an approach “rooted in post-positivist premise that the use of multiple forms of evidence can bring us closer to a ‘true’ representation of the world”. This approach allows the researcher to probe multiple views from multiple sources of data. The researcher collected documents, conducted interviews and collected tweets; this was useful for this research as it allowed the researcher to arrive at reliable and valid results that could contribute to existing knowledge and debates on social change, ideologies of social movements and social change in higher education. For Silverman (2011:371), triangulation is “best understood as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to an inquiry when interview and field data can be combined”, and the use of the different methods of data collection i.e. interview, document and tweets in this study add richness and rigour to the subject matter been studied.

3.6 Ethical considerations

This research adhered to the University's ethics guidelines through the submission of an ethics application to the Human Research Ethics (Non-Medical) Committee of the Wits University. The ethics approval is attached as Appendix 2. Additionally, because the researcher intended to conduct interviews at Wits University, the researcher applied for the Registrar's approval to conduct interviews with staff members and students of the University (see Appendix 3 for approval letter). The researcher only started interviews when she had received these approvals to maintain the ethical standards of the Media Studies Department and the University. For every interview that the researcher conducted, each participant was given the participant information sheet to go through and the researcher also explained that they could withdraw from the interview at any time.

Some respondents opted to use pseudonyms and others preferred to remain anonymous, except for one who preferred to use her job title. Once they had understood that they are free to withdraw from the interview if they feel uncomfortable the researcher proceeded to give them the consent form and the audio recording consent form which all respondents signed. The researcher proceeded with the interview and there were no incidents of ethics violations. The recordings were transcribed immediately after the interviews and stored on the researcher's password protected computer in a locked folder without any identifying markers that could reveal the respondents name. A back-up of the transcribed interviews and audio recordings was placed in cloud storage without any identifying markers; this was done so the researcher could have a back-up in case she lost her computer. This research was conducted with the strictest adherence to ethical guidelines. Please see attached Table 1 for details of interviewees, as well as the dates of interviews.

3.7 Reflections of the researcher

This part of the chapter is based on my own experiences of the research process. As a foreign student at University of the Witwatersrand, there were a lot of challenges; one must jump through hoops (mental, financial and personal) until you come out at the end of the tunnel. At the beginning of my Masters in February 2018, my main worry was what would my research target think of a foreign student probing and asking questions about such a traumatic (for some) and controversial issue. Also, I was worried about the language barrier, as some Wits radical students refuse to speak in English outside of their lectures. I worried about the people in high positions who I had to engage with. Would they agree to meet me? Would they cancel appointments, or would they allow me to sit down and ask questions? Eighteen months later,

I realise that half of these questions were just based on my fear of being the outsider or ‘the other’ in a place where I often felt like I did not belong. However, looking back as I write this chapter, I realise how my own preconceived notions of the research have been proven wrong. I had my own expectations of the research process and outcomes as I embarked on this research journey. From the onset of the research, I expected difficulties, particularly due to the wealth of articles and books that have been written on the topic by students, staff and members of university management. One main worry was that my research would seem to be a replication of other studies, in my search for a distinctive element I realised what made this research unique was bringing together different voices. While this was distinctive, it also brought about the tantamount task of approaching different stakeholders with different schedules or who couldn’t be bothered to be interviewed by a student.

While I feared that the student activists would be evasive about ideologies and actions they took during the protests, I had to maintain in all the interviews that they not divulge any involvement in violent acts during the protests. For ethical reasons as well as protecting their image. This was particularly true for students who were facing prosecution, students who did not want it to be known that they had a part to play in the protests, and students who were at the forefront and who were determined that they should be the sole authors of the stories of the #FeesMustFall movement. However, as a researcher those fears had to be thrown out the window so I could conduct the research. I did not have a claim to this movement, firstly, these protests took place in 2015 and 2016 while I was in the comfort of my homeland Zimbabwe. Secondly, the calls for free education had nothing to do with international students because international students make a conscious choice to study away from their homes and, hence, they can afford the high cost of education beyond their borders.

With all this in mind, I realised I had to implement a plan if this research was going to be a success. When I did my honours in 2017 at Wits, I had reconnected with a few of my friends from my first time at Wits as part of an exchange programme in 2011. Some of these friends were vocal during the protests and could easily be identified as ideological contributors, we had engaged in lengthy discussions about the movement and who the movement belonged to. These engagements came in handy when I finally started doing interviews as I understood the fragmentations of the movement. I knew this had to be my entry point as I started thinking about the population of the research and how to deduce a sample. I made it a point to keep in touch and catch up occasionally with some of these students because I knew I would need to

be referred to other fallists² who were still studying at the University or those who had left. This did not ease my worry about the language barrier because I knew that at some point I had to prove that I was learning a local language and had to have at least a general ability to respond to greetings and make small talk if I was to be accepted by the ‘comrades’. The best part was I had become familiar with debates surrounding free education as I had done an Honours essay on aspects of the #FeesMustFall movement.

By the time my proposal was approved in early September 2018, I had made a few friends, some of who were now members of staff at the University. I knew I had to start looking for names and contacts of additional people to interview who had contributed ideologically. I got in touch with my friends and they were helpful, but I knew the challenge would come after I had ethics approval to start doing the interviews. At the end of November 2018, I had ethics approval, as well as the Registrars approval to conduct research at the University. I immediately got in touch with ten students whose names I had, some of them responded immediately but some of them are yet to respond even after follow-up emails. By the second week of November 2018, I had three confirmed interviews with Wits students who were involved in the protests. This was not the number I had set out to interview. I needed six students. This meant that my plan was partly successful, so I got in touch with more people who could refer me to other students. One of the challenges I had was that even the postgraduate students I was in touch with were also moving out of campus because of the holidays and I had to move fast.

Getting in touch with the students and sitting down with them was one of my greatest challenges. Scheduled meetings were cancelled at the last minute while some of them stopped taking my calls. When I began data collection, I had assumed meetings with Wits management and the DHET representative would be the main challenges, however, this was not the case. Though two of my meetings with these officials were cancelled without notice, these were rescheduled and the interviews went well. As with any political movement, the assumed leaders become those who suffer any consequences such as imprisonment. This was the same with some male ‘leaders’ of the Wits movement. However, these positions come with an amount of respect and power that some cannot handle or in turn abuse. One of my proposed respondents was a student leader who has been accused of abusing his power, but

² The students were identified as fallists due to their stances on existing exclusionary conditions such as the high cost of education. From the beginning with #RhodesMustfall, the students called for symbolic and practical falling of statues, structures and exclusionary mechanisms hindering access to tertiary education.

these are only whispers among students who are familiar with him. Once I informed some of my friends that I wanted to interview him, my friends jokingly asked me if I was willing to sleep with him for the interview. At that moment I did not take it seriously, until another group of students alluded to the same issue, highlighting that it was his custom to help girls but in turn ask for sexual favours. I could never confirm these rumours and allegations because my emails were never responded to and my calls not answered, maybe I dodged a bullet there.

In summary, the data collection process was fairly challenging as was expected but the experience was both eye opening and educating. I now understand the #FeesMustFall movement from the different perspectives of the actors. This research enabled me to sit in the centre and listen to voices from four different stakeholders namely, the students, University staff, senior management staff at the University and a government representative, which is possibly one of the greatest strengths of this research. The ability to bring together multiple voices and investigate as an outsider was one of my greatest experiences.

Table 1: Table of Participants

Name	Position	Organisation	Date of interview
Adam Habib	Vice-Chancellor	University of the Witwatersrand	12/12/2018
Interviewee 1	Senior management staff	University of the Witwatersrand	14/12/2018
Ashley Mabasa	Student Representative Council Secretary-General	University of the Witwatersrand	22/01/2019
Dr Diane Parker	Deputy Director-General	Department of Higher Education and Training Education	17/01/2019
Interview 3	Associate Professor (female)	University of the Witwatersrand	11/01/2019

	Member of ASAWU		
John Smith (pseudonym)	Former ASAWU President	University of the Witwatersrand	12/12/2018
Interviewee 4	Former Student Representative Council member (male)	University of the Witwatersrand	14/12/2018
Interviewee 5	Student activist	University of the Witwatersrand	14/12/2018
Sphiwe Ndlovu (pseudonym)	Student activist	University of the Witwatersrand	18/01/2019
Malebo Ganyani (pseudonym)	Student activist	University of the Witwatersrand	21/ 01/ 2019
Thabiso Nyembezi (pseudonym)	Student activist	University of the Witwatersrand	21/01/2019

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research approach, paradigm and methodology that were implemented in this study. This qualitative research utilised a case study design. A post-positivist lens was used to understand research processes. The researcher utilised purposive sampling to identify the relevant population for the research as well as select documents and tweets which were analysed. Data was collected using interviews, tweets and documents from the DHET website. The chapter further outlined the manner in which all data collected was analysed through thematic analysis and discourse analysis. In addition, the use of multiple methods of data collection, known as triangulation, enabled the researcher to maintain validity and reliability. This research was conducted with strict adherence to ethical guidelines stipulated by Wits University. The next chapter focuses on the representation of the findings.

Chapter 4

Ideological contestations within #FeesMustFall

This research set out to interrogate the different ideologies emerging from the various stakeholders during the #FeesMustFall protests at the University of the Witwatersrand, 2015-2016, and the extent to which such ideologies have led to social change within the institution. This chapter outlines the ideological discourses that transpired during the protests among the various actors and argues that social movement ideologies are central to mobilisation, action and achievement of goals. This analysis is a combination of thematic analysis of interviews, document analysis and a discourse analysis of tweets from the 2015 and 2016 when the protests were at their peak, as articulated in the previous chapter. This chapter articulates the ideological contestations within the movement. This first theme focuses on the ideological positions of the actors in regard to what free education means and how they propose to address existing challenges in higher education. The second theme that emanated from the data collected was the place of higher education in addressing existing inequalities in the country. The final theme that will be discussed in this chapter is the politicisation of the movement by parties external to the movement, as well as the politicisation of free education in South Africa.

4.1 Ideological contestations within the movement

Ideological contestation allows for engagement of ideas (opposing and aligning) which allows for development and shared scopes leading to change. For Castells (2007, 2009), the battle for the human mind is critical for progress, change and development. While his argument is aligned to engagement on digital platforms, it is important to note that engagement paves the way for democratic discussions. This research set out to investigate the ideological contestations within the movement and found that one of the core areas of contestation was the free education debate. The contestation was based on the different interpretations of free education and the position that each actor occupied. For the students, free education was a right they were denied after independence; a right that would have paved the way for addressing generational inequality caused by apartheid. For the university administration, free education was a noble demand, but it was not in the interests of quality education for the university to undertake this project. On the other hand, government did not have a unified position in addressing the demands made by the students because the funding for free education would need to come from national coffers, which certainly could not

handle the pressure of free education. This section uncovers ideological contestations within the #FeesMustFall movement, starting from what exactly each group of actors meant by free education. This will lead to a discussion about the contestations between the different groups involved.

The student protests emanated from deep seated issues of inequality of access to education and the high cost of education at the University of Witwatersrand. According to the department of higher education,

The average full cost of higher education in the most expensive universities in the country – University of Cape Town (UCT), Rhodes, University of Stellenbosch (US), University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), University of Johannesburg (UJ) and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) is more than R90 000 annually, which is unaffordable for most middle-class families (DHET, 2015:22).

This indicates the high cost of education in these South African universities, specifically previously white institutions. This, to an extent, is the continuation of colonial legacies that excluded black people, whilst the cost is a reflection of the quality of education that these institutions offer. Morrow (2008) outlined that previously disadvantaged universities provide low quality education and are not fully equipped to produce highly competitive graduates that match those from previously white institutions. This is a reflection of the challenges raised by the students. That is, that previously white institutions are highly resourced but expensive while previously black universities are poorly resourced and yet tuition there is more affordable. This is a problematic reflection of education at the University of the Witwatersrand and other universities across the country today, and the contestations in terms of what free education meant for the different actors involved in the protests. In addition, through the ‘Report of the working group on fee free University education for the poor in South Africa’ (DHET, 2013) government identified the cost of education as a hindrance to accessing higher education:

The cost of higher education contributes to the progressive inaccessibility of education to many South Africans who are unable to raise funds for their studies. In this regard, government is considering various options of making higher education accessible to deserving students who cannot afford it financially (DHET, 2013:v).

Furthermore, a resolution from the 52nd ANC national conference held in Polokwane in 2007, Resolution 44 under ‘Social Transformation’ stipulates the need to “progressively introduce

free education until undergraduate level” (ANC, 2007:np). This resolution was both long overdue and a milestone, a starting point in creating a policy framework for free higher education which would eventually lead to opening up of avenues for the allocation of national budget resources to enhance access to higher education.

While the students argued that free education would increase accessibility and lessen the burden on poor families, they also identified the ANC neo-liberal project as a reason for the commodification of education. While this research focuses on the University of the Witwatersrand, it is important to understand that the university belongs to a larger body of universities in the country and Wits was dubbed one of the most expensive universities in the country. According to the DHET (2015:30) “the protests are also a reflection of the broader social, political and class issues that are pervasive in society. It is significant that the #FeesMustFall protests started at some of the most expensive universities”.

The students concurred that there was a need to address the high cost of education in the country in order to make it more inclusive of people from different financial backgrounds. On social media engagement in 2015 and 2016, a large number of students argued that the neo-liberal project was the reason behind the high cost of education in the country. In line with this @WitsFMF tweeted “South African students have been struggling for #FreeEducation for two decades. We have had it with commodified learning. #Asinamali continued neoliberal dogma of the post 94 project! We say #FreeEducationNow #Asinamali” (10 January 2016). The above discourses were also articulated by students whose tweets were retweeted by @WitsFMF, for example, RT @Pontsho_Pilane: @WitsFMF rep: “We are calling for the end of commodifying of education. #FMF2016” (13 January 2016). The student discourses indicated a call for the complete overhaul of the funding structure of the academy to address inequality of access to education.

According to Motimele (2019), the university is driven by neo-liberal concerns such as making sure that students finish on set times regardless of the differing academic experiences, they encounter which ultimately lead to some of them not finishing in time. She argues that “the universities’ insistence on the conclusion of the academic program (curriculum-time), the need to balance university financial books (capitalist-time), and the obsession with research output and student throughput (production-time) are all expressions of neo-liberal-time” (Motimele, 2019:205). These are all realistic expressions of the existing challenges students are facing with imposed time limits, yet the academy ignores the individual

academic experiences of students across races. While meeting research output targets and student throughput would enable the university to acquire more funding, there is no guarantee that these pressures do not already cause high dropout rates of existing students. In addition, Mbembe (2016:30) stipulates that “universities today are large systems of authoritative control, standardization, gradation, accountancy, classification, credits and penalties” which need to be changed as they have made higher education into a product that can be bought and sold to those who can afford it. For education to be fully accessible, its cost on the students’ needs to amount to a full academic experience that adds value to the lives of the people it seeks to emancipate. Consequently, making the ideology of free education germane in the 2015-2016 protests.

It was clear from the interviews with the student actors that there were different perspectives within the movement about what free education is. For the students, free education was a provision of full tuition, accommodation, and a living/transport allowance. According to Interviewee 4, who was a student council representative during the protests:

Free education is the birth right of all black Africans who suffered because of apartheid. We want the full provision of tuition, accommodation and living expenses that was promised to our parents by the ANC (Interviewee 4, former Student Representative Council Member (SRC), University of the Witwatersrand, 14 December 2018).

The above indicates the explicitness of the demands of the students. The students were determined to collect the rewards of an election promise 19 years after the ANC ushered in independence. This demand, however problematic, was centred around the collation of promises that ultimately led to the Freedom Charter. From the students’ perspective, the Freedom Charter laid out plans for free education. This idea of free education is problematic because the Freedom Charter explicitly states that:

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children;
Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit (Freedom Charter, 1955).

The above highlights that primary and secondary education shall be free, which the government has delivered through no-fee government-owned schools. On higher education, the Charter clearly stipulates that tertiary education shall be open to all through government subsidy and allowances that will be allocated on a merit basis. This claim is also backed up

by Masilela (2017), who argues that the students traced their demands back to the Freedom Charter and their claims were valid. While the first few words of the section focuses on primary and secondary education, the latter parts allude to the allocation of free education on the basis of merit.

While the students concurred that the Charter guaranteed them free education, they problematised the merit-based funding criteria as exclusionary and an obstacle that would mean lower numbers of black students were assisted. The main problem that the students raised was the deplorable state of secondary education which hindered high pass rates among students from poor families. The students argued that funding based on the merit system could never work due to the depletion of quality education in government high schools. According to Malebo Ganyani, who was a student activist during the 2015 protests:

We cannot be expected to compete with White and Indian students who attend private schools, by the time we finish Matric we are already at a disadvantage because of the poor quality of public education (Malebo Ganyani, student activist, University of the Witwatersrand, 21 January 2019).

The students' sentiments on the state of public secondary education are valid. Secondary education should be able to prepare students to compete at the same level once they enter tertiary education. Along the same lines, Swartz et al. (2018) argue that high schools are not adequately preparing pupils for the realities of tertiary education; from choosing academic courses to coping with the competitive pressure in tertiary institutions. Additionally, Swartz et al. (2018:5) concluded that "the inequalities reflected in higher education institutions are systemic and reflexive of unequal access to quality primary and secondary education". The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) conducted an investigation that laid out the harsh conditions that poor and rural black South Africans encountered in the quest for primary and secondary education. The report also laid out the challenges to quality education in rural areas and as such the demands for free education were meant to address existing challenges that exacerbated low pass rates for underprivileged black students.

Initial responses to the protests were based on denial and that the students' demands were not constitutional, while neglecting evidence of the resolutions made at the 52nd and 53rd ANC party conferences as indicated above. The initial response to student protests in 2015 are reflected through a report issued at the end of 2015 in 'The Presidential Task Team Report on Student Funding Challenges at Universities' released by the department of higher

education. The report argued that the demands made by the students were legitimate, but the students had misinterpreted the Constitution. The DHET argued that “the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa clearly supports affordable higher education for all and progressive support for financially needy students to access higher education, but it does not promise free education” (DHET, 2015:9). Instead, the document stipulates that the Constitution “can be read to promise affordable higher education and financial assistance to students who would otherwise not be able to access study opportunities” (DHET, 2015:12). This indicates a shift in free education ideologies on the part of government as they move away from the inherent discussion that was going on at the time about free education using the constitution as a buffer between policy and the demands of the people. This assertion also dismisses the legitimacy of the demands made by the students and creates a challenge in understanding what the ANC was trying to do. This also reflects a selective capacity of the ANC to take responsibility for reckless political promises. The government had continuously conducted studies to investigate poverty, inequality and the feasibility of free education and yet, until the explosion of the protests, there was no tangible solution to free education.

While the main government ideology was targeted at containment of the protests to avoid them spilling into 2016, which would have caused a further derailment of the academic year. The presidential task team report also highlighted four areas of concern that aligned with the student demands which were meant to be addressed as they would cause further protests. Firstly, the upfront fee payment for the 2016 academic year. This is a registration fee that the university requested students to pay at registration, which at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2016 was just over 9 000 Rands in 2016. Secondly, it indicated that there was a need to address the NSFAS shortfall which amounted to debts owed (historic debt) by students who could not get funding from 2013 to 2015 due to shortage of funds (DHET, 2015). Third, was a need to address the challenges of the missing middle, as they did not qualify for NSFAS. Further, the report identified these students as “instrumental in organising and participating in the #FeesMustFall campaign which started at universities with the highest fees” (DHET, 2015:11). Lastly, universities were warned about the increase in the numbers of new students and returning students who had previously dropped out of their studies due to financial challenges. All these concerns were meant to be addressed by universities in conjunction with government.

Among the students, there was an undebatable consensus on the need for free education and what it entailed. However, for university staff, particularly the members of ASAWU, there

was no agreement as to what free education should include. According to the former President of the Union, John Smith (pseudonym), the union did not have a united standpoint on the validity of the demands for free education, as they believed that government was not taking the issues raised by the students seriously and that the existing challenges faced by students stem from the failures of NSFAS. According to him:

As academic staff were not united on the merits of the protests. I think most supported the need to address accessibility and inclusivity embodied in FMF... We raised the problematic funding structure of the NSFAS and its inability to disburse funds, we raised the need for the government to treat access to higher education seriously...we had no explicit or clearly defined standpoint. We needed to remain flexible due to the lack of unity amongst academic staff on the questions raised (Personal interview, 12 December 2018).

While the union itself was not ideologically united on the way to address the challenges raised by the students, they supported the problems raised by the students. Ideological unity on the part of the academic staff was problematic to achieve because some of the members believed free education would affect the quality of education at the institution. However, those who stood behind the students clearly believed that the student demands were valid and free education should include tuition, living expenses and accommodation. According to Interviewee 3, who is a black female member of ASAWU,

We joined hands with the students because we came from disadvantaged families that struggled to put us through school, this was the perfect time to challenge the institution to address white privilege and for the state to finally deliver equality through free decolonized education (Interviewee 3, Associate Professor, University of the Witwatersrand, 11 January 2019).

The interviewee further stated that ideological standpoints on the demands of the students were affected by race and privilege, thus, they did not expect non-black members of academic staff to understand structural and generational poverty experienced by blacks in the country. A large number of pro-change ASAWU members were largely female, black intellectuals in the university. Black female academics who participated in the protests were mostly those who had something to lose, those who had also encountered the same challenges in getting their degrees at universities across the country and at the University of the Witwatersrand. This reveals an awareness of the position that black people occupy in society

and a willingness to change the status quo which Steve Biko had advocated for. For Biko (1978), it was important for black people to unite and change their place in society and reclaim their pride and power. Thus, the fact that staff members united with the students was important for the movement, as the black child had realised the importance of unity in challenging existing inequality of access to education at the institution. In line with this, student activists are noted in Chinguno et al. (2017:20) as stating “we adopted a sophisticated conception of race and non-racial society, drawing from the Black Consciousness philosophy, which also influenced the ideology of the broader #FMM movement. Biko urges Blacks to take the lead, and fearlessly so”. This indicates awareness among staff and students on the necessity of unity in achieving the demands of the movement.

Similar to John Smith, the Vice Chancellor also alluded to the splits within academic staff. He specified that the splits were as a result of the different places that the members of staff occupied within the university. Professor Habib identified four ideological factions within the staff at the university. He argued that, on one hand “there was the conservative mainstream which argued that people should pay tuition, they argued that people had to pay to get quality” (Personal Interview, University of the Witwatersrand, 12 December 2018). This standpoint indicates how some of the staff members did not empathise with the challenges that black students were encountering at the university and in the country as a whole. He added that “some of them worked for 40 years in this University and they love Wits for what it is. They came as students, they trained here, they became Professors here. They were opposed to free education”. This indicates a problematic relationship between white and black staff and students who had come to into these historically white universities. One could argue that these lecturers were mostly white because the statistics provided by Professor Habib showed that blacks were not over 25% of university staff in 2013, thus, they could not possibly be the ones he referred to when he said these members of staff had been at the historically white institution for 40 years. In his words, “in 2013 we had 21-23% black academics and in 2018 we have 49%”. This is a reflection of the slow proliferation of black academics at the University who eventually joined the student movement as they could identify with the challenges and need for provision of free education. This group of radical academics was identified by Professor Habib as the far left, who demanded free education and wanted it granted almost immediately. In Professor Habib’s words, “the far left for whom I call the Pol Pot brigade (named after Pol Pot a Cambodian Communist Revolutionary). Who do not understand the tactics, who did not understand this thing, who said we want free

education now” (Adam Habib, University of the Witwatersrand Vice Chancellor, 12 December 2018). He argued that their stance was problematic because there was no strong mechanism that could have been identified and implemented while the protests were ongoing. He likened them to the Cambodian Communist revolutionaries due to their need to usher in change without looking at how free education would affect the quality of education offered by universities.

Furthermore, he identified the pragmatic left, which was more open to long-term solutions to the challenges identified by the students. He argued that this group of academic staff supported the movement and knew that the movement was needed to usher in change at the institution, however, they were willing to wait for a longer period until a long-term solution was tabled. According to him, “the pragmatic left believed in free education, but they believed it was not going to come overnight” (Adam Habib, University of the Witwatersrand Vice Chancellor, 12 December 2018). While this ideological standpoint was valid, there was no guarantee that a lasting solution would be identified.

The contestations within the staff union also mirrored the different ideologies that existed within the university management. The researcher interviewed two members from the university management who were in support of the demands made by the students but indicated the complexity of providing free education which would ultimately affect the quality of education that the University sought to provide. The two interviewees recognised the importance of free education in South African society, but they grappled with the possibility and realities associated with delivering free education. For starters, the university Vice-Chancellor argued that he was for free education, but this was not a demand he could deliver on his own as a Vice-Chancellor or as a member of the university council. According to him, “there is a misconception that the Vice-Chancellor has power, that is not true, he is constrained by the amount of resources he has. All of the issues that the students want me to resolve, are systemic issues... I cannot control the system” (Adam Habib, University of the Witwatersrand Vice Chancellor, 12 December 2018). In reference to this, Interviewee 1 concurred that the university was in no position to deliver free education because there was a need to understand government allocations and the money that the university needed to function on a day to day basis. According to Interviewee 1:

There was a problem because the students were demanding from the University things that the University could not give. The University was in with them because

fundamentally you have to understand how Universities are run. The model even now is fees, government subsidy and money you can raise. Without fees you cannot run a University without fees because it is a core element. At Universities like University of the Witwatersrand fees and subsidies used to be 50/50. (Interviewee 1, Senior management staff, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 December 2018).

The above makes clear the standpoint of University management. The management identified with the demands made by the students, however, ideologically they could not walk the talk as they tasked the students to take up the issue with the government. In line with the response by Interviewee 1 to the feasibility of free education, a study of Government Gazette (Volume 462, number 25824) revealed that 50% of University funding was to be subsidised by the government; student tuition and other funds amounted to 25%, while other private income amounted to 25% (DHET, 2004:2). These statistics are important because over the last 10 years, the government subsidy has been decreasing and does not tally to what was promised in the government gazette. The university held that government had failed to provide 50% of tertiary education funding. A study conducted by the DHET (2015:29) stipulates that the “state funding portion of university incomes dropped from 49% in 2000 to 40% in 2014, so the contribution of fees to university incomes has increased quite substantially, from 24% in 2000 to 35% in 2014”. Along the same lines, Dr Diane Parker, the Deputy Director-General of higher education, acknowledged that while government subsidies for the university had been declining over the last few years, it was important for universities to find the means to cushion increasing numbers of students needing funding. According to her,

We as a department (DHET) had put in our burden to national treasury every year from 2011 or 2010 for additional funding to fully support students. So, we were very conscious of that and we knew it was in those institutions that was most problematic because institutions like Cape Town, had their own system where students who were NSFAS funded and there wasn't sufficient funding coming in they always topped it up (Personal interview, 17 January 2019).

While this places a limited responsibility on universities to address some of the challenges that students meet, it does not go far enough to accommodate students from poor backgrounds. In a bid to save the institution, the university had clearly adopted a stance that held the government accountable to guidelines they had set in statutory instruments such as this one. This proves that the university was not in a place to deliver free education as fees

are needed to sustain the operation of the university. As Interviewee 1 puts it, “without that 50 (50% subsidy) you could not run the University, so the University could not offer free education because if it did not have the fees, it could not offer any education” (Interviewee 1, Senior management staff, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 December 2018). The university maintained an ideological stance that they were not in a place to offer free education as it would bankrupt them. Morrow (2008) argues that historically disadvantaged institutions are the ones that have suffered the most, as student there have been protesting against the lack of quality resources within these institutions from the early 2000’s and nothing has been done. On the other hand, the price of tertiary education continues to increase at historically white universities like the University of the Witwatersrand. Morrow (2008) found that smaller protests had been happening at universities across the country that were merged after independence with historically black universities being the “orphans of South African education, the children of apartheid” (Morrow, 2008:263). In light of this, the argument that people should pay for quality education is problematic unless the system addresses the challenges faced by students. This leaves students in the middle of a war between institutions clamouring for more funding from government, with the government enforcing cost-cutting measures on universities even after the protests.

The existence of this crisis and the emergence of the protests indicates a need for a lasting solution that would address the demands of the students while ensuring that the quality education was maintained. Interviewee 1 opted for a solution that would see the university co-opting and matching whatever funds the students and their families were able to raise. According to Interviewee 1, the university could adopt needs-based initiatives such as those adopted by Yale and Harvard in the United States of America. In his words,

You must qualify to enter the university then you must say how much you can pay. It might be that you say you cannot pay at all and then you are assessed and then you are offered a full scholarship. If you say you can only pay half, then you pay your half and the other half comes from the university. (Interviewee 1, Senior University management, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 December 2018).

This solution would work based on the availability of funds that come into the university, specifically if they meet their fundraising targets. This could possibly work if there was a large alumni base that gave back to universities. Interviewee 1 further added that international universities can manage this due to large numbers of alumni that actively gave back to

universities. This model was not necessarily a free education model but it would ensure that those who could pay part of the fees would get assistance while leaving more funds for those that could not pay at all. In his words, “you can see in that model you cannot talk about free education for all, you talk about each according to how much they can pay if they can pay” (Personal interview, 14 December 2018). This could be a pivotal solution to addressing ongoing challenges and it would possibly work through identifying the level of need that each student had and then allocating resources and financial aid based on that.

Outside the above suggestion, the government, through the Department of Higher Education, alleged that they were already working on a policy that would guarantee free education. According to the Deputy Director-General for higher education, Dr Diane Parker:

We proposed a solution in 2013...The Ministers Task Team report of 2012 was the one on fee free education, that proposed a model for how we can provide funding for students who require support and then from there onwards we were going to try and get the money. (Personal Interview, 17 January 2019).

The report alluded to by Dr Parker was released in 2013 under the title ‘Report of the working group on fee free education University education for the poor in South Africa’. The report classified fee free education as the full-cost-of-study “fees to be considered ‘free’ (in ‘fee-free’) are taken to include not only tuition fees but the full cost of study necessary for success at university including: registration and tuition fees; meals and accommodation; and books and travel” for undergraduate studies to students from poor families (DHET, 2013:vii). This classification is aptly describing what the students were demanding during the 2015 and 2016 protests (Booyesen, 2016; and Chinguno et al., 2017). There is no denying that the government has been aware of the worsening burden of higher education on poor families. Two of the key aspects that the report sought to address were to investigate the feasibility of free education and to create a working definition on what being poor meant in South Africa, as well as to address the emergence of a ‘missing middle’ who were too rich to qualify for NSFAS and too poor to pay for tertiary education (DHET, 2012).

In light of existing contestations that were going on about the feasibility of free education, the students released a funding model proposal titled ‘Thuto ke Lesedi la Sechaba’ (education is the light of the nation) in October 2016. According to the students, “free education will do away with the neoliberal idea that one should pay for education or that there should be cost recovery mechanisms as these further punish the black and poor working class”

(#FeesMustFall activists, 2016:7). For the students, free education was not negotiable as it would ultimately lead to more access while at the same time addressing deeply embedded structural inequality. The students recommended that the private sector had a key role to play, as they were major beneficiaries of the skilled labour produced by universities. The students were convinced that corporate South Africa would need to invest in free education. @WitsFMF retweeted a post by @starstart: “Funding for education must come from the private sector as well - actually what did this reconciliation do for a black child...” (27 November 2015). By questioning what the black child had benefitted from the rhetoric of the rainbow nation. The tweet also questions the validity of the truth and reconciliation approach implemented at independence in a bid to usher in healing while neglecting the redistribution of wealth. Along the same lines, Satgar (2019:197) argues that the ANC strayed from the anti-capitalism dialogue in which the Freedom Charter was situated. She states that the Charter was “deeply imbued with a state centric perspective, shaped by Soviet socialism, revolutionary nationalism and social democracy”. This argument holds that the government was held by the United States’ transnational neo-liberal state politics, therefore, leading to a failure of the social democracy project.

Firstly, the students argued that the government had a responsibility to restore the 50% subsidy which had been continuously dropping in the last decade. According to the model, “South Africa currently (2016) spends around 0.7% of its GDP on universities. Our view is that an ideal contribution to the system should be 1% of GDP” (#FeesMustFall activists, 2016:25). This was a valid proposal because as of 2016, the government was spending less than other African countries on higher education and the funds were needed to address the challenges raised by the students. Secondly, the students sought to address accommodation challenges across universities through the creation of a Higher Education Capital Infrastructure Fund (HECIF). The fund was needed by the students as a result of the “significant infrastructure backlog across all institutions. This backlog is even more explicit at the traditionally black institutions which suffer from the tragic inheritances of distance from the centres of economic influence and poor institutional research and collaboration pedigree” (#FeesMustFall activists, 2016:19). The students argued that the creation of this fund would lessen the burden on government, universities and families as it would place the responsibility of infrastructure development on corporate entities that had enough profits to support the endeavour. While this proposal is similar to the one proposed by Interviewee 1 on lobbying alumni, the students differed in that they sought to relinquish lobbying power from

the university. This would allow for a more balanced distribution of resources, as the current model was exclusionary to formerly black universities. The proposal held that:

It is important to recognise that the current approach of universities lobbying individually for infrastructure grants from the same source (the state) and the open market adds to existing inequalities across the system. For example, the strength of UCT's balance sheet is very different to Fort Hare's balance sheet so in an open market it is unlikely that Fort Hare could attract significant capital investment for its infrastructure. (#FeesMustFall activists, 2016:20).

This move would allow the HECIF to allocate funds for infrastructure development in all universities based on the needs of each institution; thereby addressing the inequality of access and the availability of accommodation for students. The need for infrastructure development was also outlined by Morrow (2008) and Swartz et al. (2018) as an urgent matter that needed to be addressed to ensure that students had access to stable housing while pursuing their studies. Swartz et al. (2018:86) found that the shortage of accommodation was a struggle for mostly black and coloured students, who resorted to sleeping in libraries to avoid travelling long distances to get to university. The students considered themselves 'squatters' due to a nationwide shortage of accommodation across universities. These existing challenges were also echoed by Interviewee 1, a senior member of management at the university, he stipulated that:

The people who are not fully funded there are consequences because they cannot get their accommodation. They do not have sufficient books, they are suffering with transport and accommodation and food, so the University ends up creating feeding schemes. Remember that accommodation is not fully funded by the government. And you cannot use fees to subsidise accommodation because not everyone is in accommodation. There is a tuition budget then there is an accommodation budget which cannot go into deficit according to government.

The creation of an infrastructure fund would allow universities to offer more accommodation at no cost to institutions, thereby ensuring that students are provided with an all-round, stable university experience that gives them a competitive edge. The above also highlights how universities are not in a place to address accommodation challenges, either by funding students or building more residences because the accommodation budget cannot go into deficit. An indication of the severity of accommodation shortages at the University of the

Witwatersrand was alluded to by Ashley Mabasa, a student union leader. He stated that “why is it that they have 6 000 beds, yet they accommodate 36 000 students. Whereas in 1999 they were accommodating 19 000 students” (Personal interview, 22 January 2019). Student enrolment continues to increase, but there are limited efforts at addressing the accommodation problem. Thus, the model proposed by the students would go a long way in addressing this.

The third recommendation made by the students concerned the creation of a Higher Education Endowment Fund (HEEF). The proposed fund is meant to address existing funding gaps in the donation of funds by corporate entities. The students argued that corporate institutions already have “a bias towards high-tier institutions which further entrenches inequalities within the system. We need to revisit this approach” (#FeesMustFall protesters, 2016:22). To address these inequalities in funding allocations, the students proposed that:

Government and corporates alike are required to contribute to a central endowment fund that will be administered for the benefit of the various institutions to ensure all universities are adequately funded. The allocation of the endowment fund needs to be done in a strategic manner to ensure an unbiased, progressive allocation taking into account the needs and strategic position of the institutions. The allocations will also take into account the inherited system of black and poor versus white and privileged universities (#FeesMustFall protesters, 2016:4).

The proposals by the students were valid and critical as tools for addressing the academic needs of South Africans. However, all the proposals by the students relied on one unpredictable variable: the willingness of the corporate sector to invest into HECIF and HEEF. There is no guarantee that the private sector would be willing to invest in education because that would mean parting with their profits. As it is, the government has a problematic relationship with the market and it would be bad for the economy if government was to force the private sector into contributing to these funds. While the creation of the funds would be key in addressing inequality and also play a role towards the redistribution of wealth, it would be impossible to implement. According to Satgar (2019:202) “the post-apartheid state merely appeases African nationalism and for more than two decades has been about subordinating this state to the power of global finance”. More so, she adds that “the formal authority of the state has been increasingly undermined and an informal, shadow state has emerged. Market-driven and financialised black economic empowerment has been supplemented by state-

driven, transactional black economic empowerment” (Satgar, 2019:202). This highlights a problematic relationship between the state and capital which has led to a lack of reallocation of wealth and delayed the land redistribution promised to black South Africans at the dawn of independence. The ‘radical economic transformation’ agenda led by the ANC has failed to save the people it sought to save and empower.

As a result of resurgence of protests in 2016, the government implemented another key investigation through the Heher Commission which was meant to investigate the feasibility of free education. The commission enabled various actors within Universities to submit submissions that would be considered in order to address the increasing demands for free education. According to Interviewee 1, the University held deliberations among staff and students to ensure that all voices were represented. According to Interviewee 1,

There were two things that I did, under my office; I created a Wits Commission to make submissions to the Heher Commission. Remember Wits was the only university that created a Commission made up of professors to gather the communities’ views about the different funding models. (Interviewee 1, senior management staff, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 December 2018).

The above highlights an awareness by the university management of the need for engagement and deliberation among all actors at the institution to ensure that the challenges faced by the students were addressed. He added that,

What was important for me was there was a tendency for people to say this is how it is done, but policy does not happen that way. Even a debate in families, people will say this is the problem and they say how can it be solved, and they give different suggestions then try and create the best suggestion (Interviewee 1, senior management staff, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 December 2018).

Indicating an awareness on the importance of ideological contestation to ensure that whatever ideologies came from the university, they would be considered by the commission. This was a critical step for the movement as it ensured that the government would not impose its own ideologies on the commission, thereby creating favourable conditions for engagement of a multiplicity of ideologies needed to achieve social change in higher education.

If one then considers the 2017 announcement for free higher education made by President Jacob Zuma, Dr Parker argued that while the government was right to attempt this challenge,

this was a problematic approach to finding a lasting solution after the 2015 and 2016 protests. From her point of view,

There was the announcement in 2017 about implementing free education for the poor and the working class. It is not for all and that is not a policy of government...that is the biggest problem. That was a political decision (Personal interview, 17 January 2017).

While she did not point fingers at any particular political actors or individuals, as part of the administration she seemed fully aware of the challenges stemming from the 2017 decree of fee-free higher education and the financial problems that the announcement opened for the Department of Higher Education and Training. Sentiments on the politicisation of free undergraduate education were also echoed by university management. Professor Habib acknowledged that the Zuma concession made a big difference but, “he might have done it for different reasons but that is not the point” (Personal interview, 12 December 2018). The sentiments echoed by the two interviewees indicate a problematic overlap between the administrative roles of the government and the political ambitions of the ANC. While the Zuma concession was an excellent reprieve for poor black South Africans, it was also a shot in the arm for the state, as there was no clearly defined means of funding fee-free higher education. This indicates a disregard in policy and investigations that has led to the resurfacing of protests such as the #WitsHungerStrike which happened between 5 and 7 February in 2019 as a result of unresolved issues of historical debt, registration fees and the lack of a lasting solution for the missing middle.

In as much as free education was an ideological issue, the different ideological standpoints have impacted on the practicality and ability to resolve this pressing demand from students. It is proven that the best path to social change is reaching a consensus and that cannot be done without ideological contestation among the actors. According to Swartz et al. (2018:vii) the fight for free education is “historical and contemporary, practical and ideological”. The historical and the contemporary relate to how inequality has continued regardless of the fact that apartheid was abolished; but the government has not delivered on some of their post-independence era. The practical and the ideological relate to deliberations that would lead to the practical and context relevant solutions. Ideology plays a central role in this research because the argument is ideological contestation allows for deliberations and a mental

engagement that leads to lasting solutions for the challenges raised by the students in 2015 and 2016.

4.2 The place of education in achieving social change: re-imagining the University space

“Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world” Nelson Mandela (2003:np).

The salient issue raised by the student movement in 2015 was the importance of education in addressing the existing socio-economic issues being faced by the majority of South Africans today. Education plays a critical role because not only was it the means for oppression in apartheid South Africa, but it was also structured along racial lines as education for blacks was not a priority for the National Party government (Biko, 1978). In a speech presented at the launch of an academic programme the ‘Mindset Network’, former President Nelson Mandela lamented the challenges faced by the ANC government in addressing existing inequality and one of the problems was the inheritance of a dysfunctional education system from the apartheid government. In his words, “South Africa inherited a highly dysfunctional educational system from the Apartheid era. It is one of our major tasks of reconstruction to build an educational system that provides quality opportunities for all our people” (Mandela, 2003:np). This statement exposes the same challenges that black students are still battling with today pertaining to the high cost of education in the country and the curriculum challenges affecting students all over the country.

This study found a unified consensus among all the actors that education was indeed a critical element in addressing inequality in South Africa. From the students’ perspective, education that addresses the critical issues facing South Africa today is needed to change perceptions of who the people are and where they are headed as a country. During the protests, the students advocated for a change in curriculum structures to accommodate indigenous forms of knowledge as a way of addressing the gap between Western knowledge forms being taught in Universities and local South African realities. According to Malebo Ganyani, who was a student activist during the protests:

We need knowledge that allows us to deal with our realities and embrace our culture and values not focus on studies that alienate our tribes against each other. If we are to move up in this world, we as students in tertiary institutions need to be taught to be

more aware of who we are and where we come from” (Personal interview, 21 January 2019)

For the students, free decolonised education was critical as it would open avenues for understanding the history of South Africa and the role it plays in existing inequalities. Just as Malebo Ganyani saw a possibility for unity of different tribes through engaging with decolonised knowledge structures, Sphiwe Ndlovu added that “decolonising education means being given an opportunity for knowing ourselves better and respecting who we are. We want to be able to say proudly African and mean it but for that to happen we need to be more aware of who we are” (Student activist, Personal interview, 18 January 2018). This is in line with the notion of defining one-self, as argued by Nandy (2000) who notes that education in the global South needs to be able to teach the people to define themselves not along the Western lines but along their own understanding of who they are and what they aspire to be. In her words, “dominance is now mainly exercised through categories, embedded in systems of knowledge” (Nandy, 2000:115). The knowledge systems she refers to are within the confines of tertiary education where the knowledge project shapes the identities of people. In relation to decolonisation, Mbembe (2016:35) builds on Wa Thiongo (1981) stating that decolonisation is not a destination but “it is a struggle over what is to be taught; it is about the terms under which we should be teaching what – not to some generic figure of the student, but to the African ‘child’, a figure that is very much central to his politics and to his creative work”. This indicates the importance of the education of the African child and its relevance to build consciousness. Knowledge helps people define themselves and if it fails to help them define themselves then it becomes implicit in the colonial project that located Western knowledge as superior to all forms of indigenous knowledge in previously colonised countries like South Africa.

The students advocated for the need to decolonise the curriculum through an embrace of Black Consciousness and other local and African philosophies. According to Interviewee 4, education is meant to foster an awareness to the challenges faced by African people and it needs to make us aware of how we solve them, and this can only be achieved through decolonised education. “When we say decolonised education, we mean education that allows us to be engineers and doctors that see our people and our needs and find ways of addressing our challenges” (Interviewee 4, former SRC member, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 December 2018). In addition, another student activist, while highlighting the ills with the present form of education and the need for decolonised education held that, “we need

education that is aware that if we are to solve our problems even from a Mathematics field, we need to be aware of African ideologies that guide us in understanding how to solve our problems from our perspective” (Sphiwe Ndlovu, student activist, University of the Witwatersrand, 18 January 2019).

This indicates an awareness by the student protesters of the importance of educating future leaders in ways that allow them to not only assist but lead the world in accepting and discovering the rightful place of Africa in the world. The same decolonial ideologies were echoed on Twitter, where student engagement was at its peak during the protests. According to @WitsFMF, “quality education in post-colonial SA MUST include DECOLONISATION” (19 October 2016). In addition, @WitsFMF posted “free education is important. But it MUST be decolonized. Right now, all we have is an education that reproduces colonial structures” (13 February 2016). Along the same lines, a black academic at a forum held at the University @WitsFMFretweeted @S_Mashibini: “We don't want to be reminded dat [that] it is we, indigenous people, who r [are] poor and exploited in d [the] land of our birth”. This established the fact that the call for decolonising the knowledge project was echoed by both the students and staff members at the university. Similarly, Swartz et al. (2018:48) found that “students felt that 23 years after the end of apartheid they are still being directed to curricula that were designed to advance colonialism and apartheid. Most Black students in particular felt that they are far removed from the curriculum content which they claimed does not reflect their lived experiences”. More so, Nandy (2000) argues that colonial legacies have handicapped indigenous knowledge systems through the introduction of politically correct versions of the academy that universities are following and adhering to ‘universal’ and Western notions of what education should be. This, in turn, has alienated indigenous knowledge systems, leading to occurrences such as the #FeesMustFall protests, where the students protested existing structures within the university. Booysen (2016) identifies black-African consciousness as one of the emerging ideologies during #FeesMustFall which facilitated the awareness of what Biko (1978) articulated as needed if the position of the black man was to change. For Biko (1978), Black Consciousness is a form of awareness that the black man needed to change his history, move from the side-lines and reclaim his dignity within the world because no one was going to ever stand for the black person to change their life.

The students argued that the university curriculum had to be transformed to adopt philosophies of Black Consciousness which would encourage student consciousness of the

realities in which the black professional finds him/herself. According to Malebo Ganyani a student activist, “If you look at the question of decolonization, it was a threat to the University space to white conservative lecturers but also white liberal lecturers because they were being forced to move out of their comfort zone” (Personal Interview, University of the Witwatersrand, 21 January 2019). The students argued that their calls for free decolonised education were upsetting the balance of power in academia and, thus, most actors were critical of them, particularly some members of the academic staff and university management. According to Nandy (2000:119), “it should be possible for non-western Universities to break with their colonial past and renegotiate their self-definition”. This would be an important milestone for academics, particularly in Africa.

While Wits University was concerned that free education would affect quality at the university, it is important to note that providing quality tertiary education to a limited elite in South Africa before addressing inequality would be detrimental to the lives of the already disadvantaged black populace. According to Interviewee 1, quality education had to be maintained because it was key in producing well trained graduates. He argued that:

We will continue to be advocates for funding of quality education because if you fund quality education you will get quality societal outcomes. Well trained and well-educated people like doctors, nurses, engineers and social workers will contribute to economic development and socio-economic development. (Interviewee 1, Senior management staff, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 December 2018).

While his assertion indicates the importance of quality education, it does not allow for the accommodation of more black students into the university space due to limited funding. Biko (1978) critiqued the knowledge project as he indicated that it is complicit in the continuous oppression of blacks in South Africa. Masilela (2017:75) locates Black Consciousness as key in understanding the place of black people in South Africa and why the philosophy is critical for surviving being black in South Africa today. He states that:

We cannot and should not ignore the works of Steve Bantu Biko in this struggle because to dismantle and decolonize these traditionally exclusionary institutions, we as Black bodies had to revive and regenerate ourselves psychologically. We had to be consciously aware of our Blackness and be aware that these injustices and exclusions of the Black child, whether real or imagined, take nothing away from you as a Black person.

For Biko, knowledge relevant to Africa was needed to change the global narrative, the way in which black Africans in South Africa defined themselves and allowed others to define them. For education to be able to cater to the needs of the people, it must be well resourced, adequately staffed and relevant to the contexts and realities of the people it seeks to educate. Considering that tertiary education was organised along racial lines with universities allocated for black people such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the University of Zululand, Morrow (2008) argues that these universities were “underprivileged, under-resourced, inadequately staffed, limping academically and located in remote areas, far from centres of intellectual change, wealth power and influence” (2008:263). These inequalities were what the students sought to address as this had continued unchecked 20 years after independence.

The knowledge project in post-apartheid South Africa is the core responsibility of universities and this was done in a bid to maintain the autonomy of universities from government control. According to Dr Parker, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training, the government had a role to play in providing quality affordable education, but the knowledge project was not in the hands of the government as universities have more control on the curriculum. She stated that:

The knowledge project is the core of universities, so when you talk about decolonising education, you cannot think about it without thinking about knowledge, it is not a simple thing, it is not as good as saying forget Western knowledge... When we talk about university autonomy and accountability, we are talking of accountability of public funds. We hold universities accountable for how they spend public funds. We do not intervene at all in academic issues related to the knowledge project (Personal Interview, 17 January 2019).

The stance adopted by the government gives universities the power to focus on the knowledge project without any state interference, except when it has to do with finances. While this is an excellent position, as it allows the autonomy of tertiary institutions, it becomes problematic when the same institutions meant to liberate the mind perpetuate coloniality of knowledge through structures that focus on meeting deadlines and targets to acquire government subsidies. According to Mbembe (2016:30), there is need to decolonise university structures that perpetuate neo-liberal goals because the current structures are

“detering students and teachers from a free pursuit of knowledge” focusing mostly on the quest for credits.

The University plays a critical role in creating multiple sources of knowledge and making it available for engagement with the people. Knowledge can only be truly relevant if it embraces multiple streams of knowledge. According to Ashley Mabasa:

For instance, in sociology they study Marx, Durkheim and Weber. These are the same tools of analysis you will use in postgraduate when doing research and when you look carefully, they will never solve our problems, because they are not ours (Ashley Mabasa, Student Representative Council (SRC) Secretary-General, University of the Witwatersrand, Personal Interview, 22 January 2019).

The above reflects the frustrations that were vented by the students during the protests. The students were demanding for a truly decolonised academic experience that allowed them to study local realities without facing theoretical contradictions because the realities of Marx, Durkheim and Weber can never fully grasp the African experience. Swartz et al. (2018:48) concur that students in other universities other than the University of the Witwatersrand “felt that all the disciplines (except natural sciences) such as psychology, sociology, law and so forth advance Eurocentric and Western knowledge and do not reflect the South African context”. Along the same lines, @WitsFMF posted excerpts from a speech by Professor Lwazi Lushaba who stated that “it’s been too long that we’ve been going through an education system that alienates us from our people, and our cultures... Our cultures are made to feature as a footnote in our lives” (7 October 2016). This highlights how black academics were aware that the university was wittingly or unwittingly perpetuating the coloniality of being and knowledge.

Knowledge is meant to enlighten one of their place in society and how they can change the narrative about Africa within Western knowledge. In relation to the knowledge project, Chasi & Rodney-Gumede (2016) argue that communication studies in Africa is still grounded in Western philosophy and needs to be reconceptualised through a “smash-and-grab” approach. This approach would allow scholars to ‘grab’ knowledge that is contextually relevant for African realities instead of continually appropriating Western practices and ideologies that do help advance or resolve African epistemologies. They argue that African knowledge should be able to question the norms imposed by Western knowledge “which one-sidedly works to establish, maintain, and secure laws and orders” of knowing and learning (Chasi and Rodney-

Gumede 2016:695). The calls to decolonise education were meant to pluralise knowledge, opening up the doors of learning to other sources of knowledge that move away from the Western ideologies that entrench coloniality in the minds of future generations.

During the interviews, it was clear that the government representative was aware of the challenges of colonial knowledge structures raised by the students, however, they reverted back to the fact that South Africa was not an island and needed to embrace global knowledge streams. According to Dr Parker,

Students need powerful forms of education, let us be clear, South Africa is not an island. It lives within a global world, in a global economic context and we have to compete with that. Yes, we want to understand how our indigenous knowledge can be incorporated into the world, absolutely that is the University's job. (Deputy Director-General Department of Higher Education and Training, Personal Interview, 17 January 2019).

This aligned with the perspective of Interviewee 1 who stipulated that knowledge was used by colonisers to subordinate indigenous knowledge systems. Thus it was important for students to understand these structures, so they would be able to contribute meaningfully to the global sphere. In his words,

I think decolonisation is Africans doing knowledge creation not just production but creation, production and dissemination themselves. This is what Americans and British did as part of colonialism, to bring already created knowledge and produced knowledge and to disseminate it to you. That is what you have to do as well. You cannot just produce, what are you producing? You must create about your own context and the rest of the world because you are both local and global (Interviewee 1, Senior management staff, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 December 2018)

Consequently, the inability of universities to allow for this multiplicity of knowledge production and distribution led to the protests. While it is valid that the country needs to engage with international knowledge systems, the students were demanding that African philosophy not just be taught to Humanities and Social Sciences students, but it should be part of the entire university learning experience regardless of faculty or department. The students argued that they were not advocating for the stripping of knowledge systems to only focus on African knowledge systems. According to Interviewee 4 who was a member of the student representative council during the protests:

We need black people that invent new technologies that help black people whether they are mechanical engineers or biologists. When you come to Wits it should not be about you, it should be about those you left in the rural areas and townships, it is the responsibility of students to be selfless with an awareness of the black condition and Black Consciousness is a means of creating that internal awareness of the black condition in South Africa (Personal interview, 14 December 2018)

They believed that there needed to be a shift to allow students in medical and engineering sciences to engage with indigenous knowledge systems and theories such as Black Consciousness in order for them to be more aware of their history and the role they have to play in changing the lives of fellow blacks (Langa et al., 2017; and Chinguno et al., 2017). For this to happen, there needs to be a conscious uncoupling from the hegemonic domination of the Western canon to allow it to co-exist with our knowledge structures and ensure our knowledge is not watered down to mere history (Mbembe, 2016).

While he agreed that it was the role of government to provide quality education, Interviewee 1, a member of senior management at the University of the Witwatersrand, also alluded to the place of quality education in enabling the youth to contribute in social and economic development. He added that if government accelerated its efforts to fund higher education, it would put a stop to the continuous need to hire experts from outside the country. These are experts who charge fees in foreign currency which the country needs to develop and find solutions to existing challenges. In his words,

They will also produce solutions that we can utilise whether it is HIV, malaria, food security, etc. If you do not do that, you will end up having to hire some consultants from in the US and UK who will charge you in Pounds. Whereas if you had funded here you do not need Pounds for that and you might get research that is more contextually relevant (Personal Interview, 14 December 2018).

This speaks to one of the emerging challenges in African countries, that there is no shortage of donor agencies, contractors and specialists who come in to solve the challenges faced by Africans today. However, their knowledge is contextually irrelevant and could only function like a bandage for a broken bone. This is in line with Nandy's (2000) argument that the knowledge project needs to be more relevant to the African context to ensure that the youth are able to contribute to the development of their own countries. Likewise, John Smith stated that, "on the matter of decolonisation – making higher education more locally relevant and

inclusive of local ideas – is critical as well to development of South African society” (Personal interview, 12 December 2018). This is arguably correct because education is the key to unlocking development that is both pertinent for a country and the global. According to Mbembe (2016:37) “to decolonize the university is to therefore to reform it with the aim a less provincial and a more open critical cosmopolitan pluriversalism – a task that involves the radical *refounding* of our ways of thinking and a transcendence of our disciplinary divisions”. This, in turn, would allow universities to not only meet the demands of their own students but the demands of the global market with skills that transcend the limited glorified worshipping of the Western canon.

Furthermore, some of the students stipulated the need to decolonise within a broader context of government overspending and lack of tangible change to address the challenges of the people. According to Sphiwe Ndlovu:

The call for free decolonised education for all in itself, affects a lot of things, it affects the running of the state and the money that was being on trips and providing lavish lifestyles for people in government. This means that the government has to rethink the way it handled money (Personal interview, 18 January 2019).

The above was in response to a larger debate that took place at universities about holding the government accountable for the policies that perpetuate poverty in the country. Corruption has been a prominent problem in South Africa with the consequences being felt mainly by the poor. According to Masilela (2017:73) “the problem of the South African education system cannot only be attributed to the legacy of apartheid while paying lip service to the impact of corruption and abuse of government funds”. The reality is that most poor families have had to live with politicians living lavish lifestyles, leading to the creation of two extreme classes within blacks. In relation to corruption in government, the former ASAWU president, John Smith, stated that:

In a context where the government participates and condones corruption – students are correct to challenge that and argue for a more meritocratic and redistributive social contract. Higher education remains the clearest pathway out of poverty in SA and with over 50% of the population still being classified as impoverished – improving access is facilitating social change (Personal interview, 12 December 2018).

Corruption is a dominant problem in African governance which has led to continuous poverty and little to no reallocation of resources after independence. The discourses of government corruption were echoed on social media and across universities as one of the eminent reasons for stalled development; and, as indicated by John Smith, higher education is indeed a pathway for addressing inequality. Similarly, Mbembe (2016), building on Fanon, alludes to corruption as one of the key factors stalling the development of African countries, based on the perpetuation of ‘Africanization by nationalist leaders. He states that, “the discourse of Africanization mostly performed and ideological work... the ideology masking what was a ‘racketeering’ or predatory project – what we call today ‘looting’” (Mbembe, 2016:33-34). This is so because the decolonial project in the place of ‘Africanization’ would have opened up avenues for black people to be more aware of who they are and where they want to be. This is in line with Biko’s (1978) Black Consciousness, which argues that the realisation of the African predicament begins with an awareness that the black man is on his own and can only progress through self-awareness.

While there was an understanding of the challenges facing the country, some ANC aligned student leaders that were interviewed argued that the decolonial project was important but could not be situated within the spending of government because government was already in debt. Ashley Mabasa argued that:

South Africa is already in debt and paying 180 billion of interest annually. Then we have Eskom which owes 400 billion. Universities use close to 50 billion so the money that Eskom owes will not cover five years of free education (Personal interview, 22 January 2019).

While it is valid that the country is in debt, there are tensions within the country pointing towards the increase of corruption in the country. This is outlined through several inquiries such as the Zondo Commission currently investigating corruption during the years of former president Jacob Zuma’s leadership, as well as some investigative journalism books such as Jacques Pauw’s book *‘The Presidents Keepers’* (2017). This indicates how the governments’ inability to cater to the demands of the people is indicative of deeper issues related to corruption and the plundering of state resources by politicians.

Education plays a critical role in emancipating the youth, equipping them with the relevant skills required to contribute to economic growth. However, the skills gained through tertiary education need to be responsive to the needs of society. For instance, the students raised

language barriers as one of the challenges in acquiring the skills they need to assist in the development of the country. According to Malebo Ganyani, a student activist:

For some of us, English is not our home language, but we come here and we are expected to be equally competitive and competent as these private school kids (other students). This is not the language we speak in our communities, where we will work after graduation. How then do we address our challenges? (Personal interview, University of the Witwatersrand, 21 January 2019)

The same sentiments were echoed by Ashley Mabasa, who identified the need for a change of language policy at the university as a demand made by the EFF student command:

These were originally the demands of the EFF, they wanted people to be taught in indigenous languages and they wanted a change in the university language policy (Ashley Mabasa, Student Representative Council (SRC) Secretary-General, University of the Witwatersrand, Personal Interview, 22 January 2019).

The point raised by Malebo speaks to some of the challenges raised in earlier research about the proliferation of English as the language of instruction in most universities in a country with 11 official languages. Swartz et al. (2018) classify language as one of the challenges encountered by students at universities across the country. They articulate that “English has retained power despite current higher education language policy that aims for one African language to become a teaching language” (Swartz et al., 2018:62). In addition, Chinguno et al. (2017:24) note that the students’ “rejection of English as a medium to assert the disruption that characterises the process of decolonization and was one of the pillars of the FMF ideology”. Furthermore, in one of the student’s accounts of the challenges placed upon them by having English as the sole medium of communication, the student provided an account of a student named Themba who had been struggling to deal with language barriers. According to Moyo (2017:54) “despite his excellent grades Themba battled with language, it was also his first time in an institution that used English almost as exclusively as a medium of instruction”. This account depicts the realities of students that contributed to the #FeesMustFall protests, the alienation of poor black students, not only on an epistemological level but also in terms of language.

In a bid to address this, the university management articulated that they were taking strides towards addressing the demands raised by the students. According to Professor Adam Habib:

As a university we have been holding consultative forums with stakeholders including post-graduate students and members of academic staff on mapping ways of adopting languages that have previously been neglected. These are initial steps in ensuring that the challenges raised by the students are resolved (Personal interview, 12 December 2018).

This is an indication of the strides that the university is taking towards addressing the demands made by the students. In addition to consultative meetings on addressing curriculum changes at the university aimed at accommodating decolonial epistemology, the university has also implemented a language policy which requires undergraduate students to study at least one language course in their first year. According to Mashishi (2018:np) the university introduced a new language policy starting in 2019 that aims to “promote isiZulu, seSotho and South African Sign Language (SASL) at the institution”. The language components were introduced and made compulsory for Humanities and Faculty of Engineering students (Mashishi, 2018). These adjustments are a step towards ensuring that the education provided by the university is responsive to the multilingual South African society. According to Mbembe (2016), education needs to respond to the needs of society if it is to address the challenges faced in the fast-paced digital world. He also adds that aspiring to be competitive on the global scale should be done in line with the communities where the students will provide skills and solutions so they can provide context relevant solutions. This means that in its strides towards providing a world-class education, the decolonisation of education should continue to take centre stage and the efforts made by the university are a step in the right direction. Alongside this, the university has also opened opportunities for first year lecturers to learn isiZulu and seSotho in a bid to make the realities of the academic experience more adaptable to South African society. This is arguably one of the milestone achievements that have been implemented by the university because the policy had been adopted in 2015 but was yet to be executed. While the framework for adopting the demands made by the students already existed, the final implementation of the language policy at the University of the Witwatersrand is an indication of the power of the #FeesMustFall protests.

4.3 The politicisation of free education

At different stages during the protests, the movement was accused of being infiltrated by political ideologies and the ambitions of some of the actors. This theme outlines different political discourses evident on social media and from conversations with some of the actors. #FeesMustFall was undoubtedly one of the largest protests to emerge in post-apartheid South

Africa. The numbers and debates it inspired were a reflection of early anti-apartheid student movements. During and after the protests, there were deliberations about how the protests were hijacked by the political ambitions of the various actors. This was also a dominant theme that emanated from the conversations that the researcher had with the students, university management and staff, and the government representative. This section will outline the various political ideologies, as well as the complexities they caused for the relationships among the actors.

While the demands were clearly defined, the structure and composition of the movement were less clearly defined due to the different political cohorts that the students belonged to. Some have argued that the student movement was hijacked by the political ambitions of various student body members who participated in the protests. To understand the complexities of the student movement, the researcher had to delve into the notion of ideology on the protest and the whether there was really political infiltration. This research has already ascertained the demands of the students and what they meant for them and for the wider South African society. However, the politicisation of the movement was a prominent issue during the protests in 2015 and 2016, and the researcher sought to understand the ideologies that led to these conclusions by the various actors.

Conversations that the movement had been politically infiltrated emanated from a conversation with the Deputy Director-General for Higher Education, Dr Diane Parker. From her perspective, the movement was influenced by external parties such as political parties that had been lobbying students to rise against government. According to her, the movement was born out of politicking by different political entities that were going around Universities planting seeds of dissent. In her words:

It was politicised from the very beginning. Right from the beginning it was political. It was different political groups going to universities even before it started...in some quotas there were discussions about bringing the government to a standstill (Deputy Director-General, Department of Higher Education and Training, Personal Interview, 17 January 2019).

While she did not specifically pin point whom the political actors were, it is easy to assume that those who supposedly ‘influenced’ the students were not aligned to the government, which is led by the ANC. While this is reflective of the stance that was adopted by the authorities, one can only question the validity of these assertions. Similar views were echoed

in a DHET report where the government acknowledged the politically volatile environment around universities from 2013, “the past 24 months have ushered in a new era of a highly politicised and volatile climate on South African university campuses” (DHET, 2015:10). This indicates an awareness on the part of the government that there was discontent among the students and the nation as a whole that consequently led to the explosion of the protests. However, other researchers have indicated that there were deeper issues that led to the student protests. For Booysen (2016), the student led social movement emanated from deeply ingrained discontent that had been brewing over the years due to poor service delivery, inequality, and a lack of redress and reallocation of resources (particularly wealth and land) after apartheid. In addition, various student articles have argued that the protests emanated from the exclusionary and high costs of tuition which were perpetuating inequality and whiteness in academic institutions (Motimele, 2019; Chinguno et al., 2017). These were real issues that the students were highlighting and the burden of the costs of tertiary education could not possibly have been dismissed to a simple issue of the political manipulation of the student activists.

Despite this complexity, university management were convinced that the student protests were staged by higher powers that sought to bring down the government because of the tensions between the SRC and the EFF student command. Referring to particular incidences of student tensions between the PYA-led SRC and the EFF, Professor Habib argued that factionalisation was the cause of violent outbursts on the campus. He stated that:

They say movement turns violent on two conditions, one is when there is police action (what the students are saying) and once there is factionalisation...Factionalisation starts at the end of October 2015 because after Zuma makes the concession and students come back, the ANC tries to control the movement. Then the EFF tries to control the movement and as each tries to control the movement, the violence starts. Three days later on Tuesday night (Personal interview, 12 December 2018).

The incidents alluded to by Professor Habib are related to moments when the students movement protests could have ceased due to concessions between the government and university students but elements within the university rekindled the protests. One particular instance was the alliance between the students and the workers’ #EndOutsourcing movement. While the government had agreed to a 0% fee increase in 2015, the Wits SRC urged students

to return to classes. However, according to Ashley, while the PYA rallied students to return to class, the EFF urged the students to stay away from classes. Ashley Mabasa and Interviewee 5 concurred that these actions were a cause for concern, as they exposed splits within the movement while at the same leading to further scrutiny of the movement actors themselves. According to Ashley, “PYA was going around putting up posters telling students to go to class but EFF was going around removing the posters telling people that we were not going to write or go back to class until Wits agreed to insourcing of staff” (Ashley Mabasa, Student Representative Council (SRC) Secretary-General, University of the Witwatersrand, Personal Interview, 22 January 2019). Another indication of this was a retweet by @WitsFMF, which commended other students for helping the workers when the PYA led SRC pulled out of negotiations: “RT @khathu_musetha: What if Wits students gave up after SRC pulled out?” (31 October 2015). Similarly, @WitsFMF retweeted @KuteInkinga: “Amazing perseverance and integrity shown by Wits students who ignored the consensus to #EndOutsourcing, truly inspiring stories” (31 October 2015). However, not all students share the ideology that the #FeesMustFall movement was politicised. For instance, Thabiso Nyembezi (pseudonym) argued that if the students had returned to classes when President Zuma announced the 0% fee increases, the larger fight for free education would not have seen the strides taken by government to guarantee free education. He stated that:

If we had gone back to classes and not joined #Outsourcing and continued the fight for fee-free decolonised education, there was no saying that today we would have first- and second-year students on the NSFAS bursaries. We were not political at that moment, we were seeing a better vision for our young brothers who were still in matric and that is what motivated us (Thabiso Nyembezi, Student activist University of the Witwatersrand, 21 January 2019).

Staying away from classes at this point was used by the students as a strategy to gain the attention of the government. One can argue that like other movements that use mass sit-ins, blockades and mass demonstrations, the students successfully utilised barring other students from attending classes as a means to hold the university hostage. Similarly, in O'Malley & Nelson's (2013) account of the 2006 student protests in Chile known as the Penguins' Revolution, students utilised mass demonstration and occupying schools in a bid to bring the education system to a halt and to gain the government's attention. This was largely successful because the government was forced to reconsider and address some of the demands made by the students. In line with the students' strategies of mass sit-ins on the university campus and

barring other students from attending class, Interview 1 argued that the attempts by the students to hold the university hostage was not guaranteed to yield the expected results. This caused a lot of trauma among other students who wanted to continue with learning. He stated that:

Fasiha (Fasiha Hassan was a prominent student leader and Wits SRC secretary general from 2015 to 2016) put it well on TV when she said, we cannot attack the government, but we can only hold the university hostage but that was a dangerous kind of thought. What if government had said we are not coming to release the hostage, because remember government acts as a political entity, because then if we release the hostage you will then come and attack us (Personal interview, 14 December 2018).

On the political involvement of the ANC, Interviewee 1 attributed this to a loss of legitimacy by the ANC. It was argued that this was the reason they were trying to manipulate the students into bowing down on their strategies of mass protest and abstaining from classes. He specified that, “that particular government led by Jacob Zuma was not enjoying the kind of legitimacy it enjoyed when it came into office in 2009” (Personal interview, 14 December 2018). This is an indication of the position that government was already in, with accusations of corruption and abuse of state power. Therefore, to conclude that the students were acting on behalf of other forces, greatly reduces the value of the student protests.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, Professor Adam Habib, while buttressing this idea that the students were acting at the behest of political actors held that:

The EFF complained that ANC was trying to control the movement, but they were trying to do the same...what Jacob Zuma or Shaka Sisulu was trying to do with the PYA, Julius Malema was also trying to do with the Vuyani Pambo (Personal Interview, 12 December 2018).

This implicates both parties of politicking through the student protests. Therefore, disproving the argument that the political actors that were influencing the students were merely from one political camp. More so, if one is to look at the current political careers of the actors, #FeesMustFall could have been a political stepping stone for some student activists. Two students from the #FeesMustFall movement who were based at the University of the Witwatersrand are now members of Parliament. These were Vuyani Pambo, who was an

instrumental EFF student leader during the protests, and Nompendulo Mkhathshwa, who led the PYA-led SRC at the University in 2016.

Twitter discourses on the @WitsFMF indicate an emphasis by the students that the protest had not been ideologically infiltrated by political actors. @WitsFMF posted “We have maintained our integrity as an intersectional; student led non-partisan movement that is fighting for free decolonised education” (4 April 2016). This is a clear indication that the students were aware of the ideologies being broadcast in the media. In October 2015, @WitsFMF also posted “a nonpartisan, student led, worker aligned movement, that is the principle at play” (31 October 2015) in a bid to control the narrative that was being broadcast about the political nature of the movement. To this end, Langa et al. (2017) argues that the movement was not politically aligned to any political party and that could possibly have been one of the movements’ greatest strengths.

The events around the university campus when the SRC stopped supporting the worker’s movement gave the government ammunition to dismiss the students. This was detrimental to the movement’s progress because it is typical of government and people in positions of power to blame external forces for the rise of contention and conflict. According to Eltantawy & Wiest (2011), when the government is challenged by the people it governs, the first instinct is to quash that resistance or apportion blame to entities that have nothing to do with the challenges or demands raised by the people. In the case of South Africa, it is important to remember that the protests were born out of the existing every day challenges of financing being met by black students across the country, which had led to increasing numbers of students who leave university. While it could be argued that there was some political interference within the movement, some of the students did not have a unified position relating to the political hijacking of the movement. On one hand, Ashely Mabasa agreed that there were ideological differences in terms of demands,

We had differing demands, for instance the PYA at that point never thought of decolonisation, language policy or the changing of university names... these were originally the demands of the EFF, they wanted people to be taught in indigenous languages and they wanted a change in the university language policy (Ashley Mabasa, Student Representative Council (SRC) Secretary-General, University of the Witwatersrand, Personal Interview, 22 January 2019).

On the other hand, Interviewee 4 strongly believed that the movement had been hijacked by the political ambitions of the actors themselves. He stated that:

It should not be a surprise that the movement was hijacked because as you can see today, those same students who stood in front leading in chanting slogans and singing occupy coveted positions in the youth politics of their respective parties (Interviewee 4, former SRC member, University of the Witwatersrand, Personal Interview, 14 December 2018).

Ashley clearly acknowledges the ideological differences that existed within the movement. However, it is important to realise that while these differences caused splits and shifts within the movement they also possibly opened up the movement to growth and ideological clarity. I argue this is because movements are generally bodies of people who map ideas and build on existing challenges, and one of the core tasks is presenting ideologically nuanced goals and demands which the masses identify with. According to Castells (2007), difference in ideology in communication is not essentially a bad thing, it is critical as it allows the battle of the human mind. On another level, the above quotations highlight the different levels of capture of the movement. The movement itself was a noble cause, however, it was manipulated by various actors to further their own ideologies. These actors were not only students but even the politicians in their respective government capacities fuelled the fire of the movement. Ndlovu (2017) argued that these various splits, which manifested themselves in partisan ideologies, were manifest in 2015 at the ANC headquarters. This saw ANC members booed off stage by EFF affiliated students, leading to an intervention by the PYA representative to allow them to speak. These tensions could easily have broken the movement.

The tensions within the student movement were not just a concern for the students themselves. The academic staff union former president was of the view that these plot twists and turns within the movement fragmented the ideologies and the impact that the movement was meant to have. The union members had conflicted views about the tensions between the students, according to John Smith,

The FMF movement became highly fragmented and internally competitive across political parties – namely the ANC aligned groups and the EFF elements caused a huge amount of instability and uncertainty – conflating messaging and decision making. Ultimately, the lack of ability to develop nuanced positions or approaches in the protests resulted in a lowest common denominator result in how the FMF

movement was managed. Only absolute positions could be agreed upon – free higher education and no compromise, complete shutdown academic activity and so forth (Former ASAWU president, University of the Witwatersrand, Personal Interview, 12 December 2018).

While I have argued above that the differences could have strengthened the movement, the quotation indicates that some members of staff believed that the movement had been infiltrated by the political ambitions of other actors. The students themselves articulated in one of their books that ideological discussions were held with mostly Social Science students, which ultimately grew to include students from other schools and faculties (Chinguno et al., 2017). This alone signifies a gap in ideological awareness among the students themselves. Ideological unity and clarity ultimately unified the different political groups to gain more traction and power. While discussions were limited to small numbers of students around the university campus, one could argue that the political splits in the movement also reflected poor ideological framing that could have unified the students' aspirations and desires. However, the spread of the movement indicates that the movement was successful in uniting discourses online and offline. The students managed to do this by using social media to mobilise, spread information and raise awareness through their Twitter page. There were several posts on the page inviting students to consultative meetings on decolonising the university and transformation. For instance, @WitsFMF posted "OUR WEEKLY EDUCATION SESSIONS ARE BACK. Tomorrow we talk Decolonization & Transformation for our Unis. 4-6pm" (2 December 2015). These consultative and education sessions were critical for the movement, as they allowed the students to mobilise even after the protests had stopped. These sessions allowed the students to administer collective action ideologies and frames, and these sessions were also pivotal in ideological parity within the movement. According to Sphiwe Ndlovu, "we held sessions with other students to ensure that they understood what free education was and the direction we wanted to go. For the movement to stay united, we knew we needed to collectively engage the students to stand with us" (Student activist, University of the Witwatersrand, Personal Interview, 18 January 2019). Benford & Snow (2000) articulate that framing is critical in uniting people's ideologies from personal aspirations to group goals and demands. In the case of the Penguins' Revolution in Chile, O'Malley & Nelson (2013) argue that the movement was highly successful because the students held meetings to develop a shared concern for social justice and to build strategic alliances across distinct groups of citizens. This in turn creates a sense

of unity, where the individual actions became group identities and concerns. The participants united for a greater good that surpassed the needs of the political, thereby forcing the government to act and address the main demands as well as the smaller demands made by the unified groups of students across Chile.

The student protests of 2015 and 2016 emanated from a politically volatile environment in South Africa, with legitimate demands that had clearly not been addressed after the end of apartheid. Based on the demands of the students and the collective attempts to gain the attention of the government, this research found that the movement might have had political affiliations, but they were not entirely behind the explosion of the protests. What unites movement actors is a shared desire to change their status quo and that does not remove them entirely from original political affiliations that they already had before becoming part of the collective.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the various ideologies that were articulated during the #FeesMustFall movement in 2015 and 2016. Student ideologies were rooted in addressing inequality through calls for free decolonised education and they based their demands on the Freedom Charter. These demands were found problematic by a section of university staff and management, and the government. This research found that education plays a critical role in addressing inequality. Only when education is relevant to the lives of the people it seeks to emancipate can it be valuable, thus, validating the demands for decolonising education curricula made by the students. The research also found that education within the South African context is key to addressing inequality because it opens up avenues for incorporating the youth into the economy, thereby giving them a chance to change the lives of their families. Therefore, if education is made affordable or free, the country will be taking a good step towards addressing structural inequality. On the other hand, government was convinced that free education was not feasible and argued that they could only attempt to deliver affordable education. However, the Zuma decree of 2017 indicates the impact of ideological unity among the students and sections of staff as it attempts to resolve the inaccessibility of education.

Chapter 5

5.1 Narratives of the #FeesMustFall movement

This chapter unpacks the narratives of the 2015-2016 #FeesMustFall protests based on key findings from conversations with students, members of the University of the Witwatersrand academic staff and management, as well as documents analysis. Data collected unearthed the importance of narrative and ideological control during the protests from the perspectives of the actors involved. The students were concerned about the depictions of the protests and violent characterisations that pervaded the mainstream media. While, on the other hand, results showed that the government was interested in controlling the debates to ensure support for the university, leading discussions away from those that were perpetuated by the students blaming the university for exclusionary high costs and colonial epistemology. This also aligned with the university management ideologies that sought to divert attention towards the violent outbursts that characterised the protests.

During interviews with some of the students, the researcher discovered that the students utilised social media for deliberation and mobilisation. The main arguments for the use of social media by the students were that they needed to control the narrative that dominated the mainstream media, where they were portrayed as violent hooligans causing immense destruction of property. According to Sphiwe Ndlovu, a student who was involved in decision making during the protests:

We used social media to control the narrative because we were presented as hooligans and that is why we mobilised through social media and to show that we actually had plans and we were not hooligans just acting. Twitter and Facebook were spaces to correct and [own] the narrative. WhatsApp was a primary site of mobilisation. These platforms also connected the struggle across university campuses (Student activist, Personal interview, 18 January 2018).

For the students, utilising social media was key in rallying the larger population behind them, to gain support and empathy, while at the same time countering mainstream media ideologies. In earlier accounts made in student writing about the events of the #FeesMustFall protests, the students lamented the existence of a narrative of danger that was initiated by the Vice-Chancellor to tarnish the image of the protesters. In Leopeng's (2017:94) account of the university's narrative of the protests, "there is a "discourse of danger" surrounding the walls

of Wits that has infiltrated public consciousness and has inexplicably become the solitary narrative”. These are ideologies that the students sought to counter. A review of the media coverage during the 2015 and 2016 protests from mainstream media such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), *Mail & Guardian* and *The Media Online* website showed biases in some of the stories relating to violent outbursts on the University of the Witwatersrand’s West Campus. For instance, a larger number of articles by Ra’eesa Pather in the *Mail & Guardian* were focused on violence perpetuated by the students. For example, a headline from 20 September 2016 read ‘#FeesMustFall: Students armed with rocks take aim at Wit’s glass house’. Another example of biased reporting was noted in a video posted by SABC Digital News on 10 October 2016 titled ‘Fees protest turns violent at Wits University #FeesMustFall’³. Here, the reporter justified police brutality and “protective action and dispersion” in clear instances where the students were retaliating to bullets and teargas. Social media engagement also revealed student anxieties on the biased nature of media reporting. Some movement actors blamed the media for tarnishing the image of the students and generally taking their comments out of context. For instance, in their defence, @WitsFMF tweeted the following series of tweets,

If anyone knows of a reliable news outlet or student accounts, please can we tweet/re tweet. The media att [attention] given 2 [to] the student movement has been grossly disproportionate to say the least. This is not surprising considering the racist white supremacist media stakeholders. However, we can use our own platforms 2 embolden our collective cause hold the media accountable. Especially during this desperate time. #ULShooting (27 September 2016).

In line with the above tweet, Ebrahim (2018:361) argues that “newspaper reports of the #FeesMustFall protests foregrounded student violence at the expense of their positions as agents of transformation”. In addition, she stipulates that “newspaper reports of the violence overshadowed reports of the positive changes that the student protesters catalysed and in so doing, newspaper reports during this time delegitimized the students as agents of change” (Ebrahim, 2018:360). This is an indication of the importance of controlling the narrative for protesters because negative coverage can easily alienate protesters from the larger public. This is supported by Castells (2009), who argues that the greatest battle of humanity is the battle for the human mind, where power lies in the hands of whoever has the means or access

³ Accessed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jW49or4LHsc>

to communication channels. Communication allows engagement of ideas through deliberation; and according to Castells (2007, 2009), digital technologies have created channels for the creation of counter-publics who challenge mainstream ideologies through the use of unrestrictive platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and chatrooms. The student protesters became counter-publics during the protests in their bid to control their representations and spread their ideologies.

The narrative of condemning student violence was also inherent in discussions with members of university staff who argued that, while they supported some of the demands made by the students, they were against the use of violence by the students. John Smith, a member of ASAWU, characterised violence at the university as a tactic used by the students. In his words:

I think most supported the need to address accessibility and inclusivity embodied in FMF – but the tactics and violence used were not palatable to many across the institution (Personal interview, 12 December 2018).

This is an indication of the proliferation of the narrative of the protesters as ‘violent and dangerous’ that Leopeng (2017) notes as having taken over within university walls. In addition, Langa et al. (2017) also highlights that the narrative of violent students was used by the mainstream media, the university and government to justify violent actions by the police and private security. This speaks to the justification of securitising universities, which now characterises protests at Universities across the country. John Smith also highlighted that there was no consensus among the Union members on the strategies employed by the university in response to the protests. He articulated that:

Some members were in favour of the university management bringing police and private security onto campus, whilst others were not. My personal views on this were that some strategic mistakes were made in the early stages of the protest by university management which exacerbated the student position – restriction to buildings for meeting space and the use of private security to enforce those restrictions; threatening legal proceedings under the Apartheid era Trespassing Act; bringing police onto campus early on; and authorising the use of stun grenades to disperse large groups of peacefully protesting students – only cemented and empowered the more militant elements of the FMF movement (Personal interview, 12 December 2018).

John Smith's personal view on violence perpetrated by the university against the students was not a dominant discourse in the mainstream media, which was characteristic of apartheid South Africa, where the media was implicit in covering up acts of police brutality and the police were continuously protected through such narratives. The representations of protesters as violent were also manifest in other protests in South Africa before the #FeesMustFall movement, such as the Marikana protests which led to the deaths of 43 miners (34 were killed by the police) on 16 August 2012. According to Chiumbu (2016:417), "South African print media provided coverage of the strike that privileged mining interests and generally ignored the concerns and voices of the miners". These representations of the miners, the living and the dead, played a role in blindsiding the valid need for better salaries and living conditions that the protesters had raised at the Lonmin Platinum Mine in Marikana. Chiumbu (2016) argues that the violent depictions of protesters in the country are a result of the power matrix that exists in South Africa, that continuously reproduces and maintains the ideologies and interests of the elite.

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allowed the students to provide alternative accounts of violent events that occurred during the protests. For example, Interviewee 4 alluded to a specific event where student leader Shaeera Kalla was shot several times with rubber bullets at the university. According to Interviewee 4:

The media did not report events as they happened, they were focused on making us seem like the bad guys when the police and Adam's (Adam Habib) private hounds were violating our human rights. Shaeera Kalla was shot over seven times with rubber bullets from the back, but the SABC and other media made it seem like the police were victims. We posted a full video to the world revealing what happened on Twitter and for us that was a victory on controlling the narrative and media discourse about us (Personal interview, former SRC member, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 December 2018).

The utilisation of digital activism is characteristic of youth led protests over the last decade in Europe, America and in Africa. During the Egyptian protests in 2011, Chebib & Sohail (2011) quoted an anonymous activist who stated that the protesters utilised Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to mobilise, organise and inform the world of the injustices and police brutality that occurred during protests. While the student protesters used social media for controlling the narrative, social media also provided a platform for the students to spread their ideologies

beyond face to face information sessions that they held across the university. The student protesters interviewed agreed that they utilised WhatsApp groups to discuss and articulate their viewpoints. Another interesting dynamic was that the students used these WhatsApp groups to set the agenda for discussions on Twitter and Facebook. For instance, Sphiwe Ndlovu mentioned that,

We cannot talk about something that is trending without talking about WhatsApp, because in order for anything to trend, you need numbers to tweet and retweet. In order to do that, there must be a site of mobilisation somewhere which is hidden to the public and then that site of mobilisation is a WhatsApp group (Student activist, University of the Witwatersrand, Personal Interview, 18 January 2019).

This highlights the pivotal role of digital technologies within the #FeesMustFall movement and how WhatsApp became a tool for mobilisation and deliberation. The students strategically utilised social media as a tool for deliberation in fortifying their position as counter-publics. Sphiwe Ndlovu further added that:

You need to have a particular time when you storm Twitter and this was the case with all the times that it happened. We would deliberate an issue then agree on what hashtag we would use. This is also how the mainstream media picked it up (Sphiwe Ndlovu, student activist, University of the Witwatersrand, Personal Interview, 18 January 2019).

Twitter provided opportunities for the students to gather and discuss their counter ideologies to what the government and the university were presenting to the world. Thereby becoming a formidable counter-public (Castells, 2007). These platforms (WhatsApp and Twitter) provided opportunities for the students to act and engage with the world, creating a network for the engagement of ideas with students from other universities as well as the general public. Bosch (2016) concurs that social media were critical platforms for the engagement of ideas from all over the country about existing challenges that people had been facing. Aside from inherent splits within the movement, the students stood as a united force to be reckoned with. This aligns with Castells' (2007) argument that the battle for the human mind is fought through communication platforms that allow the engagement of ideas. Therefore, communication played a key role in the engagement of students among themselves and with other publics. This was done to counter the ideologies of the university and present their own

viewpoints about transformation within the tertiary education sector and ways of address existing funding challenges.

While media coverage was biased towards protecting the interests of the elites, in this case government and the university, the discourses from university management and the government representative also indicated a slant towards blaming the students for violence on the university campus. For instance, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adam Habib, blamed factionalisation within the movement as having caused violence. He argued that:

Now the question was, and this is the complexity of 2015, you have factionalisation, it was not police presence because I kept the police out. Factionalisation creates violence. When violence starts, your decision is either let it continue, close the campus or bring in the police even though you know that when the police come it will go up but then it will go down and that is what happens in 2015 and 2016 (Personal interview, 12 December 2018).

The Vice-Chancellor's account contradicts the account by John Smith, who attributes some of the actions made the university as having caused violence. The university narrative on violence reflects a privileged narrative that focused on the wrongdoings of the students and not taking responsibility for the university's part in causing violence. According to Ebrahim (2018:369) "naming the students as destructive, violent; disruptive as opposed to heroes, champions, stalwarts, or victors has reproduced the students as villains. From this position, the negative qualities imbued upon them are further naturalised". This created continuous hegemonic representations of the students as violent, which led to their utilisation of digital activism to rewrite their stories and play a central role as counter-publics. Furthermore, there was extensive focus by police in the media and in conversations with government and University management on the cost of the violent protests; and no focus on the trauma that the students could have suffered from being shot at and being beaten. Dr Parker, the government representative, focused on the cost of damage to property that was done by the students instead of the traumatic experiences that the students faced at the hands of police and private security. According to Dr Parker:

In the end, the violence linked to this was the most devastating and also the idea that you can go into universities and not respect each other or listen to other voices, not work with each other; it is a fundamental deficit of what a university is about. The

fact that there was so much infrastructure destroyed. Over 1.5 billion worth of infrastructure was destroyed and in some cases, guards were locked in a room and the place was set alight. The oldest law library was burnt and a lot of original archives were lost. At UCT, artwork was burnt and those are some of the consequences we have to live with (Personal interview, 17 January 2019).

Accounts of the violent and destructive nature of protesters did not account for the trauma that the students could have endured or the importance of the cause. This is not to say that this research accepts or supports the violence that occurred during the protests. This research found depictions of the students in post-apartheid South Africa as the core cause of violence as problematic. Along the same lines, Chiumbu (2016) argues for reading protest narratives in South Africa through a decolonial lens that places violence during protests within the historical context of violence against black people that has not changed despite the end of the apartheid era.

Aside from narratives on violence, the researcher also found that the government sought to control the narrative on free education in a way that shielded the university from further scrutiny, as well as pushing an agenda for affordable education. The government was deliberately trying to control the narrative on free education at the end of the 2015 protests. The Presidential Task Team Report on free education (DHET, 2015) outlines the need for the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) to shift public discourse in support of universities. The task team report details the need for,

A media campaign run by GCIS and supported by all government departments should be run on TV, radio, print and social media platforms. Key political, business and civic leaders as well as parents, academics and students must be used to convey key agreed upon messages (DHET, 2015:14).

The report clearly identifies mainstream media channels and social media as strategic platforms to convey messages that could be used to quell the blame apportioned to universities, particularly their role in failing to address existing inequality. This media campaign was meant to “shift the public discourse to support the University” (DHET, 2015:14). This was important for the government as it was a starting point in controlling the narrative on social media platforms. This was traditionally one of the tools that the students used to discuss, collaborate across universities and publicise events across university campuses. This shows a shift in the tactics used by the government in communicating with

the general public, from the traditional mainstream platforms such as newspapers, radio and television to adopting the same platforms that helped the student movement gain momentum. The change of communication tactics by government aligns with Castells' notion of communication power, as it highlights an awareness on the part of government that the battle for the human mind is fought through communication. Controlling the narrative also meant controlling ideologies, and because the students' use of social media had shifted discourses on mainstream and alternative platforms, they could not censor what the audiences had access to. The GCIS was meant to usher in the key media messages in a bid "to garner widespread support for ensuring that the university system is strengthened and supported and not rendered ungovernable and destroyed" (DHET, 2015:14). Furthermore, the report identifies the following hashtags as starting points to get deliberations going, "#saveouruniversities, #handsoffouruniversities, #investinouryouth; #supportyouthrightstouniversityeducation and #stoptrashingouruniversities (DHET, 2015:60). While the student activists had established themselves as counter publics, particularly on social media platforms, these hashtags were meant to be utilised as counter ideologies to the uncensored debates and discussions happening on social media, which were controlled by the highly organised student actors. At the end of the 2015 protests, the main government ideology was rehashing affordable education as discussed above. The 2015 presidential task team report emphasised that "the key message to communicate consistently is #affordable higher education for all" (DHET, 2015:16). This message was emphasised through deliberations on social media and mainstream media platforms, with a key emphasis on avoiding a repeat of the 2016 protests.

In conclusion, this research ascertained that the students utilised social media to counter state and university ideologies that were pervasive in the mainstream media. Through deliberations on Facebook and Twitter, the students were able to play a critical role as counter-publics, changing the hegemonic narrative that has traditionally characterised protests in the country. It was also evident that social media additionally assisted the students to mobilise and share ideologies, which is in line with the communication power theory. The discussion above has also highlighted that mainstream media narratives in the country are consistently tilted towards the elite, which brings its own challenges in post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter provides a recap of and conclusion to the study. The chapter articulates a recap of the study from the intended aims and a discussion of the methodology that was followed. In addition, the chapter will provide a summary of the research findings as discussed in the previous two analysis chapters. Recommendations for future research will be articulated to explore new avenues for further research on ideologies of the #FeesMustFall movement and social movements generally in South Africa.

6.1 Recap of the study

The #FeesMustFall protests emanated from issues of inequality of access to education, the need to decolonise the curriculum and structural inequalities that continued years after apartheid. This research traced inequality in higher education to the apartheid era, where education was structured along racial lines with black people having limited access to universities; and when they finally did, they were in previously homeland areas with meagre resources. These historically black institutions were later merged by the government, some with historically white institutions. However, other historically white institutions were preserved in their current structures, leading to the current state of higher education today. While mergers sought to address the challenges of apartheid by providing more equal opportunities, they created vast differences between universities. This in turn created disparities between highly expensive and fully resourced universities that maintained their ‘white academic excellence’ label such as the University of the Witwatersrand, and those that were historically black with poor funding and not enough resources such as the University of Zululand. While it has been articulated that there were earlier protests across other universities in South Africa, the #FeesMustFall protests were more pronounced. It spread across more universities due to the magnitude of the issues raised by the students as well as the successful utilisation of digital activism as a social movement mobilisation tool. Therefore, this research sought to investigate the ideologies of the actors involved in the protests, with a particular focus on the University of the Witwatersrand.

The research focused on the student activists, university management and members of academic staff, and government representatives as they were the main actors involved in the protests. Of interest to this research was specifically the ideologies articulated by the each of the actors. Focus was on the demands made by the students and how they sought to bring

about social change in higher education, as well as the ideologies of the other actors and their views on the demands made by the students. To investigate the ideologies, the researcher conducted interviews with six student activists, two members of university management, one government representative and two members of ASAWU. In addition, an online ethnography of tweets from @WitsFMF, the official Twitter page used by the students, was conducted to gain an understanding of online discourses articulated by the students on social media. A sample of 2678 tweets was gathered, of which 50 purposive tweets were used for the research. The tweets were specifically sampled from 8 to 20 October 2015 and 19 September to 11 October 2016. These were peak periods of the protests. Policy documents relating to free education released by the government before and during the protests were also analysed, namely 'The Presidential Task Team Report on Student Funding Challenges at Universities' (DHET, 2015) and 'Report of the working group on fee free education University education for the poor in South Africa' (DHET, 2013). Furthermore, the researcher accessed a document from the @WitsFMF page titled '*Thuto ke Lesedi*' (Education is the light), which was a policy proposal by the students towards addressing existing funding challenges and the feasibility of free education. In addition, media articles were analysed. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interviews, while discourse analysis was utilised to analyse the tweets from social media.

6.2 Summary of findings

The study found that there were ideological contestations within the #FeesMustFall movement; the main contestation was the feasibility of free education. The students argued that free education was their birth right that was guaranteed through the Freedom Charter. On the other hand, the government representative argued that free education was not a government policy and it was not embedded within the Constitution. The students' demands for free education were also opposed by the university management, that argued that free education would affect the quality of education at a time when the government subsidy was already low and universities were struggling to reconcile the money available with students' needs. Free education was the main demand made by the students and it arose from the interviews and social media conversations that the students believed that free education would lead to social change within higher education and beyond. It was a key step towards addressing existing barriers to entering university and staying enrolled due to the high cost of education in the country. While the main argument was existing inequality which needed to be addressed, the government expressed an awareness of the challenges faced by the students.

Staff members at the university were not ideologically united on the demands made by the students, as some argued along with management that free education was expensive and would affect the quality offered by the institution. However, some members of staff argued that the needs of the students needed to be met due to existing inequality which had continued from apartheid due to a lack of racial redress and redistribution of wealth.

The research furthermore uncovered ideological contestation amongst the students themselves which was highlighted as a cause of violence by some actors, while others argued that movement had been politically infiltrated from the beginning. These ideological differences led to arguments about the politicisation of the movement. Some of the actors argued that the ANC and EFF were manipulating the students, which in turn caused violent outbursts across the campus for the duration of the protests. While there were contestations in relation to the politics of the movement, there were also ideological differences. For example, the EFF ideology on decolonising education which became a core element of the movement signifying the ability of the students to set political differences aside to make the decolonial debate a collective effort. The reprieve that came for the students through the Zuma decree of free education in 2017 was also labelled as a political move for the former president to regain the political legitimacy his government was losing.

Furthermore, the research found that for education to be highly effective in achieving social change, it needs to be decolonised in a bid to address the indigenous knowledge gap in higher education institutions. The continued perpetuation of whiteness and Western epistemology has weakened indigenous knowledge structures that are needed for universities to produce well balanced graduates that can contribute to solving social problems. Universities play a critical role in ensuring that African philosophies such as Black Consciousness are part of the curriculum across all fields. Additionally, due to the fact that the knowledge project is in the hands of the universities, it is their role to administer the required changes for a more adaptable curriculum that conscientizes the youth about the importance of history and creates an awareness of the complexities of race in South Africa.

Lastly, the research found the utilisation of digital activism by the students allowed them to control the narrative on social media platforms in response to the negative representations that were perpetuated by mainstream media, particularly those aligned to the state such as SABC News. The students successfully managed social media conversations through WhatsApp to deliberate on hashtags and the most effective times to create attention for each

particular cause. This successful implementation of digital activism gained the attention that the students desired for the movement to be reignited and spread across the country. Twitter in particular provided an uncensored platform for the students to mobilise, engage in debate and control the narrative from mainstream platforms.

While the composition of movement actors has been similar across the African continent, the South African student movement at the University of the Witwatersrand was generally comprised of University students. The students had access to social media through their phones or University lab computers connected onto the University Wi-Fi or internet network. In relation to the composition of other protests in Africa where the middle class have been labelled ‘generals’ of youth movements across the continent (Mueller, 2018), this is a stark difference. This is so because in the South African case, there were no middle class ‘generals’ to fan the fires of the movement, it was the students that brought attention to the cause in their own capacity as movement activists. This also signifies a shift in the conducting of protests as the student movement presented a paradigm shift on how protests are conducted in the country through their utilization of digital movements.

Prior to the #FeesMustFall protests, earlier research had found that South African movements were too fragmented to challenge policy-making processes. According to Peris & Kristian (2005:27) “new movements have so far been issue based and fragmented with limited capacity to merge diverse issues and build a coherent movement” capable of contesting the state’s policy-making processes. This could be seen in the existence of movements such as the TAC, SECC and Sikhula Sonke which according to Peris and Kristian (2005) signify the issue-based movements that could not unite to challenge policy making in the country. While the students’ unitary approach to addressing the need for free decolonised education, was similar to the approach of European anti-austerity movements that utilised collective action frames particularly centred around citizenship to unite the have-nots into cohorts of radical citizenry against state power (Gerbaudo, 2014). Similar traits have also been noted across the continent in the 2011 Arab Spring movements in countries such as Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen that categorically utilized ideology to mobilise against abuse of power by government officials leading to mass corruption, leaving entire populations living in poverty.

On the African continent, Aidi (2018) and Mueller (2018) argue that protests movements emanate from a diversity of issues. Mueller (2018) holds two distinct views, firstly that political grievances which define moments when protests begin are a guiding factor

particularly in the case of #FreeBobiWine in Uganda which led to a global uproar in the arrest and subsequent torture of parliamentarian Robert Kyagulanyi. While the student protests were not politicized in the beginning, the results indicate that the student movement became politicized by the ambitions of some of the student actors as well as the government with the ANC and EFF fighting to be legitimate adversaries of the movement. These political parties also occupied different positions on the directions that the movement took. For the ANC it was critical to control the narrative on the responsibility that the University could bear regarding the tertiary education crisis. While for the EFF, the movement was meant to uproot coloniality through decolonising the curriculum to provide opportunities to engage with indigenous forms of knowledge. This highlights the difference positions that politics occupies in youth movements within the continent.

Secondly, she points out that material grievances leading to high unemployment and increased poverty are push factors that lead to protest (Mueller, 2018). Similarly, Aidi (2018) opines that poverty and lower chances of upward social mobility pushes youths onto the streets to protest against governments for example the Niger protests in 2009 and 2010. This is along the same lines with the findings discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis. The student protesters and University of the Witwatersrand argued that education played a key role in achieving social change in South Africa. For the students, free decolonized education would play a role in addressing generational inequality that has not been addressed over 20 years after independence. The high cost of education as a result of lack of policy readjustment to cater for black people who had been disadvantaged during apartheid forced the students to rise and protest. Additionally, while literature discussed did not highlight ideological contestation among actors, the research found clear instances in the #FeesMustFall case to indicate ideological contestation as key towards understanding movement direction and solutions offered by different ideological actors.

6.3 Recommendations

The above discussion has revealed that the funding woes highlighted by the students at the University of the Witwatersrand during the protests are larger issues that students across the country are facing, particularly due to the lack of solid intervention by the government to address funding challenges in the long term. The main challenge for South Africa is the neo-liberal policy which holds government accountable to the private sector, the major beneficiary of graduates released by universities. Based on the challenges raised by the students, universities need to be more open to change and accept that the decolonisation of

university spaces is critical for students to be able to gain valuable knowledge that will assist them becoming more active members of society. Enabling them to provide solutions to the challenges of poverty and disease.

While the government has sought to address the fee-free education issue, the current decree is not sustainable because the funds are not available to run the initiative in the long run. While the students proposed a scheme that would ensure the private sector donates funds to infrastructure development and increase funding for universities on a needs basis, it would require the corporate sector to part with their money with little to no returns, which is not feasible and likely unacceptable. Therefore, government needs to restructure the allocation of funds through NSFAS, as students have raised complaints across the board about the poor administration of funds at the state institution. A complete overhaul of the structure and processes of funding at NSFAS would be needed to align it with the realistic picture of poor black South Africans who fall in the gap as the missing middle. Until their challenges are resolved, there will always be protests such as the #WitsHungerStrike that happened in February 2019 at the University of the Witwatersrand. A recommendation that emanated from the discussion with university management was the need to invest in strong alumni relations, particularly for the purpose of fundraising for the university to cover the needs of poor students. This would particularly work at the University of the Witwatersrand as the AfrAsia Bank South Africa Wealth Report released in 2018 indicated that “there were 43,600 South Africans with net assets of more than \$1 million (R11.9 million) and 2,200 with net assets of more than \$10 million (R119 million). Of these dollar millionaires, 22% attended the University of Witwatersrand” (Wasserman, 2018:np). While the mere existence of these millionaires does not guarantee their willingness to give back to their alma mater, this is a considerable source of funds that universities could consider exploring. As indicated by Interviewee 1, universities in Europe and America have explored and benefitted from their alumni, thus, it should be an option for worth considering, not only for the University of the Witwatersrand but for universities across the country.

In addition, there is the need for the South African government to address the existing inequalities that have impacted on black families and made it difficult for their children to access quality education. Such readdress should go beyond the provisions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address inequality so the government can eventually deliver on its pre-apartheid promises in a bid to address the challenges faced by mostly black families. But should be centred around addressing racial inequality which according to

Erasmus (2005) continues to shift, creating gaps between the richest and poorest among blacks. The extreme levels of poverty that the country continues to plunge into and increasing unemployment cannot be solved by grants. There is need for investment into education from secondary schools, which are deteriorating, to ensure that more people qualify for university. In addition, getting more students into universities that have exclusionary systems and knowledge structures would be a doomed effort. Thus, there is a need for universities to follow decolonisation practices that allow students to study using local languages, engage with philosophies such as Black Consciousness and Ubuntu, for them to gain insight into African values that would allow them to give back to their communities through skills and solutions.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

Further study on social movement ideologies within the South African context would serve to investigate the relationship between ideologies and social change focusing on other protests that have happened within South Africa. In addition, further studies could investigate how other platforms such as the news website Daily Vox were utilised by the students to control the narratives during coverage of the #FeesMustFall protests.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research approval



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Student Number: 676254

Ms Fiona T Chawana
33 Jorissen Street
Braamfontein
Johannesburg
2001

28 August 2018

Dear Ms Chawana

APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS BY RESEARCH IN MEDIA STUDIES

I am pleased to be able to advise you that the readers of the Graduate Studies Committee have approved your proposal entitled ***“An analysis of the ideological interventions during fees must fall: A case study of the University of the Witwatersrand”***. However you should take note of warnings and recommendations. I confirm that Dr Ufuoma Akpojivi has been appointed as your supervisor.

The research report is normally submitted to the Faculty Office by 15 February, if you have started the beginning of the year, and for mid-year the deadline is 31 July. All students are required to RE-REGISTER at the beginning of each year.

You are required to submit 2 bound copies and one unbound copy plus 1 CD in pdf (Adobe) format of your research report to the Faculty Office. The 2 bound copies go to the examiners and are retained by them and the unbound copy is retained by the Faculty Office as back up.

Please note that should you miss the deadline of 15 February or 31 July you will be required to submit an application for extension of time and register for the research report extension.

Any candidate who misses the deadline of 15 February will be charged fees for the research report extension.

Kindly keep us informed of any changes of address during the year.

Note: All MA and PhD candidates who intend graduating shortly must meet your ETD requirements at least 6 weeks after your supervisor has received the examiners reports. **A student must remain registered at the Faculty Office until graduation.**

Yours Sincerely

G Kamfer

Genevieve Kamfer (Mrs)

Faculty Officer

Faculty of Humanities

Private Bag X 3

Wits, 2050

Appendix 2: Ethics Approval



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Chawana

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: H18/10/06

PROJECT TITLE

An analysis of the ideological interventions during fees must fall:
A case study of the University of the Witwatersrand

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Miss F Chawana

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

SLLM/

DATE CONSIDERED

19 October 2018

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved

EXPIRY DATE

07 November 2021

DATE

08 November 2018

CHAIRPERSON


(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Dr U Akpojivi

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

UNIVERSITY OF
REGISTRAR

WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG



THE OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY

19 November 2018

Fiona Tafadzwa Chawana
Student Number 676254
MA Candidate
School of Language Literature and Media

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

"An analysis of the ideological interventions during fees must fall: A case study of the University of the Witwatersrand"

This letter serves to confirm that the above project has received permission to be conducted on University premises, and/or involving staff and/or students of the University as research participants. In undertaking this research, you agree to abide by all University regulations for conducting research on campus and to respect participants' rights to withdraw from participation at any time.

If you are conducting research on certain student cohorts, year groups or courses within specific Schools and within the teaching term, permission must be sought from Heads of School or individual academics.

Ethical clearance has been obtained (Protocol number HI 8/10/06).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicoleen Potgieter', enclosed within a circular stamp.

Nicoleen Potgieter
University Deputy Registrar

Participant Information Sheet for Wits management Staff.



Dear Sir/Madam ,

My name is Fiona Chawana and I am a Masters student in the department of Media Studies at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project titled, “An analysis of the ideological interventions during fees must fall: A Case Study of the University of the Witwatersrand”. The aim of this research is to understand the different ideological contestations during feesmustfall and how these ideologies have been able to bring about social change in higher education. This research project is supervised by Dr. Ufuoma Akpojivi.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in an interview I would like to interview you at a restaurant or place convenient for you. You have been selected for the interview because you are one of the key actors identified to have play a significant role during the FMF. The interview entails answering some questions which will take around 30 minutes.

Your participation in the interview session is voluntary, and you will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. I cannot guarantee confidentiality or anonymity due to your official position at the University. However, I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation, in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device, I will not mention your name once I start recording and the data will be stored without any markers such as your name. The recording will be stored in a password protected computer. However, if you feel uncomfortable with the audio recording I am more than happy to conduct this interview without using the digital device but take notes.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Chawana

Fiona Chawana , fiona.chawana@students.wits.ac.za, 0749118542

Ufuoma Akpojivi, Ufuoma.Akpojivi@wits.ac.za, 0117174145

Participant Information Sheet for Wits member of Staff and member of ASAWU.



Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Fiona Chawana and I am a Masters student in the department of Media Studies at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project titled, “An analysis of the ideological interventions during fees must fall: A Case Study of the University of the Witwatersrand”. The aim of this research is to understand the different ideological contestations during feesmustfall and how these ideologies have been able to bring about social change in higher education. This research project is supervised by Dr. Ufuoma Akpojivi.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in an interview I would like to interview you at a restaurant or place convenient for you. You have been selected for the interview because you are one of the key actors identified to have play a significant role during the FMF. The interview entails answering some questions which will take around 30 minutes.

Your participation in the interview session is voluntary, and you will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. I cannot guarantee confidentiality or anonymity due to your official position at the University. However, I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation, in my final research report. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation, in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device, I will not mention your name once I start recording and the data will be stored without any markers such as your name. The recording will be stored in a password protected computer. However, if you feel uncomfortable with the audio recording I am more than happy to conduct this interview without using the digital device but take notes.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Chawana

Fiona Chawana , fiona.chawana@students.wits.ac.za, 0749118542

Ufuoma Akpojivi, Ufuoma.Akpojivi@wits.ac.za. 0117174145

Participant Information Sheet for Ministry of Higher Education and Training representative



Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Fiona Chawana and I am a Masters student in the department of Media Studies at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project titled, “An analysis of the ideological interventions during fees must fall: A Case Study of the University of the Witwatersrand”. The aim of this research is to understand the different ideological contestations during feesmustfall and how these ideologies have been able to bring about social change in higher education. This research project is supervised by Dr. Ufuoma Akpojivi.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in an interview I would like to interview you at a restaurant or place convenient for you. You have been selected for the interview because you are one of the key actors identified to have play a significant role during the FMF. The interview entails answering some questions which will take around 30 minutes.

Your participation in the interview session is voluntary, and you will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. I cannot guarantee confidentiality or anonymity due to your official position in the Ministry. However, I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation, in my final research report. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation, in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device, I will not mention your name once I start recording and the data will be stored without any markers such as your name. The recording will be stored in a password protected computer. However, if you feel uncomfortable with the audio recording I am more than happy to conduct this interview without using the digital device but take notes.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Chawana

Fiona Chawana , fiona.chawana@students.wits.ac.za, 0749118542

Ufuoma Akpojivi, Ufuoma.Akpojivi@wits.ac.za, 0117174145

Appendix 7

Participant Information Sheet for students who participated in FMF protests.



Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Fiona Chawana and I am a Masters student in the department of Media Studies at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project titled, “An analysis of the ideological interventions during fees must fall: A Case Study of the University of the Witwatersrand”. The aim of this research is to understand the different ideological contestations during feesmustfall and how these ideologies have been able to bring about social change in higher education. This research project is supervised by Dr. Ufuoma Akpojivi.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in an interview I would like to interview you at a restaurant or place convenient for you. You have been selected for the interview because you are one of the key actors identified to have played a significant role during the FMF. The interview entails answering some questions which will take around 30 minutes. I would also like to urge you refrain from divulging any illegal activities that you might have witnessed or participated in during the protests.

Your participation in the interview session is voluntary, and you will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device, I will not mention your name once I start recording and the data will be stored without any markers such as your name. The recording will be stored in a password protected computer. However, if you feel uncomfortable with the audio recording I am more than happy to conduct this interview without using the digital device but take notes.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Chawana

Fiona Chawana , fiona.chawana@students.wits.ac.za, 0749118542

Ufuoma Akpojivi, Ufuoma.Akpojivi@wits.ac.za, 0117174145

Appendix 8: Consent form

Consent Form

Title of project: An analysis of the ideological interventions during fees must fall: A Case Study of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Name of researcher: Fiona T. Chawana

I **(Please use pseudonym)** agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

	Yes	No
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	☐	☐
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in her research report	☐	☐
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	☐	☐
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously by other researchers following this study	☐	☐

..... (signature)
..... (name of participant)
..... (date)

Appendix 9:

Interview guide for students who participated in #FeesMustFall students

1. What were your motivations for protesting?
2. What were the underlying issues that pushed you to get out and protest?
3. Was there an ideological backing for the protest?
 - If yes, what were the guiding ideologies for the movement?
4. Reflecting from the time the protests started, do you believe there has been social change in terms of access to Higher Education?
 - If no, why not?
 - If yes, what are the changes?
5. Would you say you are satisfied with the direction taken so far by the government towards creating opportunities for free education?
6. Was there a contestation of ideas with other actors who did not identify with your movement?
 - If yes, how did you handle the contestations?
7. Does the current situation reflect the ideologies that you presented during the protests?

Appendix 10:

Interview Guide for University of the Witwatersrand management

1. What was your view of the protests?
2. What was your view of how the student movement managed the protest or their approach towards getting your attention?
3. What issues regarding free education did you raise as a stakeholder in a place of power?
4. Did you have an ideological standpoint that you adopted during the protests?
 - If yes, what was your ideological standpoint?
5. Why University management enlist the services of private security and the police during the protests?
6. As part of University management, what do you think are the reasons behind the challenges raised by the students in terms of lack of social change in higher education?
7. Reflecting from the time the protests started, do you believe there has been social change in terms of access to Higher Education?
 - If no, why not?
 - If yes, what are the changes?
8. Does the current situation reflect the ideologies that you presented during the protests?
9. As a University have you taken action towards addressing the issues raised by the students?
 - If no, why not?
 - If yes, what have you done?
10. Would you say you are satisfied with the direction the government has taken towards creating opportunities for free education?
11. Would you say you are satisfied with the direction you have taken as a University towards creating opportunities for free education?

Appendix 11:

Interview Guide for Wits University Staff, member of Academic Staff Association at Wits University (ASAWU).

1. What was your view of the protests?
2. What was your view of how the student movement managed the protest or their approach towards getting your attention?
3. As an association what were your views about the stance that the University adopted during the protests?
4. Did the ideologies of the University have a bearing on your ideologies and / stance regarding the student protests?
3. What issues regarding free education did you raise as ASAWU?
4. Did you have an ideological standpoint that you adopted during the protests?
 - If yes, what was your ideological standpoint?
5. As a member of ASAWU, what do you think are the reasons behind the challenges raised by the students in terms of lack of social change in higher education?
6. Reflecting from the time the protests started, do you believe there has been social change in terms of access to Higher Education?
 - If no, why not?
 - If yes, what are the changes?
7. Does the current situation reflect the ideologies that you presented during the protests?
8. As a Union have you taken action towards addressing the issues raised by the students?
 - If no, why not?
 - If yes, what have you done?
9. Would you say you are satisfied with the direction you have taken as ASAWU?

Appendix 12:

Interview guide for Department of Higher Education Representative

1. What was your view of the protests?
2. What was your view of how the student movement managed the protest or their approach towards getting your attention?
3. What issues regarding free education did you raise as government?
4. Did you have an ideological standpoint that you adopted during the protests?
 - If yes, what was your ideological standpoint?
5. What was your ideological standpoint when the University enlisted the services of private security and the police during the protests?
6. As the government, what do you think were the reasons behind the challenges raised by the students in terms of lack of social change in higher education?
7. Reflecting from the time the protests started, do you believe there has been social change in terms of access to Higher Education?
 - If no, why not?
 - If yes, what are the changes?
8. Does the current situation reflect the ideologies that you presented during the protests?
9. As government have you taken action towards addressing the issues raised by the students?
 - If no, why not?
 - If yes, what have you done?
10. Would you say you are satisfied with the direction you have taken as a government towards creating opportunities for free education?