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**THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGISTS IN THE #FEESMUSTFALL
MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Clinical Psychology.

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Abstract

Since 2015, students across South Africa have protested for free tertiary education. This protest movement is known as #FeesMustFall. It was deemed important to understand what psychologists could do in this movement, as these protests have highlighted the existing inequality and lack of transformation in South African universities. Further, these protests have shown to cause psychological sequelae, and, at present, there is very little information regarding the role of psychologists in these types of protests. In response, this current qualitative study explores what four psychologists believe their role could be within the protests, specifically within Grahamstown, Eastern Cape. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and a Thematic Analysis methodology and Critical Psychology approach were used to analyse the findings.

The results of the study revealed that these psychologists understood they could have varying roles within the protests. These varying roles linked to the broader concept of transformative versus ameliorative interventions. Ameliorative practices are usually more short-term in their effect to initiate change and are mainly aimed at the individual level, while transformative approaches are long-term and are mainly aimed at the societal level. Under the ameliorative approach, the psychologists' roles included that they provide individual therapy to students who were affected by the protests. The transformative approach, on the other hand, included that the psychologists use their role to act as advocates, negotiators or advisors, and therefore take an active role in assisting the University with the protests. The findings also showed that some participants were ambivalent and uncertain about their role. This ambivalence led to these participants questioning the protests themselves. Results also showed limiting factors within the Psychology profession, which prevented psychologists from taking a more active stance in the protests. The limiting factors referred to phenomena which prevent psychologists from being able to take a role, not only in protests, but in society as a whole. These factors included the idea of the psychologist being a bystander and/or being limited by the professional scope of practice.

The implications of these findings highlight the possible key roles that psychologists can play in protest situations. However, it shows that perceived limiting factors sometimes prevent these roles from being fully realised. The findings also then point to a broader issue within the Psychology discipline, specifically relating to its relevance in the South African context.

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Introduction

Overview

This study set out to investigate what psychologists in a small town in the Eastern Cape believe the role of psychologists could be in student protest situations, specifically focussing on the #FeesMustFall movement in South Africa. Through doing this, this thesis has hoped to contribute to clarifying what psychologists can do in these situations and ultimately aims to continue to provide insight into Psychology's role in social justice issues.

Rationale for this thesis

The #FeesMustFall protests began in 2015 and have occurred and continue to occur (in various forms) at various universities across South Africa (EWN, 2017). The #FeesMustFall protests challenged the lack of transformation and economic inequality that still exists in South African universities. The protests highlighted the need for a more inclusive university institutional culture, improved access to education, and a transformed curriculum that is relevant to the current post-colonial and post-apartheid context (Long, 2016; Naicker, 2016; Pillay, 2016).

Currently, there has been little research conducted on the role of psychologists and Psychology in the protests. In an editorial, Pillay (2016) noted how psychologists who do not speak out against oppressive injustices and do not contribute to important debates regarding the protests, are contributing to an unjust status quo, a phenomenon Pillay refers to as "silence is violence" (p. 157). It has been noted that psychologists can become advocates by using their role to speak out against oppressive injustices (Arumugam, 2001) which have an impact on a person's wellbeing. It has also been noted that the psychological impact of these protests has not been adequately addressed (Qukula, 2016). Therefore, this research was deemed important as it could help clarify how psychologists can use their role to contribute to society within protest movements. It was decided to specifically focus on psychologists for the above reasons, but also because of their expert knowledge in managing emotional distress and improving wellbeing. It was also deemed important as it continues to add to the critical debate of psychological practices and their relevance within the South African context.

Structure of the thesis

This research is made up of the following chapters: introduction, context, theoretical lens, methodology, results and discussion and finally, the conclusion.

The context chapter specifically looks at the history of Psychology in relation to the South African context. This provides a backdrop for the argument for the importance of psychologists playing an active role in movements such as #FeesMustFall. I begin by discussing Psychology's associations with the apartheid regime (either through professional organisations that valued white exclusivity or through unfair and indiscriminate psychological testing), and then later how progressive psychologists used their voices to act out against this regime (through promoting more liberatory practices and critically engaging in debate about the impact of apartheid on mental health). I then include a discussion of the various issues in the psychological discipline which prevent it from being socially responsive to the South African context. I will argue how these factors were also mirrored within the university context. Finally, using Pillay (2016)'s suggestions, I highlight roles psychologists can play within protest situations.

The theoretical lens chapter provides an understanding of Critical Psychology - the approach that was chosen for my analysis. This approach is appropriate as, at the heart of Critical Psychology, is the importance of bringing issues of social justice to the forefront, through acknowledging and critiquing existing power differentials in the social context. This mirrors what protests such as #FeesMustFall aim to do – highlighting the need for social equality by challenging dominant ideological practices in institutions such as universities.

The methodology chapter highlights the research aims and questions, the research design, the recruitment process, the details of participants, the interview process, thematic analysis, reflexivity, rigour, and ethical considerations. I provide detailed descriptions of these processes and how they related to my research.

The results and discussion section highlight the findings and critical discussion of the research. I explain the dominant themes, and the implications thereof; and link these findings to my research question. Finally, the conclusion sums up the research project and discusses implications and limitations of the thesis and ideas for future research.

Context

This section explores the background of this area of research specifically within the South African context. First, the historical role of the field of Psychology, beginning from the time of apartheid, is explored. Second, the relevance of the role of Psychology in the social context is discussed. Third, current issues that hinder Psychology responding to the social context are outlined. Fourth, the section explores how Psychology has or could deal with social problems, specifically in relation to #FeesMustFall protests. Against this backdrop, I will argue that, although Psychology has shifted and changed in South Africa in response to its shortcomings, the #FeesMustFall protests have highlighted areas which require further attention – such as understanding how psychologists can continue to be socially relevant in response to the protests.

Psychological associations during apartheid

Drawing on the historical accounts of Psychology in South Africa by Cooper (2014), Cooper and Nicholas (2012) and Johnston (2015), the connections between the apartheid political system and the first psychological professional organisations will be explored. Through reviewing these historical accounts, it is established how early Psychology's "complicity with apartheid, has been established beyond rational doubt" (Chitindingu & Mkhize, 2016, p. 73).

In 1948, the first national association of psychologists in South Africa was founded (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012) and was known as The South African Psychological Association (SAPA). In contrast to the current Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), which upholds values of inclusivity and transformation (PsySSA, 2018), SAPA promoted white exclusivity and initially prevented black professionals from entering their organisation (Cooper, 2014). This organisation was led by A.J le Grange, a mentee of Hendrick Verwoerd, the "architect of apartheid" and former Prime Minister of South Africa (Cooper, 2014, p. 839). In 1962, SAPA eventually permitted black people to enter the organisation (Cooper, 2014). To counter this, 44 displeased white members formed an alternative body called the Psychological Institute of the Republic of South Africa (PIRSA) (Cooper, 2014). PIRSA kept in line with apartheid policies of racial segregation (Cooper, 2014) and "insist[ed] on promoting a discipline that was committed to the ethnic-national vision of the apartheid state" (Long, 2014, p. 339). In 1983, PIRSA and SAPA ultimately merged to form the Psychological Association of South Africa (PASA) (Cooper, 2014). All three of these organisations (SAPA, PIRSA and

PASA) were unwilling to make Psychology more accessible to black people and did not play an active role in challenging the South African apartheid government and the impact of its racist policies on most South Africans' wellbeing (Duncan, Stevens & Bowman, 2014). It was also noted that, at this time, Psychology was used to further support racist ideologies through indiscriminate and unfair intellectual testing (Cooper, 2014; Johnston, 2015).

The Relevance Debate

After the emergence of PASA, many progressive psychologists debated the 'relevance' of Psychology (seminal works include: Dawes 1985; de la Rey & Ipser, 2004; Sher & Long, 2012). It was argued that the psychological discipline was in crisis as it had failed to remain relevant to South Africa's social context (de la Rey & Ipser, 2004; Sher & Long, 2012). This crisis occurred from the late 1980s until the early 1990s, coinciding with the increasing struggles against the oppressive apartheid system (de la Rey & Ipser, 2004, Long, 2016; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). Seedat and Lazarus (2011) discussed how several factors contributed to this debate: such as the lack of responsiveness of Psychology as a discipline in resisting the apartheid regime (Dawes, 1985; de la Rey & Ipser, 2004) and the degree to which Psychology, as an academic discipline, had been implicated in oppressive ideological discourse and practices (Foster, 2008, as cited in, Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). This was highlighted by psychologists such as Andy Dawes, who critiqued the profession for not being socially responsive to the socio-political context (Johnston, 2015) and argued for a model of liberatory Psychology that promoted activism and advocacy (de la Rey & Ipser, 2004). Another factor was the inapplicability of eurocentric and American psychological theory to the social problems in South Africa (Holdstock, 1981; de la Rey & Ipser, 2004; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Chitindingu & Mkhize, 2016; Johnston, 2015). As a discipline inherited from Europe and North America, Psychology is positioned in the individualistic western tradition (Cooper, 2014), which often focusses on a reductionistic and decontextualised view of an individual (Chitindingu & Mkhize, 2016). This means that Psychology has traditionally emphasised one-on-one therapy, such as psychoanalysis, which is usually long-term and expensive, and inaccessible and ineffective for many South African contexts.

OASSSA, PAG, PINS

The relevance debate was influenced by non-governmental organisations, which had vastly different views and goals to PASA. The organisations were named the Organisation for Appropriate Social Services in South Africa (OASSSA) (Long, 2016) and the Psychology

against Apartheid Group (PAG) (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). OASSSA consisted of progressive mental health workers, most of whom were psychologists (Hayes, 2000). OASSSA was the only alternative psychological body to the conservative PASA (Hayes, 2000) and argued that there was a “duty for psychologists to participate in mass politics” generated as a result of the causal link between apartheid policies and mental health problems in South Africa (Long, 2016, p. 225). Consequently, OASSSA became a part of the social consciousness of Psychology against the apartheid regime and these psychologists aimed to use their psychological roles to act against apartheid (Hayes, 2000). Therefore, they were to play an active role in advocacy. In their review, Seedat and Lazarus (2011) noted that this was done by offering “psychological support to victims of apartheid violence, organis[ing] regular seminars, discussion groups, and conferences, and mobiliz[ing] mental health workers nationally to help promote the resilience and survival skills of vulnerable groups” (p. 246).

Because of Psychology's association with PASA, and its lack of public criticism of apartheid (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011), the PAG assisted in leading an academic boycott of Organised Psychology (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). Further, the PAG called for the integration of black people and women into the process of psychological theory generation and organisation (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). In 1983, the critical academic journal, *Psychology in Society* (PINS) was founded to critically engage in theoretical debates about the importance of examining the psychological effects of state violence and repression (Carolissen, 2008). This time has been described as the emergence of a critical voice within Psychology (Painter & Terre Blanche, 2004).

Democracy, PsySSA, and Community Psychology

On January 21, 1994, just three months before South Africa was democratised, PsySSA was formed (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012; Cooper, 2014). PsySSA was established due to discussions that occurred in the 1990s between PAG, OASSSA, PASA and the regulatory Professional Board for Psychology (Cooper, 2014; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). Because of these discussions, PASA was replaced by PsySSA (Painter & Terre Blanche, 2004) and was to become the first non-racial professional organisation for Psychology in South Africa (de la Rey & Ipser, 2004; Cooper, 2014).

To redress Psychology's past in implementing oppression, de la Rey and Ipser (2004) noted there needed to be a deliberate response to post-apartheid issues from the psychological discipline, and that the demographic profile of psychological practitioners needed to change.

Further, there was a shift in the academic discipline towards Community Psychology. Community Psychology was brought about as a reaction to mainstream Psychology, which was critiqued for being largely ameliorative and 'expert led' in its interventions (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005) and focusing on pathology as located within the individual rather than within the context (Carolissen, 2008; Arumugam, 2001). Community Psychology aimed to make psychological services available for a greater number of people. Consequently, Psychology training programmes at South African universities implemented Community Psychology into the scope of their curricula (Ahmed & Pillay, 2004).

Because of apartheid, Cooper (2014) noted how tertiary educational facilities were separated along racial-lines and most of the resources were directed towards institutions and graduate programmes which catered to the white minority. Thus, the professional Psychology discipline remained overwhelmingly white in the post-apartheid era (Cooper, 2014; Johnston, 2015). To address this, universities attempted to train more black psychologists through transforming selection and recruitment processes (see Ahmed & Pillay, 2004). The Professional Psychology Board stipulated that there must be at least a 50% intake of black students into Psychology Masters' programmes (Eagle, 2005).

As a reaction to mainstream westernised Psychology, there was a push for the indigenisation of the discipline (Mkhize, 2004; Sher & Long, 2012; Johnston, 2015). Ahmed and Pillay (2004) further described that it was important that all psychology curricula are scrutinised - examining what is being taught and why. de la Rey and Ipser (2004) discussed how psychologists tried to expose racism, class oppression and sexism (and the implications thereof) in their academic, teaching and research publications. These critiques eventually led to the current and more politicised and critical forms of Psychology such as Postcolonial, Liberation and Feminist Psychology (Kessi, 2016, as cited in Pillay, 2016). Additionally, it was emphasised that research needed to be in line with social needs (Macleod, 2004) and, in their review, Macleod and Howell (2013) noted how democracy brought with it an emphasis for more publications that promoted an awareness of mental health in connection to social policies.

Psychology 'now.'

Despite the notable advancements that have been made since South Africa was democratised, there are still issues which prevent Psychology from fully responding to South Africa's social needs (for example, see Naidoo, 2000; Long, 2013; Bandawe, 2005; Ahmed &

Pillay, 2004). One of the greatest issues include the phenomenon known as ‘the treatment gap’ (Naidoo, 2000; Jack, Wagner, Petersen, Thom, Newton, Stein, Kahn, Tollman & Hofman, 2014). The treatment gap refers to the issue that there are many who have mental illnesses who are not receiving the treatment that they need. According to The South African Stress and Health Study (SASH), the lifetime prevalence of common mental disorders (such as anxiety and depression) in SA is 30.3% (Herman, Stein, Seedat, Heeringa, Moomal & Williams, 2009). The SASH study was conducted between 2002 and 2004 and is the only national data which represents the prevalence of mental illnesses in South Africa (Jack, et al., 2014). It was noted that the high prevalence of mental illnesses may have largely been due to exposure to trauma and stress during apartheid, and ongoing racial tension and inequality (Herman et al., 2009; Jack et al., 2014). The report showed that 74.8% of South Africans experienced at least one traumatic event (Jack, et al., 2014). Despite the increasing levels of violence and trauma in South Africa, it was noted that in the SASH study there is a treatment gap of 75% (Herman et al., 2009). This means that only 25% of people diagnosed with a mental disorder, or who have experienced a traumatic event, have received psychological assistance (Long, 2017).

Further, in addition to a scarcity of mental health care resources (Saraceno, van Ommeren, Batniji, Cohen, Gureje, Mahoney, Sridhar & Underhill, 2007), there are also barriers that prevent people from accessing the care that is available. For example, Ruane (2010) highlighted how stigma about mental health issues had prevented people from seeking treatment. Another obstacle is that psychological services are expensive, and there is a lack of psychologists within primary health care (Pillay, Ahmed & Bawa, 2013). Additionally, most of South Africa's mental health professionals are in urban locations, leaving rural provinces with very few mental health professionals (Lund, Kleintjies, Kakuma, Flisher, 2010).

Another issue is what has been referred to as a ‘dominant market discourse’ in current Psychology (Long, 2013; Pillay, 2016). Long (2013) explains how Psychology attempts to be globally competitive and internationally recognized. As such, it is noted that international accolades, international competitiveness and ‘meeting targets’, are prioritized in research decisions over less globally attractive but more locally relevant areas of study (Long, 2013; Long, 2016). This is demonstrated by the fact that some research is funded purely to compete in the global market (Long, 2013) as opposed to funding research that applies to the South African context. For example, in Macleod and Howell's (2013) study, it was demonstrated that various social issues relevant to South Africa were underexplored in journals, such as the South African Journal of Psychology (SAJP) and PsycINFO. The social issues that were

underexplored included key issues in the South African context such as housing, land reform, development programmes, water resources and socioeconomic inequalities (Macleod & Howell, 2013,).

There is also a noted lack of an indigenous Psychology practiced or studied in South Africa (Johnston, 2015). Despite critique of the westernised framework discussed above, and the need for the indigenisation of psychological knowledge, Bandawe (2005) noted that an African Psychology was still not noticeably apparent in university Psychology curricula (as cited in Pillay et al., 2013). Further, it has been noted that many psychometric tests (which are used often by psychologists) are standardized with reference to Eurocentric populations (Chitindingu & Mkhize, 2016). Chitindingu and Mkhize (2016) state that the Psychology curriculum still needs to be transformed, making sure that students are grounded in Afrikology (see Nabudere, 2011) and an Afrocentric worldview that values interconnectedness which extends beyond the view of individualism (Mkhize, 2004). This means that students should understand the historical contributions of Africa to world knowledge, but also contribute to an ongoing dialogue to develop new knowledge (Chitindingu & Mkhize, 2016).

The demographics of Psychology practitioners in South Africa also continue to be over-representative of the white minority population (Ahmed & Pillay, 2004; Cooper, 2014; Carolissen, Shefer & Smith, 2015). In a review by Carolissen, et al. (2015) it was noted that black professionals make up a minority of South African psychologists, and black students less than half of interns and postgraduate students. Though the representation of black professionals has improved from 18% in 2004 (Duncan, van Niekerk & Townsend, 2004), black professionals still made up only 25% of the profession in 2014 (Cooper, 2014). In contrast, more than half of South African psychologists, interns and students are made up of white individuals despite white people making up only 8.9% of the country's population (Carollisen, et al., 2015).

It has also been argued that, despite their relevance in South Africa, Community Psychology, and Critical Psychology, are regarded as 'sub-disciplines' and have not received adequate attention in the field (Painter, Kiguwa & Böhmke 2013; Carolissen, 2008). De la Rey and Ipser (2004) discussed that several psychologists were dissatisfied with the way Community Psychology was adopted and label the adoption of Community Psychology in the field as "simplistic" (p. 545). They note that while Community Psychology became more noticeable in the 1990s, it still exists on the margins of the discipline (Carollisen, 2008), often

just as a sub-discipline. Pillay, et al. (2013), in reference to Carolissen et al. (2010), further described the danger of separating Psychology along disciplines which serve different economic portions of society.

Further, the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) scope of practice of psychologists has also caused confusion and debate around roles of the different categories of psychologists (Pretorius, 2012). There are several types of Psychology, and psychologists, which makes it difficult to define the role of Psychology. Psychologies can include social, critical, cognitive, and community (Long, 2017). Additionally, The HPCSA registers psychologists in distinct categories, including 'Clinical', 'Counselling', 'Educational', 'Organisational' and 'Research' psychologists. Each psychologist must provide services that are in line with their scope of practice and are legally prohibited from providing services outside their scope of practice (HPCSA, 2011). While all psychologies should emphasise the social context, it seems that most authors write about a 'Critical Community' or 'Critical Clinical Psychology' as the type of Psychology that involves activism, liberation or social justice (Arumugam, 2001). Further, clinical psychologists have been accused of locating pathology within the individual (Long, 2016) and thereby distancing themselves from working with socio-political issues, whereas counselling or social psychologists are seen to work with social justice issues. These scopes of practice sometimes overlap, and there have been debates about who should do what (Pretorius, 2012). Pretorius (2012) notes that social problems sometimes fall to the wayside as scope of practice and power debates continue. Also, in linking to the existing treatment gap in South Africa, discussion surrounding scope of practice does not meaningfully increase the accessibility of mental health care in South Africa and may in fact act as a further barrier (Chitindingu & Mkhize, 2016).

Additionally, critics have noted that Psychology, as a discipline, has attempted to distance itself from politics (Hook, 2014; Pillay, 2016; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2011). Cooper (2014) noted that since the formation of PsySSA, "Psychology in SA has been avowedly non-racist, non-sexist, and non-political" (p. 841). Cooper (2014) attributes this to the entry of more black people into the profession, more service provisions through Community Psychology, and a constant grappling with how Psychology can respond to social issues. In contrast to this, Long (2016) claims (in reference to Cooper) that "in a series of sweeping turns of phrase, the article elevates contemporary psychology not only above the politics of the past but also above politics altogether" (p. 224). Pillay (2016) agrees that politics and Psychology cannot be separated - "all aspects of life are conditioned by political forces – so palpable and profound in the current

South African context that it almost goes without saying that Psychology and politics should be a happily married couple” (Pillay, 2016, p. 157). The implication of Long and Pillay’s arguments is that an attempt to separate Psychology and Politics may limit Psychology’s ability (as a discipline) to respond to the socio-political challenges it faces.

Universities, FeesMustFall, and Transformation

Hayes (2000) commented that the psychological consequences of oppression and exploitation of the black population by the apartheid regime will continue to influence the social context of South Africa for generations. These reverberations echo in the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movements – protests that highlight the lack of transformation, and exclusion, that still exist at South African universities (Pillay, 2016).

It has been 23 years since apartheid, yet SA remains a highly unequal society (Naicker, 2016). In October 2015, university students protested for free tertiary education – advocating that education should benefit all (and not just the minority who could afford it). The protests started at the University of the Witwatersrand, after the university announced there would be an increase in fees for 2016 (Kekana, Isaacs & Corke, 2015). The protests then spread to various universities, including Rhodes University. The protests then continued in 2016, after the 2017 fee increase was announced (EWN, 2017).

Naicker (2016) noted these protests as a transformative moment for South Africa, where “students have linked their struggles to the 1976 Soweto Uprising; they have also seen it as continuing the unfinished task of undoing the legacy of apartheid” (p. 60). Pillay (2016) explained how “the zeitgeist of Nelson Mandela’s post-1994 government disabled radical activism by foregrounding narratives of peace, reconciliation, forgiveness, and unity. The current cadre of student activists are actively critiquing those narratives, foregrounding exclusion, poverty, broken political promises, and privilege” (p. 156). The narrative disruption has been seen in other protests as well, such as Marikana which was reminiscent of the 1960s massacre in Sharpeville in 1960 (Pillay, 2016).

These protests have highlighted the need for decolonisation (Pillay, 2016), transformation (Naicker, 2016) and the insourcing of outsourced workers (Baloyi & Isaacs, 2015). Transformation factors include the need for a decolonised curriculum, an increase in the number of black staff, improved access to higher education and a more inclusive institutional culture (Naicker, 2016; Long, 2016a). For example, it has been noted that university curriculums are still dominated by Eurocentric worldviews, and as Heleta (2016) notes,

“disconnected from African realities” (p. 1). For example, the Black Student Movement at Rhodes University protested the institutional culture at Rhodes and how it did not reflect its place within the African continent (Naicker, 2016). Heleta (2016) described how students are protesting that there is a lack of understanding of Afrocentric worldviews and black students lived experiences are not recognised unless they conform. Decolonisation would mean a reframing and rethinking of the curriculum which brings South Africa and Africa to its core (Heleta, 2016). It is noteworthy that these general criticisms of the university system in South Africa echo the various criticisms of Psychology in post-apartheid South Africa discussed above.

Pillay (2016) contends that there is currently a lack of relationship between Psychology (and even Critical Psychology) and progressive politics, even though Critical Psychology also calls for “fundamental social change” (p. 156). As noted above, Pillay (2016) has critiqued the lack of movements such as #FeesMustFall in the media, and how this complacency amounts to complicity with the unequal and unjust status quo. Macleod and Howell (2013) state that Psychology may be relevant only by acknowledging its potential complicity with existing socio-political norms, and how this may perpetuate inequality, and by asking critical questions about how power relationships are maintained. This emphasises the importance of psychologists debating this movement and addressing the current inequalities that still exist in South African society.

Pillay (2016) noted a lack of debate and information in progressive media platforms; confirmed by the minimal response returned by a simple Google search of “#FeesMustFall” and “Psychology”. However, despite this ‘silence’, it is true that not all psychologists have been quiet on this matter (for example see Long, 2016b; Pillay, 2016, Mqadi, 2016, Qukula, 2016). Clinical psychologist, Nomfundo Walaza, explored the psychological implications of the violence and trauma for those involved in the movement (Mqadi, 2016), and argued that the psychological impact of these protests had not been adequately addressed (Qukula, 2016). Psychology lecturer, Dr Shose Kessi, also commented on the psychological implications of this movement, stating she experienced the militarisation and securitisation on campuses, as well as the divided academic staff body, as emotionally challenging and anxiety-provoking (Qukula, 2016). The Student Division of PsySSA has also presented on the student protests (Pillay, 2017).

Pillay (2016) argued that individual Psychology professionals can break the 'silence' by playing a role in the #FeesMustFall movement. One of the ways that they can do this is by debating these protests in the media. Pillay (2016) further suggested four ways in which individual psychologists can help and 'add their voice': (i) they can support the movement (from a critical stance); (ii) place human rights at the forefront of their agenda. (iii) understand the reasons for decolonisation; and (iv) decolonise oppressive curricula and practices. Therefore, suggesting that "we remain allies and advocates by speaking up against postcolonial injustices, understanding root causes that are mostly historical and racial, avoiding the psychopathologisation of activism and by proactively participating in transformational narratives and dialogues that destabilise, problematise, and confront hegemonic practices maintaining divisive status quos" (Pillay, 2016, p. 157).

Conclusion

This context provided a review of the history of Psychology within the South African context. It expanded on the issues of Psychology's 'silences' regarding its lack of response to acting out against apartheid, and how Psychology needed to make amends in the new democracy by becoming more relevant to South Africa's social context. The section then highlighted the current challenges that prevent Psychology from being a discipline that is responsive to the needs of the South African population. The protests were then described, showing how South Africa still shows vast inequalities and lack of transformation, which mirrors the lack of transformation in Psychology as a discipline. Therefore, the #FeesMustFall protests have highlighted areas which require further attention – such as understanding how psychologists can continue to be socially relevant in response to the protests.

Theoretical Framework

Overview

In this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of my chosen theoretical framework in this study. I chose to use the principles of Critical Psychology to guide the analysis of my findings. Firstly, I will briefly define Critical Theory, the overarching theory which includes Critical Psychology, and then I will discuss Critical Psychology and its guiding principles and themes.

Critical Theory

Critical Theory is a philosophy that is concerned with critiquing and overcoming dominant and assumed beliefs, values, and societal structures, by revealing the problems that they produce (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Fay, 1987; Ponterotto, 2005; Kincheloe & McClaren, 2002). The aim of this critique is to effect social change by encouraging re-evaluation of societal norms. There are many types of Critical Theories, and as Bronner (2011) notes “many sources” (p. 4). So therefore, instead of providing an in-depth explanation (which goes beyond the scope of this thesis), I will give an example of how a critical approach would be applied to a research project. A researcher would need to:

- (i) Identify and acknowledge dominant or assumed ideological influences in the research conducted,
- (ii) Critique and challenge the assumed belief, and
- (iii) Identify what impact the assumed belief may have on the social context of the study and on the participant and/or the researcher in question.

I aim to do this using the Critical Psychology approach.

Critical Psychology

Hook (2014) explains that “Critical Psychology is more an approach, a kind of orientation towards psychological knowledge and practice – and relations of power in general – than any one kind of theory, any one set of concepts” (p. 11). In this regard, Critical Psychology is not easily defined and is not one type of theory or practice (Hook, 2014; Parker, 2015). Reasons for the difficulty in defining Critical Psychology include that: (i) there are many types of psychologies, and therefore it would be impossible to highlight one type of Critical Psychology, and (ii) Critical Psychology is made up of many diverse theoretical perspectives and practices (Hook, 2014) – such as Feminist Critical Psychology (Kiguwa,

2014), Critical Health Psychology (Campbell, 2014), and Liberation Psychology (Foster, 2014).

However, at the heart of Critical Psychology, is a need to bring social justice to the forefront through deliberately questioning and critiquing traditional knowledge in mainstream Psychology (Fox, Prilleltensky, Austin, 2009; Parker, 2015). Mainstream Psychology can be defined as the dominant Psychology that is taught within universities, and which most clinicians and researchers practice (Fox et al., 2009).

Critical Psychology Themes

While it has been explained that Critical Psychology is difficult to define, Hook (2014) states that the following themes and principles underpin Critical Psychology. The themes include: (i) power and politics, (ii) neutrality, (iii) promotion of social justice, (iv) reflexivity, and (v) transforming Psychology.

Power and politics. Critical psychologists acknowledge that Psychology, as a knowledge or practice, has always been, and continues to be, powerful and political (Hook, 2014). Hook (2014) clarifies the definition of “political” as being involved in positions of power and control.

For example, during apartheid, Psychology had exerted its power through its early psychological associations (SAPA, PIRSA, PASA) and intelligence testing to support racist ideologies (Cooper, 2014; Hook, 2014). SAPA, PIRSA, PASA exerted control through preventing black people from entering their organizations and not actively going against apartheid (Duncan, et al., 2014). This ideological power also carried over into close associations between academic and political elite – for instance, it was noted above that A. J le Grange, the head of the early psychological association, SAPA, was mentored by Hendrick Verwoerd (Cooper, 2014).

However, on the other hand, Psychology has also been used as a “force for good” through psychiatrists like Frantz Fanon, whose work has been used as a model of anti-colonial transformation (Collins, 2014). Activists central to the political resistance to apartheid (such as Steve Biko) used Psychology to resist dominant ideologies and power relations (Pillay, 2016).

Therefore, Hook (2014) makes the point that Critical Psychology has two aims (i) to dismantle oppressive psychologies through critique but to also (ii) use Psychology to act as an instrument of social justice.

Neutrality. A major critique is that mainstream Psychology has tried to dissociate itself from politics through positioning itself as a positivist and value-free science (Hayes, 1989, as cited in, Hook, 2014). Critical Psychology rejects the assumption of a neutral and objective Psychology (Collins, 2014) which Parker (2015) names “fake neutrality” (p. 4). Rather, it is acknowledged that Psychology’s knowledge prioritises certain groups, ways and interests (Hook, 2014). Critical Psychology is, therefore, concerned with reconnecting Psychology to “political levels of description and/or analysis” (Hook, 2014, p. 20).

For example, Mainstream Psychology has often prioritized a depoliticized and reductionistic understanding of an individual’s distress (Hook, 2014). Critical Psychology would aim to place more emphasis on how distress is caused by a societal/political level of dysfunction (Fox, Prilleltensky & Austin, 2009; Hook, 2014). Prilleltensky, Prilleltensky and Voorhees (2009) refer to this as psychopolitical validity, where psychologists must acknowledge power differentials and understand how both political and psychological dynamics can affect well-being.

Critical Psychology would also argue Psychology should take political stands when it comes to issues of social justice. So, with regards to the #FeesMustFall protests, Critical Psychology would argue psychologists should not remain neutral and attempt to understand all sides of the issue, rather, they need to stand with those who are protesting and produce work that confirms the legitimacy of the protests and, thus, become a “liberatory force for good” (Pillay, 2016, p. 158).

Promoting social justice. As discussed above, Critical Psychology aims to promote social justice (Hook, 2014; Parker, 2015). Social justice refers to living in a world with more equitable and equal distribution of resources, with fair treatment and self-determination (Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom & Siddiquee, 2011).

In the South African context, Hook (2014) notes that Critical Psychology needs to think about how it can be responsive and serve this emancipatory agenda, through both theoretical and practical ideas. It is suggested that this can be done by aiming for different and more effective psychologies that have an emancipatory and transformative agenda (Hook, 2014; Fox, et al., 2009). For example, Critical Psychology would argue that social justice needs to be promoted within the field of mainstream Psychology through decolonization of the curriculum, training professionals to be responsive to the South African context, ensuring accessibly and

affordability of services as well as ensuring that Psychology takes a stand when issues of social justice arise in the broader context.

Reflexivity. Critical psychologists encourage reflexivity and the moving away from a non-critical acceptance of existing norms. This reflexivity is achieved by constantly questioning our own practices and efforts (Fox, et al., 2009) and becoming consciously aware of how our own values and assumptions influence our activities and goals (Bullock & Limber, 2009). Consequently, Critical Psychology becomes mainstream Psychology's conscience (Collins, 2014) by becoming aware of destructive aspects in which mainstream contemporary Psychology may take part (Parker, 2015). This is achieved through (i) recognising the importance of interrogating taken-for-granted beliefs and views and then (ii) noting the impact that these views may have in the South African context (Hook, 2014). For example, Critical Psychology critiques the dominant mainstream views that pathology is solely located in the individual (Maracek and Hare-Mustin, 2009) and aims for a contextual Psychology that has social equality as its goal (Collins, 2014; Hook, 2014).

Transforming Psychology. While Critical psychologists critique mainstream Psychology, they do not want to destroy or abandon it all together (Collins, 2014; Teo, 2009). Rather, the aim is to transform Psychology, so that it holds social justice at its core. Teo (2009) concurs that:

“critical reflection and recognition that Psychology is a problematic science should not be understood as a call to abandon Psychology. Instead, it is an argument to transform Psychology in a direction that does justice to the complexity of the subject matter, chooses methodologies for the particularities of mental life embedded in contexts, and develops ethically responsive practices and ideas that challenge the status quo” (p. 50).

This would mean that individual psychologists would need to look at the work they are doing and critically ask themselves the following questions: in my counselling work, do I hold in mind issues of social equality? In the research I produce, do I hold in mind issues of social equality?

This theory is appropriate for this project, as it aims to bring about change and insight in the roles of psychologists within protests, whilst advocating for those who have unfairly been disadvantaged because of power relations within the social and historical context.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a brief overview of Critical Theory and Critical Psychology. I described the principles and definitions of Critical Psychology including: (i) power and politics (ii) neutrality, (iii) promoting social justice, (iv) reflexivity and (v) transforming Psychology. It is hoped that this chapter provides a clearer understanding of the lens I used when approaching my research findings.

Research Methodology

Introduction

The following chapter explains the methodology of this study. This first sections in this chapter highlight the research questions and research design. In these sections I explain my research aims and my choice to use an exploratory qualitative research design. The next section discusses recruitment of participants and interview procedures. These sections highlight how the findings was gathered and then explains how the interview transcripts were analysed using Thematic Analysis. Finally, the last sections address reflexivity, rigour and trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. These sections highlight the importance of self-awareness in my role as a researcher, the importance of rigour in qualitative research and the relevant ethical principles that were considered.

Research Aims and Questions

As stated in the context section, the role of psychologists in protests, particularly the #FeesMustFall movement, needed to be addressed. This is deemed important because these protests highlight the existing inequality and lack of transformation in South African universities (Naicker, 2016). Further, these protests have also been shown to cause psychological sequelae such as PTSD (Qukula, 2016). At present there is very little information regarding the role of psychologists in these types of protests. Pillay's (2016) editorial is a plea for psychologists to break the silence in these protests. As such, I aimed to investigate how psychologists felt about and responded to the protests. It is hoped that the results of this research will assist in helping psychologists understand and know how to contribute within protest situations. Due to the nature and scope of this research, I limited the study to the location of Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Therefore, the research questions were:

1. What are psychologists' thoughts and opinions around protests such as #FeesMustFall?
2. What do psychologists in Grahamstown think their role is in protests such as #FeesMustFall?

Research Design

To answer the proposed research questions, I chose to use a qualitative research design. Qualitative research can be understood as "involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to

its subject matter with attempts to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). For this research, exploratory qualitative research was chosen as it is often used when little is known about a phenomenon (Cresswell, 1998). This was relevant as #FeesMustFall is a recent movement, and little academic research has been conducted regarding the role of psychologists in these protests. Further, exploratory qualitative research is intended to explain rather than merely describe the phenomenon (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2008). Therefore, this type of research aims to help understand the issue more thoroughly.

Recruitment and Participants

To answer the above-mentioned research questions, semi-structured interviews with psychologists were conducted. I recruited the sample of psychologists via a purposive, non-probabilistic sampling technique. Purposive sampling involves the selection of participants because they meet pre-established criteria that are relevant to addressing the research question (Saumure & Given, 2008). This method is unlike probabilistic sampling where participants are chosen at random. I chose this technique as I was specifically interested in understanding what psychologists in Grahamstown thought their role could be within protests. Participants for this study were recruited from parts of Grahamstown, and included participants working in institutional and private practice settings. The inclusion criteria were: psychologists registered with the HPCSA, who had been living and working in Grahamstown during any of the #FeesMustFall protests. Once permission was obtained by gatekeepers (Appendix I), psychologists were contacted via email either directly or via a forwarded email from the gatekeeper. Psychologists in private practice were contacted from the list the researcher received from the Rhodes University Psychology Clinic.

To increase the participant base, I ensured to (i) contact all the psychologists who worked at the relevant institutions and (ii) contact all the psychologists listed in private practice. I had hoped for a larger and more diverse group; ensuring that I emailed all the psychologists on the lists I received. However, I only received four responses. To further increase the participant base, I had considered approaching more psychologists/psychology students, however I was concerned that this might impact on the validity of the research process as the initial group of respondents had elected to participate without further pressure. Further, as an intern, there would have been too much familiarity with other psychology students/interns. Therefore, the sample consisted of four participants. Out of these participants, there were two

males and two females, one black person and three white people. Three were registered as clinical psychologists, and one was registered as a counselling psychologist. The place of work of these psychologists were redacted from the data because Grahamstown is a small town where it is relatively easy to identify fellow psychologists. Thus, revealing the participants' work context would have compromised their anonymity. While participants were emailed directly, the email reiterated that participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time. To ensure confidentiality, all identifying information was removed from interviews prior to data entry, and the participants are identified by either "Participant 1, 2, 3 or 4".

Semi-structured interviews

Open-ended, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with all four participants. I chose open-ended interviews as it allowed the participants to discuss their opinions, views, and experiences in detail (Patton, 2005). Semi-structured interviews also allowed me to establish rapport with the interviewee by using active listening skills (Ayres, 2008). The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions, uniquely developed by me, in consultation with my supervisor, for this study (Appendix II). However, because the interview was semi-structured, the questions only guided the interview, and I, at times, used probes to elicit further information (Ayres, 2008). Additionally, sometimes new questions arose during the interview. Thus I "moved back and forth through the [questions] based on the informants' responses" (Ayres, 2008, p. 810). Before participants engaged in the interviews, they were required to sign a written consent form (Appendix III). The interviews generally lasted up to an hour, but this was dependent on the participant. The interviews were voice recorded with permission from the participant (Appendix IV). The recording was used to help the interviewer prepare transcripts. To ensure confidentiality, the recording was kept in a secure place and only listened to in private and destroyed once transcription was complete. Because of time limitations, the transcription was done by an independent transcriber who signed a confidentiality clause. Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study or terminate their involvement at any time. The participants had the opportunity to choose where the interview took place. All participants chose to be interviewed at their own offices.

Thematic Analysis

The information from the interviews was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of Thematic Analysis (TA), a common approach used in qualitative research (Guest,

MacQueen & Namey, 2011). I chose TA as it: (1) “can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 5); (2) enabled me to identify themes that helped to answer the research questions; and (3) the flexibility of TA means it can be applied to a range of theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and was therefore appropriate for a Critical Psychology approach. Once the interviews were transcribed verbatim, I used Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phases in analysing the data. The phases can be described as follows:

First phase: Familiarisation. In the first phase, I familiarised myself with the interview transcripts, by rereading them many times. This was done by reading the transcripts in an ‘active’ way and searching for patterns and meanings within the interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This meant that when I read the transcripts I made ‘mental notes’ of possible codes.

Second phase: Coding. In the second phase, I manually generated initial ‘codes’ within the interview transcripts. Codes represent or capture the essence of what is being said in each line of the interview transcript (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I embarked on this phase by writing down codes in pencil in the left-hand margins line by line of the interview transcripts. Because I was interested in coding for latent themes (which are themes that transcend the meaning of what has been said), I coded using an inductive approach - without trying to fit the codes into a pre-existing idea or frame (Boyatzis, 1998; Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bandas, 2013, as cited in, Braun & Clarke, 2006). After reading Participant 4’s transcript, I immediately began to see themes and codes that were relevant to my research question, and therefore thought it would be helpful to use this transcript as a foundation for coding the rest of the transcripts. Using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) key advice, I coded for as many themes as possible, and included context around the code. The initial codes I found in Participant 4’s transcript included “detachment”, “not being heard”, “invisibility”, “staying comfortable”, “frustration”, “personal viewpoints”, “life of a psychologist”, “scope of practice issues”, “potential roles of psychologists”, “different viewpoints” and “relevance of Psychology”.

Third phase: Searching for themes. In the third phase, I searched for themes. This involved “sorting the codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 19). This involved me creating a mind map in my research journal, with corresponding themes and relevant codes. I then typed the codes into a word document, as this helped me to easily shift the codes into overarching themes, sub themes and miscellaneous themes.

Fourth phase: Reviewing themes. In the fourth phase, candidate themes were reviewed. The first themes that emerged were “potential roles of psychologists”, “emotions of psychologists”, “ambivalence of psychologists”, “ameliorative interventions”, “preventative interventions” and “personal thoughts on protests”. The first phase in reviewing themes involved ensuring that the collated codes for each theme formed a coherent pattern (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I then used Patton’s (1990) criteria for judging categories by making sure that there was internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity within the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This meant that the information within themes were similar and themes were distinct from each other (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, I was able to differentiate the themes – “ameliorative and preventative interventions”, while making the sure the information within each theme was similar. I also had the research questions in my awareness when noting the applicability of themes. When I noticed that extracts did not form a coherent pattern, I put them into another category or discarded them from the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second phase in reviewing themes involved ascertaining whether the themes made sense in relation to the entire interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, after noting “emotions of psychologists”, I realised that this theme did not make sense in relation to the research question and the rest of the analysis, so I decided to discard it.

Fifth phase: Defining and naming themes. In the fifth phase, I defined and finalised the names of the themes. The themes were given names that demonstrated what they were about (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This meant identifying the central part within each theme and what the theme captured (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A detailed analysis was written for each theme. This was achieved by analysing how the theme related to the data and the research question and how the theme related to other themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Sub-themes were also identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Sixth phase: Producing the report. In the sixth phase, I produced the report. This involved the actual write up of the Thematic Analysis, showing how the themes matched up to the research question within the lens of Critical Psychology. I asked myself the questions as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 24): “what does this theme mean? What are the assumptions underpinning it? What are the implications of this theme?” As such, the themes were interpreted and not just described (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I also included “compelling examples to demonstrate the themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 26) by incorporating relevant extracts from the interview transcripts.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity in qualitative research can be described as the researchers' engagement and examination of how they influenced a research project (Dowling, 2008). The reflexivity of the researcher differs according to the methodology used in the study (Dowling, 2008). As I chose to use Critical Psychology as my paradigmatic lens, it was important for me to engage in self-conscious criticism and embrace an examination of the political and social issues that informed my research (Dowling, 2008). Self-conscious criticism is undertaken by the researcher in order to become more aware of ideological and epistemological views that inform their research and their own subjective views (Kincheloe & McClaren, 2005). Only by engaging in an exercise of awareness of such views can the researcher accurately take their influences into account in the examination of research material and analysis which follows.

As a starting point, it can be noted that my decision to choose this research topic stems from the view that I believe protests such as #FeesMustFall highlight the lack of transformation that still exists in South Africa. This is paralleled within the discipline of Psychology, which is challenged by a lack of transformation and by its social relevancy within developing countries. From a professional point of view, I felt that Psychology's social relevance is something of immense importance. I believe Critical Psychology has value, and that is important to regularly interrogate beliefs that we hold. Therefore, when the #FeesMustFall protests occurred, I felt that it was important to try and understand how a psychologist (who aims to improve the well-beings of others) could make a difference. I remember that during this time, a fellow Psychology colleague told me about the divided views on campus and how this caused further conflict, and how people were confused as to what the role of a Psychologist in this context really was. I began to question what their role could be. Currently, as an intern clinical psychologist and also a Psychology student, I still find myself grappling with my role regarding protests and other social issues.

It is important to acknowledge my position as a white female from a socioeconomically advantaged context. I grappled and reflected on this position throughout writing this thesis. On the one hand, as a beneficiary of an exploitative and unjust historic legacy, I feel that is of vital importance to acknowledge my positioning, think about how my background might have influenced this work or the reasons behind doing this study and to strive to use these unearned benefits to improve the society I live in. It is with this in mind that I had been drawn to the topic in the first place. On the other hand, throughout this study I have been concerned as to

how coming from this position, has impacted on the legitimacy of my voice speaking about protest action. I have had to think about my insecurities and privilege. These concerns were compounded by the fact that most of the participants shared a similar demographic. I was disappointed by the lack of diversity in the sample. It is also clear that the geographical limitations of the study may have influenced the research process. Grahamstown is a relatively small town and has a low number of professional psychologists who experienced the #FeesMustFall protests. As a result of this, the community of professional psychologists is close and well acquainted, which resulted in a degree of familiarity between interviewees and between the researcher and interviewees. It was important to note that my role as an intern psychologist could have impacted on this process. Being an intern possibly impacted what the interviewees shared. For example, participants might have felt inclined to help me out as they empathise and understand what it's like to be an intern psychologist. The advantages of this meant that participants perhaps felt more comfortable with me, and as a result, were able to express their thoughts and feelings more freely.

Rigour and Trustworthiness

Whittemore, Chase & Mandle (2001), in their synthesis on rigour in qualitative research, identified four primary criteria, including: (1) credibility, (2) authenticity, (3) criticality, and (4) integrity. Cresswell (2007) explains that research is credible and authentic if it accurately interprets the participants' meaning, and that research has criticality and integrity if the investigators are self-critical (Cresswell, 2007).

To ensure credibility and authenticity, I made use of the 15-point check list of criteria for good thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, see Appendix V). For example, the data was transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were checked against the recordings for accuracy (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the coding process, each line of the interview transcript was given the same attention during coding, all relevant extracts were collated, and the themes were checked against each other and back to the original data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Themes were ensured to be internally coherent, consistent and distinctive (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the analysis process, data was explored and interpreted, rather than just reworded or described, the analysis and data fit together, and aimed to tell a convincing and coherent story about the data and topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To ensure integrity and criticality, Cresswell (2007) contends that it is important to clarify research bias from the outset of a study so that the reader understands the researcher's

position and any biases/assumption that have shaped the interpretation or approach of the study. Hence, my own biases are described in the reflexivity section above. The supervision process also monitored the researcher's own biases in the analysis of the data. Finally, by identifying my own biases, it is hoped that I was able to be more aware of their influence.

Ethical considerations

Following submission of the ethical protocol for this project, ethical clearance of this project was obtained by the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University on 14 June 2017 (Appendix VI). The following were considered in the ethics protocol:

Beneficence and non-maleficence. Before the research was conducted, an assessment of overall level of risk of the study was carefully studied. Grahamstown is a small town where it may be easy to identify fellow psychologists, therefore, to reduce third party risk to reputation, all identifying details (such as whether the psychologist worked within an institutional setting or in private practice) were redacted from the data. Furthermore, it was noted that psychologists may experience distress around remembering the protests and some of the stories they may have heard or seen. These risks were considered reversible and minimal – because participants had access to their own psychotherapy. Further, because I am a psychologist in training, I have some experience in managing distress, which may be deployed to further reduce this risk. It was also noted that there would be benefits to the participants – the interview could have helped them reflect on their own practice, and through conversation, it was noted that they could find ways in which they could take a more active role in transforming Psychology as a discipline.

Informed consent. Consent for participation in the interview was given in writing. The participants were informed: (1) of the nature of the research, (2) of the participants' rights to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research once started, (3) of contact details for the supervisor and the researcher, (4) that the interviews would be recorded only with participants' permission, (5) that the participant may voice any concerns that had about their participation in the study and (6) that ethical clearance had been given.

Confidentiality. The interview recordings were stored electronically in files that were kept securely. The transcripts were transcribed by a transcription service provider who signed a confidentiality clause. Once transcriptions were completed, the recordings were destroyed. The transcriptions were kept securely and password-protected. In addition, all identifying

details of the participants and their places of work were not used in any of the extracts collected in the interviews. Participants were given a pseudonym.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the research methodology for this thesis. I explain the research design and highlighted how the findings were gathered and then analysed using Thematic Analysis. The last sections highlight the importance of being aware my role as a researcher, the importance of rigour in qualitative research and the ethical principles that were considered in this research.

Findings and Discussion

Introduction

In this section, I highlight the findings of my research. I also discuss the findings in relation to previous research, theories and principles of Critical Psychology. The aim of this study was to investigate what psychologists in a small town in the Eastern Cape believe the role of psychologists could be in student protest situations, specifically focusing on the #FeesMustFall movement in South Africa. The following themes and subthemes emerged in response to this aim:

1. Transformative work and advancing social justice

1.1. Psychologists as advocates

1.2 Psychologists as negotiators and advisors

2. Ameliorative work and limiting factors

2.1. Ameliorative work

2.2. Psychologists as bystanders

2.3. Scope of practice and professional registration

3. Ambivalence and lack of certainty

The first theme: “Transformative work and advancing social justice”, highlights ways in which these psychologists think that they can play a more active role in promoting social justice. The subthemes under this theme are: (i) “Psychologists as advocates” and (ii) “Psychologists as negotiators and advisors”. The second theme: “Ameliorative Work and limiting factors”, highlights the ways in which these psychologists have been involved in interventions that involve first-order change, rather than second-order change. This theme also includes limiting factors that may prevent psychologists from being more active in protest situations. Thus, the subthemes under “Ameliorative Work and limiting factors” are: (i) “Ameliorative work”, (ii) “Psychologists as bystanders”, and (iii) “Scope of practice and professional registration”. Lastly, the theme: “Ambivalence and lack of certainty”, highlights the struggles which emerged from interviews with participants in understanding their role in protests, and in understanding the protests themselves.

These themes were identified as consistent patterns of thinking which emerged in interviews with the participants. It is hoped that the analysis of these themes will assist psychologists in developing a consistent approach in addressing issues relating to political protest and periods of social upheaval. The themes identified are relevant to the research

question as they address and give clarity to the potential roles psychologists can assume in protest situations. When analysing these themes, relevant literature was drawn on to compare the findings against existing research.

Context: Transformation versus Amelioration

The definition of whether an intervention is ameliorative or transformative is not always clear (Fox, et al., 2009). However, critical psychologists, Fox et al. (2009), note that ameliorative practices are much more short-term in their effect to change and are mainly aimed at the individual level, while transformative approaches are long-term and are mainly aimed at the societal level. Therefore, an ameliorative practice is usually aimed at tending to the already wounded, while transformative practice is aimed at changing the system that wounded the person in the first place (Fox et al., 2009). Prilleltensky and Nelson (2009) describe how critical praxis is transformative rather than ameliorative, because it involves second-order change and is concerned with the change of a system's values, structure and power relations, rather than first-order change which involves change within a system without questioning the system itself.

Ackhurst (2017) describes how transformation and amelioration should probably not be seen as exclusionary, but rather be seen as two ends of a continuum, "with work progressing along this spectrum, as time unfolds" (Ackhurst, 2017, p.16), and that "a more evolving process is perhaps realistic in the South African chronosystem" (Ackhurst, 2017, p. 16). Similarly, Fox et al. (2009) grapple with this and consider whether critical psychologists are meant to abandon ameliorative practices all together. Their answer is that individual or ameliorative work is necessary but is insufficient. The following quote illustrates this concept: "The internal debate in Critical Psychology is not so much whether social change is needed but what level of change to seek and how to bring that change about. Positions on this issue reflect a confluence of influences from the political and personal to the professional and pragmatic" (Fox et al., 2009, p. 14). As this section continues, one will be able to see how this debate is at the forefront of the issues the participants engaged with.

1. Transformative work and advancing social justice

This theme highlights the interventions that these participants thought about with regards to transformative work and advancing social justice. The first subtheme includes participants' views about the role of being an advocate, and the second subtheme includes participants' views about negotiation and advising. These roles fall under transformative work and advancing social justice for two reasons: (i) these roles would include the psychologist

taking an active stance within the protests, and (ii) it shows how these psychologists think about using a role that intervenes at the macro-level (i.e. within university systems through advocacy, negotiation and advising), rather than just at the micro-level (i.e. with an individual through psychotherapy). A critical engagement of advocacy within Psychology is also discussed alongside this theme.

1.1 Psychologists as advocates

One of the subthemes which emerged was the idea that psychologists could act as advocates in protest situations. This theme will be explored with reference to Participant 4's interview, as Participant 4 specifically referred to "advocacy" in the interview. To understand how Participant 4 explains the role of advocacy, it is important first to highlight how Participant 4 understands why protests occur. Participant 4 considers that protests arise because students' voices have not been heard, or if they have been heard, the response has been inadequate. As such, Participant 4 thinks that student protests are motivated by an attempt to "force you to listen to them". The following extract illustrates this:

Participant 4: "Okay. Look, um, I thought you know for someone, for students to come as a collective and to protest something, there is a voice that is not being heard. Um, and the assumption I make is that people have tried to voice their concerns, but, uh, did not, felt unheard or the response was unsatisfactory. So, then what does one do when one doesn't feel heard? You do something that is going to force you to listen to me. So, I felt on one side, it's their reaction to not being heard. Formalising and organising how they did was strategy. Uh, get it as wide as possible therefore you get higher impacts, so ja, look, for me I felt it needs to be done. I used to be a student, I am still paying for my University fees, years after qualifying so..." (Lines: 9-24)

Participant 4 then discussed how psychologists could be "advocates":

Participant 4: "So, one of the things we do though for patients is we become their advocates, so advocacy is one of the roles that Psychology ideally plays and should play. So, whenever there are things with protests, hence I was saying earlier there is a voice that wasn't heard and, we understand human behaviour, we understand people who haven't, take a normal child for instance who is acting out, uh, and you understand there could be a problem at home. Protests for me is a form of acting out. So, for, there is, there is something that is driving that..." (Lines: 46-56)

Therefore, Participant 4 understood the role of advocacy as helping students' have their voices heard and drew a parallel between advocating for patients and advocating for students in protests. In this extract, Participant 4 also explained protesting as a form of "acting out". Participant 4's understanding of advocacy was, therefore, as the psychologist helping the university to understand the reason for this "acting out" by the student body. In Participant 4's view, psychologists can use their knowledge and understanding of human behaviour, as well as the "drivers" behind the protests, to help the university understand. Using this understanding, the interpretation is that psychologists can advocate for the students by explaining to the

universities why protests occur and how to understand the students behind them. Participant 4 further elaborated that psychologists can use their skills in understanding human behaviour by helping “the powers that be” understand different viewpoints. For example, if the protests reoccur, the psychologist could provide insight into the “stories” behind the students who are protesting:

Participant 4: “And, perhaps we could assist in having the powers that be see that, you know, see that yes, these, they are protesting but look at their stories. Look at their lives. This is why they find themselves having to do this you know, we are not encouraging them, but we are understanding them.” (Line: 606-610)

What is noteworthy from this account is indicated by the phrases “they are protesting but...” and “we are not encouraging them”. Participant 4 seems to view protests in a negative light, as if protesting is something that should not be encouraged. This implies that the participant believes that psychologists should only understand, rather than encourage protests as a form of standing against social injustice. Later on, in the interview, Participant 4 elaborated on his understanding of protests as a way of people “trying to get access to something”. Participant 4 discussed “not agreeing with the manner in which they are going on about it”, but that it is important to try and listen to the voices behind the protests:

Participant 4: “So that is how you are needing to understand protests... people are trying to get access to something. We might not agree in the manner in which they are going about it, but they are saying something. I am going to, are we going to listen or not and if we don’t listen what is the cost. And unfortunately, the costs tend, costs tend to be heavier than what could have been done. Um, so, because for me protests, like I am saying now, protests and service delivery and access they don’t, they take different forms, but they are similar in the ways they occur. And, this is what we do as psychologists. We understand patterns, behaviours and how things develop. And, I feel that we just, we have a bigger role to play, in society. We don’t take it up, we shy away from the role that we can play, we, we play small, we stay in our little corners and we talk about our psychoanalysis, our psychodynamic understanding of the role in the and we become so intellectual. Yet as much as we, we are clever, we are blind to what is happening in the world, because we have got this narrow view of how things are. So, and I think, up until a point where we sort of get our heads from the sand, and wake up and say you know what, sometimes you don’t even have to do something, but just be able to identify and recognise that this is happening in the world. I think that recognition that something, and it is not right. You know, I may not have what it takes, but sometimes we shy away” (Line: 507-522)

Participant 4: “Uh, and we are, we live in these societies as well of these psychologists, so when these kind of concerns you see them as psychologists, like this could potentially, put it in the potential of being a problem, so we could play a much bigger role. As psychologists. Advising for instance. In protests for instance advise Universities. Like, listen, these are their concerns, this is how we understand them. For the University it is financial, for them it is look, don’t have the money, they must pay their fees, that is just the way it is. So therefore, the understanding is a particular way. Whereas we can understand one, how the system is required, and also the frustrations that the students are feeling. Therefore, we can, advocate and also, be negotiators” (Line: 64-78)

Within the Critical Psychology lens, advocacy, which means “working on behalf of social change” is seen as essential (Bullock & Limbert, 2009, p. 229). As highlighted in the context chapter, Pillay (2016) notes that psychologists are advocates when they can speak up

against postcolonial injustices. They are also advocates when they can understand the root causes of the protests, which are mostly historical and racial, avoid the psychopathologising of activism, and proactively participate in transformational debates (Pillay, 2016). Therefore, Pillay (2016) suggested that psychologists support the movement with a critical stance and try to understand the logic and legitimacy of the protests and what they represent. While Participant 4 does discuss some root causes of the protests (such as students' protesting because they have not been heard), Participant 4 seems to place more emphasis on helping the university and others to understand the people behind the protests, rather than the protests themselves. Further Participant 4 seems to see protests as "acting out" and as something that should not be "encouraged". While, it is important to understand the individuals behind the protests as Participant 4 has discussed, Pillay (2016) argues it is important to also support the movement by acknowledging the legitimacy of protests. From this critical stance, this would mean that psychologists should also highlight to the university the importance of protests and what they represent. Ultimately, it would therefore mean that they would not view protests as a way of "acting out" but rather see them as a way of bringing social justice to the forefront (e.g. by showing how the protests have highlighted the need for decolonisation, transformation, improved access to higher education and a more inclusive institutional culture) (Baloyi & Isaacs, 2015; Long, 2016; Naicker, 2016; Pillay, 2016).

While it is important to include this type of work as a psychologist, advocacy training per se is not noticeably seen in graduate training in Psychology (Cohen, Lee & McIlwraith, 2012). As a reaction to this, Community Psychology (CP) has tried to incorporate activism and advocacy in its work. For example, CP's use of the social action model arose as a reaction to mainstream Psychology's failure to appreciate the link between behaviour and social systems (Arumugam, 2001). Most psychologists work within the mental health model – imparting knowledge and psychoeducation, without transforming oppressive practices and structures. Therefore, CP, and Liberation Psychology, were developed to help psychologists work within models that create social change with a clear political commitment to transforming oppressive structures. As such, the social action model sees structural inequalities as the core of community distress (Arumugam, 2001). This is in line with what Participant 4 said regarding protests:

Participant 4: "You know, like uh, structural inequalities, uh, fuel a lot of this comes from protests, it is going to be FeesMustFall, it is going to be service delivery issues..."

Within this model, Arumugam (2001) has explained that the role of a psychologist is as an activist. However, as discussed in the literature, Community and Critical Psychology are often also just seen as ‘sub-disciplines’ and are yet to receive adequate attention or be fully integrated into mainstream psychological training (Carolissen, 2006), because services are still primarily focussed on individuals (Cohen et al., 2012).

Further, the role of ‘psychologists as advocates’ is not clear, and can be quite nuanced, demonstrating that there are many ways in which a psychologist can advocate (Cohen et al., 2012). In order to demystify advocacy, Cohen et al. (2012) explain that advocacy in Psychology requires clear and succinct communication to get a point across, and psychologists must think about their unique position in society, and how this can help or hinder their role as an advocate. For example, Pillay (2016) suggested that psychologists can help when they embed their work within a human rights agenda and work to undo oppressive practices. Reflecting on the Rhodes (RU) Reference List protests, and what they evoked, Participant 1 specifically said psychologists could contribute to the conversation on human rights, which can also be seen as advocacy:

Participant 1: “...in terms of, you know, women’s rights, and all sorts of things, human rights generally in terms of the right to be, what is it, basically not to have anyone touch you, that you don’t want to be touched and you know, that you are not going to be exposed to violence, that you are kept in a safe... unfortunately these human rights which I can’t remember exactly off hand now... but they um in this country are being violated all the time. So, you know, if a conversation could be had on a University campus, maybe that will trickle down into society as well. So good that it is starting there, that people can think um and make things more aware. I mean, I am constantly working with these things in therapy with people. Trying to empower women, dealing with people that are being abused constantly in their marriages, in society, at work, bullied bosses, men, I mean this is constant, this is work on a daily basis” (Line: 110-129)

Another point is that Psychology has been critiqued for attempting to be apolitical or neutral (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2009), especially that: “presenting itself as a science, Psychology would pretend that it is free of politics, because science is assumed to be, by definition, value-free” (Hayes, 1989, as cited in Hook, 2014, p. 15). This is a critique, it is argued, because Psychology as a discipline is not neutral nor can it be, as it is inherently linked to the socio-political structures of the society in which it operates. Hook (2014) notes that:

It is this realisation more than any other that would seem to lie at the heart of critical Psychology, the realisations that Psychology is not a neutral ‘science’, not an unbiased, simple objective way of knowing the world. On the contrary, power ‘runs in the veins’ of Psychology; there is no form of psychological knowledge or practice that does not

set up or support a certain relationship of power. It is this fact more than any other that motivates the efforts, practices and critiques of Critical Psychology (p. 14).

Therefore, a Critical Psychology approach argues that neutrality is impossible, and that Psychology should not be neutral when it comes to social justice issues. If Psychology is to embrace its role in promoting social change, this perceived barrier will need to be overcome. When recalling his role in the protests, Participant 2 notes the difficulty of maintaining “a neutral position”:

Participant 2: “So, I think the role of being able to be available for no matter who, no matter what was very important, but is then incredibly difficult to suspend your own politics when you are so intimately involved or due witness, because, I, I don’t imagine at all that is it possible that you can completely suspend your subjectivity to then not have an opinion, but then what impact would that have on, you know, a debriefing or therapeutic space. That is very difficult and very questionable. So, ja, I don’t really know what the role is, other than to be available in that kind of neutral position.” (Line: 339-362).

Participant 2: “Um, you know, so again a very different kind of headspace, but, I think ja, what was interesting was kind of having to suspend the politics of it, and my subjectivity to kind of try and sit down and be present, um, I don’t know to what extent I did that you know kind of perfectly and ethically and professionally, um, but ja, kind of for me that experience was a very difficult headspace to kind of sit in simultaneously.” (Line: 629-633).

As described, Critical Psychology understands that it is impossible for psychologists to be neutral, rather, it is suggested that psychologists need to embrace reflexivity through “a conscious exploration of how our own values and assumptions affect our theoretical and methodological goals, activities, and interpretations” (Fox et al., 2009, p. 10). Participant 2, in the above extracts, is already embracing this reflective stance by acknowledging how his “political views” could impact on a “debriefing or therapeutic space”. Further, Participant 2 recognizes the difficulty with having to “suspend the politics” but simultaneously acknowledges the importance of conducting therapy with students in a non-judgemental way to provide them support. What this means is that when psychologists are intervening in protest situations, they need to acknowledge rather than deny their own biases. Through this acknowledgement, they would note how their values and assumptions are impacting on their role within protest situations.

1.2. Psychologists as negotiators and advisors

Participant 4 considered that psychologists’ role in protests could include “advising” and Participant 3 understood that the role of psychologists in protests could include “negotiation”. For example, when reflecting on the conflict between police and students during the protests, Participant 3 explained how it would be “ideal” for a psychologist to negotiate or act as an intermediary between these two groups:

Participant 3: “With the police, and just, it felt very, very frightening and there was no negotiation, not talking – it felt very, very heavy-handed and I think that always upsets me. As a psychologist I think it a lot of it was handled badly...” [referring to police bullets] (Line: 109-114)

Participant 3: “Um, shjoe, ideally, I would love for, for us to be really good at being negotiators. In an ideal world, like I would like to play a role in being negotiators, or intermediaries between perhaps the police that were called and the students...” (Line: 152-155)

Participant 3 discussed that playing the role of negotiator or intermediary would happen “in an ideal world”. The phrase is often used when someone talks about something they would like to happen but knows that it is not possible. In the next extract, Participant 3 continues to grapple with the feasibility of negotiation, especially in conflictual and violent situations:

Participant 3: “And, I (sigh) I suppose there is a part of me that worries about, um, what happened in the crowd. The kind of depersonalisation that can happen. That perhaps you might, well certain students might feel heard, but maybe there is someone who is not in that space to negotiate and may escalate things, and, um, it just feels like things become violent so quickly. So, I, I actually don’t know. I mean, I am sure there has to be examples of positive ways in which psychologists can intervene within those types of situations and deescalate stuff. We hope that there would. But, I do think a lot would hinge on whether the psychologist felt whether they had the backing of the university to negotiate with certain things.” (Lines: 162-180)

Participant 3 considered it important that the psychologist de-escalate group violence, before providing a space to negotiate. When thinking about ways in which psychologists could negotiate, Participant 3 used the following phrases: “So I actually don’t know” and “I am sure there has to be examples of positive ways in which psychologists can intervene ... we hope that there would”. These phrases imply that Participant 3 does not know exactly how psychologists could intervene as negotiators or de-escalate group violence. Participant 3 also feels that the University would have to support the psychologist in their role as negotiator.

In contrast, as seen in the below extract, Participant 4 has more certainty about the role of a psychologist as “advisor” in a protest situation. Participant 4 said that psychologists can use their knowledge of group dynamics and behaviours to help people understand each other “without there being a confrontational situation”:

Participant 4: “So I think as psychologists, you can, uh, because, we understand group dynamics. And group behaviours, you can already foresee that these kinds of things will happen. Advise, one the Universities, uh listen, in institutions like this, these are the potential things that could happen. So, how do we intervene before these those things happen. You can get, you don’t have to get them all in one, you can get those students who are for protests, those ones who are not for protests, uh, have them uh understand each other without there being a confrontational situation. You know, they don’t have to face each other off. Like you would in any situation, like in race relations, try to get people to understand the other, understand the other from their standpoint without judging the situation, and I think psychologists are the ones who can do that kind of work. More than any other, any other skilled professional, because we are skilled in human behaviour.” (Line: 134-145).

In considering psychologists as negotiators and advisors, these roles could be viewed as psychologists taking a more active role in the protest situations – either by using their role

to de-escalate violence or negotiate (as Participant 3 discussed) or advising the university by providing solutions to issues (as Participant 4 discussed). Taking this active stance lines up with Pillay (2016)'s plea for psychologists to be present in protest movements. What is also noteworthy about both these roles are that they include the psychologists intervening with groups and systems (such as the police and the university). This stands in contrast to the traditional psychologist role of intervening with individuals one-on-one (Parker, 2015). However, only two participants discussed the role of negotiation and advising. The reasons for this could be the propensity for most psychologists to work within traditional models as described (Arumugam, 2001). It could also point to the lack of certainty and the perceived "ideal" nature of the role, referring to Participant 3's comments. Fox et al. (2009) are also of the view that most psychologists work within defined roles – and perhaps "negotiation" and "advising" are not clearly defined within these roles. As discussed earlier, Cohen et al. (2012) suggested that psychologists need to think about what their unique skills could be when doing advocacy work. Psychologists' could also think about how these unique skills can be used in negotiation in protests – as this would bring more clarity to the role. In the last extract, Participant 4 referred to psychologists using their specialised skills and understanding of group dynamics and human behaviour in "facilitating negotiations" and advising the university. Therefore, this could mean, that during protests, psychologists could (i) use their unique and specialised skills of group dynamics to help the university to understand how to intervene, but also (ii) use these skills when they act as an intermediary or negotiation between groups such as students and the police.

2. Ameliorative work and limiting factors

It was evident from the interview analysis that participants noted how psychologists, with regards to protests and other situations, usually intervene in a situation "after the fact" or when the situation has already gone "too far":

Participant 3: "A lot of our work is kind of after something has happened, hey?" (Line: 149-150)

This is indicative of how much of psychologists' role is in helping in a situation after an event has already taken place, therefore, not preventing that situation from happening in the first place. This is central to the distinction between ameliorative versus transformative practices as discussed earlier. Critical psychologists have often critiqued mainstream Psychology for being largely ameliorative (Fox, et al., 2009) as it narrowly focuses on therapy for the distressed and policy research aimed at minor reform. Therefore, the critique is that

psychologists focus on helping an individual who is stressed, without focussing on the environment. The social action model critiques this “band aid approach” (Arumugam, 2001, p.11), and Community Psychology, through its social advocacy model, tries to come in as an alternative which addresses underlying social or structural problems as well as helping individuals. Therefore, this approach is more focussed on “prevention” through changing social and structural problems to avert further issues from occurring. For example, Participant 1 noted how she “dealt with the aftermath” of the protest by treating the individuals with acute stress and PTSD:

Participant 1: “So, I saw a lot of that and I saw quite a few new people dealing with acute stress or, ja maybe a PTSD response. Deal with the aftermath.” (Line: 90-93)

This extract also shows how the university sees psychologists as dealing with the aftermath or fallout:

Participant 4: “They asked, they asked us, uh, if they need psychologists wold we be willing to stand by and see, uh, patients or, not patients really but students who were having Psychology problems as a result of that,” (Line: 171-182)

Further, Participant 1 reflected that not only do psychologists see things once they have happened, but they also often come in after a situation has gone “too far”:

Participant 1: “Ja. I actually originally wanted to go into psycho-education. But, um, ja, I this is kind of where the emphasis needs to be, also. Because, I, you know, as a psychologist sitting in the chair here I mean, I see things once they have happened and things have gone waaayy too far, you know, and people are now showing symptoms and um, ja, and it becomes a pathological thing, and often you know, it is about parenting and things like that, and you know, I just wish that somehow people could be more aware, and made more aware about how important certain parenting things are. You know like just abandonment and emotional deprivation and things like that”. (Line: 513-519)

The above extract highlights Participant 1’s frustration with the band aid approach discussed earlier – she wishes that she was involved in more interventions that focussed on prevention. These sentiments can also be linked to the protest situations, with regards to Participant 4’s extract below. Participant 4 highlighted how psychologists can (i) foresee situations that could happen and (ii) play a more active role in prevention of a situation, instead of just “waiting until the bump blows”:

Participant 4: “So, it’s those kinds of things, and all of us can see those kinds of dynamics in play, but we will wait until the bump blows, you know, so we would help universities, or universities can have discussions with people who know how to or understands these kinds of dynamics. But listen, this is going to be a problem, chap, should we not perhaps do something. Instead of reacting to um, something happening. Universities for instance, I look at, last year, the year of the protests, the university that didn’t have protests was MEDUNSA. [identifying data removed] Uh, because, they understood the dynamics of the students. The vast majority of students are poor students, or when the University said, when government said you can go up to 8 and students had a problem, the university said, you know what, we are instituting a 0 increase, uh, because you know that is what students want. So, if you pre-plan and you give it

to them because you look at it, if we don't give them this what is the cost going to be? Is it really worth fighting about this, you know, perhaps an 8 percent increase would be what, let's say 50 million, but the damage that they will do if we don't do this will be 100s of million. So, like what is the, in terms of like, should we really like sorry, sorry I just got disturbed here. Should we really just not, and it's not just about giving in, and I think the fear is always that they are giving in to students demands um, and sometimes, like but is, do they understand but is an unreasonable demand. You know, yes it is a demand and yes they are protesting, but, is it unreasonable? Uh, is it attainable and would it be possible for us to maintain peace? Uh, because it becomes this adversarial process, where one doesn't want to listen to the other, and what, the I know another University took a similar approach in protests. No damage to property, nothing. But, the students did protest, not inside the University but outside the University in support of other universities. Uh, but the university remained intact opposed to places like Wits where hundreds of millions of damage. Was it really worth it at the end of the day. Find preventative measures. And that is what, community, what I understand about Community and Social Psychology is all about though. It is about preventing. Prevent people from exercising, people come just when there is already a problem." (Line: 275-322)

In above extract, Participant 4 shows how it is important to “pre-plan” instead of just “reacting”. At the end of the extract Participant 4 discusses the importance of finding “preventative measures”. As discussed earlier, Community Psychology came about as a reaction to mainstream Psychology which is often critiqued for being psychopathology-focused and reductionistic (Parker, 2015). In contrast to this, Community Psychology is driven by principles that promote strengths, prevention and participation, with empowerment for change (Ackhurst, 2017). Participant 4's thoughts on prevention relate to these principles. For example, with regards to the protest situation, Participant 4 thinks that psychologists can play a role in prevention, instead of just reacting to the situation. Through doing this, they would help prevent violence and, at the same time, help the needs of the students to be met (as Participant 4 described MEDUNSA had done). Critical Psychology argues that many psychologists do, in fact, wish to be involved in interventions that are more preventative and therefore aimed at macro-level, however due to time constraints and the enormity of the task, they are often daunted as to how to go about this (Fox et al., 2009). As my discussion continues, I will highlight ways in which Critical Psychology argues that both ameliorative and transformative interventions can be balanced and integrated within the roles of psychologists, and then link it back to my research question.

2.1 Ameliorative work

I felt it was important to include “ameliorative work” as a sub-theme for the following reasons: (i) most participants reported this type of work as a part of their role within the protests, and (ii) this subtheme clarifies which ameliorative interventions were used. In this section, I will first highlight “evoked trauma” - as most of the interventions were given in response to this phenomenon. Then I will discuss which ameliorative practices these participants engaged in, including: “trauma work”, “containment”, “debriefing” and “support”. In the posttraumatic

field, these are known as “acute interventions” (Kaminer & Eagle, 2010, p. 85). At the end of the section I will consider how these extracts related to the research question.

Evoked trauma featured strongly in the study, and was discussed by Participant 1, 2, and 3. Evoked trauma refers to the phenomenon of how a person’s previous history of trauma can be retriggered by the protests. Participant 1 refers to this as “there is some trigger of an old trauma that might be triggered”:

Participant 1: “Well, we were obviously very involved, well, I was in particular, just because I see so many students in, obviously dealing with acute stress, trauma and a lot of people who haven’t had any history of trauma would experience acute stress which is something that anybody would experience having maybe had to leopard crawl through the campus to get from rubber bullets and things like that. So, we don’t diagnose posttraumatic stress, you know, until two-three weeks after. We first consider it a normal response, um, but obviously, some of the patients that I see have a history of trauma; either complex post-traumatic stress from family, or actually violence in the homes, and South Africa is a pretty violent place, so most people have had experience of violence, so, for a lot of people, um, you know obviously there is some trigger of an old trauma that might be triggered. So, I saw a lot of that and I saw quite a few new people dealing with acute stress or, ja maybe a PTSD response. Deal with the aftermath.” (Line: 73-93)

In the above extract, Participant 1 also discussed that people experienced “acute stress” due to the rubber bullets that were fired by police on campus. With regards to evoked trauma, Participant 3 also noted how protests could elicit a person’s memories of a traumatic past:

Participant 3: “Um, also because I think when something like that happens, if you have had a traumatic past, or an event in the past that is going to absolutely elicit that. Um, so again that is all retrospective, isn’t it? That is more after the fact.” (Line: 185-187)

Participant 2 referred to “existing trauma” and “palpable anxiety” that broke down peoples’ defences and was a catalyst for depression or anxiety, and “existing trauma” in relation to the RU Reference protests:

Participant 2: “But, I think the difficult thing is then, then like with the RU Reference List. It triggered a whole bunch of other stuff, like existing trauma, or depression. Anxiety and that kind of stuff so there was this kind of clear catalyst but it kind of extended way beyond into other sequelae and kind of other disorders... and other disorders and that kind of stuff.” (Line: 229-237).

Participant 2: “Ja, and, and anxiety, depression, and that kind of stuff, it really shattered a lot of people’s existing defences and resources. Um, you know, so even though, they were kind of getting through, with so much instability, you know and so much anxiety, like there was literally this massive, fully endured, palpable anxiety. And I think that really knocked people a lot, um, you know, people with resilient defences, and people with fragile defences. Um you know when those things kind of started crumbling then a lot more anxiety, depression, that kind of stuff came through, um and existing trauma. Certainly, we definitely saw that with the RU Reference List protests too you know, um people having conversations about stuff, um, it would definitely elicit kind of peoples’ um trauma memories or recollections or um bring that emotion to kind of the fore...” (Line: 456- 474).

In response to this anxiety, or trauma, Participant 2 expressed using the following interventions: debriefing; facilitating conversations and providing therapy. Participant 2 noted specifically that individual therapy had helped:

Participant 2: “Um, Ja, I, I think one of the most valuable roles we can play was, um, was kind of, a debriefing. And facilitating conversations, and I don’t know to what extent group stuff work, but I definitely think that individual, um, therapy helped. Just kind of being able to just help people unpack, and debrief, and I know we had a lot of conversations [identifying data removed], and I kind of tried to facilitate that”. (Line: 303-309)

Both Participant 2 and 3 then reflected on the intervention of “debriefing” and whether it was helpful or not. For example, Participant 2 highlighted how it can heighten distress, rather than ‘contain’ it. It was important for both Participant 2 and 3 to engage and be reflexive about the type of intervention they had used; a key tenant of Critical Psychology (Parker, 2015):

Participant 3: “It is a bit like trauma debriefing, and I know how people feel like sometimes some people are quite resistant to that, because sometimes it can in fact be more traumatic. Um, so if you were to do work so close to the trauma, in a way someone isn’t in the mind set to actually negotiate those feelings yet, so sometimes you can heighten the distress.” (Line: 294-298)

Participant 2: “I think it would be very interesting to know what role people could play, because there is that counternarrative as is typical of Joburg and Gauteng, that you know, trauma debriefing immediately after isn’t actually very helpful. I don’t really know the research, but, I think that there is a growing argument that is it not useful. Is that it can kind of reinforce or prolong trauma, and so certainly..”(Line: 527-535)

Further, as a counter to “trauma debriefing”, Participant 2’s strategy was to help those affected by the protests by facilitating them to focus on practicalities whilst providing a supportive session:

Participant 2: “My intention last year was to focus a lot more on practicalities. Kind of, are you safe? Are you eating? Are you sleeping? Are you communicating with your family? You know, are you taking care of yourself and your academics and that kind of stuff. Um, rather than kind of trying to extract this narrative. Tell me blow by blow by blow, um, ah, because my experience was that people didn’t want to talk about it, you know people needed to explain and they wanted to their story, but, not in a way that, they, they wanted someone to sit there and say, how did that make you feel?” (Line: 535-546)

Participant 2 did this by helping a person who was panicking to “focus on your breathing” and also by asking them, “are you safe?”. This is line with seminal work in the traumatic stress field which emphasizes it is important to first ascertain whether the person is safe, and then only process and re-integrate the trauma (Kaminer & Eagle, 2010). This would mean that the role of the psychologist in a protest situation, is to first ensure that a person is safe, and then “contain them” using practical therapeutic interventions such as “progressive breathing relaxation”. This refers to Participant 2’s idea of “triage first aid Psychology” in the extract below:

Participant 2: “Ja, um, well ja, I mean I did quite a lot of containing people in one on one sessions, but, on more than one occasion, um, I was out in the street kind of talking to people, and then, standing there with people who are having like major, major panic attacks, and they are kind of being supported by their friends, but just literally kind of like a triage first aid Psychology on the side of the street. Hey, look, you know, you are having a panic attack, you know, just focus on this, you know trying to do a sort of progressive breathing relaxation thing. And, on the streets, like, you know while this girl is having this massive panic attack, talking to her friends and saying do this and do that, you know checking with other, sort of staff and students, you know, are you alright, um, and, I didn’t take a role in kind of trying to de-escalate things and kind of standing between – a lot more as a kind of witness. And, perhaps, that was my own morbid curiosity or stupidity that kind of made me come and stand out in the street” (Line: 193-210).

As one can see from the extracts above, it was important for these psychologists to engage in these ameliorative interventions for the following reasons: (i) it helped to reduce students’ panic attacks and (ii) because protests elicited trauma, therapy was important to help students to process this trauma. Participants in the study felt strongly that their practical role in protests – perhaps regardless of their ideological or theoretical perception of the protests – was to use ameliorative interventions to assist people affected by the protests. Critical psychologists suggest that one does not have to abandon ameliorative protests, but, rather, psychologists can integrate both ameliorative and transformative practices into their work (Fox et al., 2009). With regards to balancing ameliorative and transformative interventions, Prilleltensky et al., (2009), p. 394) suggest that psychologists ask themselves the following questions:

1. How does this ameliorative practice inform our transformative practice?
2. How does our knowledge of inequality and injustice inform our counselling work?
3. How does transformative practice in society inform our ameliorative work in the helping system?
4. How does our outsider role as social critic inform or relate to our insider role?

Therefore, psychologists should be reflexive in their role while performing ameliorative and counselling work within protest situations. This links to Participant 1’s extract about feeling that, in her individual therapies, it was always important to educate individuals about “systemic stress”:

Participant 1: “But I would like to say something quite important about systemic stress. Um, that quite often in traditional Psychology, you know the, um, stresses are places, or the reaction to stress, the way people respond in a stressful situation is kind of place on the individual, and one is kind of judged in that way, how much stress, you know, how do I adapt to stress. Which, is, is a thing and it is important How everyone individually deals with stress. But, what I deal a lot with in my practice is helping people to understand, that it is actually what is called systemic stress, which is coming from the outside, from political situations”. (Line: 141-151)

Hence, trauma work is important in helping people who have been experiencing stress and evoked trauma from the protests, but psychologists also need to hold in mind the larger social context in which they work when performing individual therapy. This is done externally

through advising about systemic stress, and internally, by keeping in mind their knowledge of inequality and injustice and how it informs their counselling work.

2.2 Psychologists as bystanders

When commenting on psychologists' role in protests, Participant 4 noted how psychologists only get involved in situations when they have been asked to. Therefore, in a protest situation, this means that psychologists may only help if their assistance has been requested from the university (or, theoretically, by a protest group). Participant 4 referred to this as being a "bystander":

Participant 4: "we tend to be bystanders a lot, in a lot of things, we tend to not get involved. It's not our place. Only when we are requested to come then we will come, yet we have a wealth of knowledge that we can impart that can be assistance in situations like this..." (Line: 81-88)

Mainstream Psychology has been critiqued for being in "waiting mode" (Arumugam, 2001, p. 5), expecting patients to come to them, rather than the "seeking mode" - taking services to the people that need them (Arumugam, 2001, p. 5). Participant 4 acknowledges this as psychologists "shying away":

Participant 4: "And, I feel that we just, we have a bigger role to play, in society. We don't take it up, we shy away from the role that we can play, we, we play small, we stay in our little corners and we talk about our psychoanalysis, our psychodynamic understanding of the role in the and we become so intellectual. Yet as much as we, we are clever, we are blind to what is happening in the world, because we have got this narrow view of how things are. So, and I think, up until a point where we sort of get our heads from the sand, and wake up and say you know what, sometimes you don't even have to do something, but just be able to identify and recognise that this is happening in the world. I think that recognition that something, and it is not right. You know, I may not have what it takes, but sometimes we shy away. So, we just don't see it. And, just because we don't see it doesn't mean it is not there. And, my biggest fear are the situations where inequality because these kinds of protests, when people are in a system that increase an inequality, my fear is always that I will be driving down and then someone is going to hijack me, and when they see me, they don't see a person, they see a possession. They see I have something when they have nothing. And, the reason they have nothing is because I am silent as well to their suffering. So, we can't keep a blind eye and assume that we will be safe. There is no way. There is no way. Because people are suffering" (Line: 507-543)

The implications of this "waiting mode", as Participant 4 acknowledged, means that a psychologist is not imparting their knowledge and experience to those who may really need it. Further, Participant 4 discusses how psychologists are "blind to what is happening in the world" and hopes for psychologists to "get our heads from the sand". He also says that psychologists, with regards to issues of inequality, are "silent to suffering". These sentiments link directly with Pillay's (2016) idea of "silence is violence" referring to how psychologists' silences perpetuate an unjust status quo. Participant 4 also looks forward to a day when "Psychology will just stand up":

Participant 4: “So, ja, I just, I just look forward to a day where Psychology as a profession will just stand up, and stop being ah like an abused child that just sits in a corner somewhere. To just stand up, and claim our place, and in a very arrogant, but, by actually being of service to humanity and society so that people can actually see what we can do and see what we do and see the value that, uh, we can add to those lives. And, I think once we do that, instead of wanting people to see us, once we portray our value people will see our value and our relevance.” (Line: 639-647)

Participant 4 went as far as to say psychologists are actually “invisible as a profession”:

Participant 4: “Especially in the Eastern Cape, a child, doesn’t matter where they are from, East London, or rural areas, when they walk into a hospital or a facility they don’t see, uh, [identifying data removed]. They will see a doctor. They will see a nurse. Ja, you see, so we are invisible as a profession. Uh, then, if we are invisible then how can we be relevant. If for instance, for the Department of Health, if there are 1000 doctors, and 10 psychologists, the needs that they are going to listen to are going to be those of the doctors because they have bigger numbers, and they can articulate their problems clearly.” (Line: 443-457).

The waiting mode, the concept of the “the shying away” and “invisible” psychologist, would imply that psychologists do not play active roles at all in the context of protests. This also ties into the broader debate about the relevance of Psychology, and how the profession is supporting the social context in which we live. Participant 4’s sentiments are confirmed by the literature which states that (i) there is a lack of psychologists within primary health care (Ahmed, et al., 2013) and (ii) a lack of psychologists in rural areas (Lund et al., 2010). It also relates to Pillay’s (2016) argument about how there is lack of relationship between Psychology and a call for “fundamental social change” (p. 156). Critical psychologists would argue psychologists should speak out for those who have been silenced, ignored, marginalized or oppressed (Collins, 2014). Participant 4 also agrees that there needs to be a relevant Psychology that is of “service to humanity”.

2.3 Scope of practice and professional registration

The next subtheme highlights how professional categories affect the role of what psychologists could do in protest situations. This subtheme is relevant to the research question as it shows how participants may think scope of practice and professional registration might dictate which type of psychologist ‘should’ be involved in a protest situation.

The scope of practice and professional categories debate has been discussed in the literature (Pretorius, 2012). Pretorius (2012) has noted that sometimes social problems are “falling to the wayside as scope of practice and power debates continue” (p. 516). Pretorius’s (2012) notion is that the fight over the debate of registration categories distances psychologists from the “real world”. Chitindingu and Mkhize (2016) also comment that the scope of practice discourse is of “limited or no use to the vast majority of the rural and poor people who have no

access to any professional services” (p. 76): In regard to this, Participant 4 states how psychologists are “fighting categories” which leads to an “inward focus”:

Participant 4: “Ah, so I think that psychologists are Psychology’s worst enemy, if you know what I mean. You know, so we get in, we study, we work and then we live it, uh, and we forget that we need to formalise this profession, you know, make it accessible to more people, you know, the BPsych degree, I did a BPsych... that was meant to be a degree that opens up, but it fizzled along the way. So, then you have closed access, uh to Psychology. With a BPsych at least you know would have these primary practitioners, but psychologists had a problem with uh, counsellors, as if competition in the market, a lot about service, yes, so, yes, I might worry that you might offer the same service, so what. It is big. You know, so we are busy fighting amongst each other. If we are not fighting counsellors, we are fighting within categories, like our focus is so inward, we are fighting categories, like, our focus is so inward that is it not outward so that it can be relevant. In real world... how can we be of service in the real world, how can we open it up you know so. You young minds can change the world (laughs)” (Line: 459-491)

In the next extract, Participant 4 states that “Psychology confines itself to these categories” and wonders who derives benefit from the categorisation, when he asks the question: “But, who does it serve?”.

Participant 4: “You know, and it’s best to have, and also, Psychology confines itself to these categories. ... Confine ourselves to these things where this must be like this. But, who does it serve? ... Ultimately. It’s nice to have a title that I am this sort of a psychologist, but, who does it really serve, and it’s not like in America, for instance, they don’t have these kinds of social problems that we have. .. You know, a place like this benefits more, will benefit, not like those of us who are already in the process or those who want to come into categories are not of use. (Line 324-333)

Participant 4 then states that “America, for instance, they don’t have the same kinds of social problems that we have...”. Some authors, such as Sher and Long (2012), argue that many of the same social issues the discipline of psychology faces in South Africa are also present in the US. For example, their study showed parallels between the relevance debate of psychology is South Africa and America – for example, showing how the Eurocentric nature and individualistic focus of psychology also underemphasized the impact of social context on mental health in the US. However, the above statement of Participant 4 might be interpreted as pointing out that some problems have different origins and ways of manifesting in South Africa as compared to elsewhere. However, it is unclear why the Participant believes that differences in the nature of problems experienced in South Africa mean that the concept of separate psychological disciplines is unhelpful or limiting.

In the next extract, Participant 4 then discussed that social psychologists, compared to clinical psychologists, could contribute more on societal issues. As a result, Participant 4 felt that there needs to be a more formalised training of “Social Psychology”. The following extract illustrates this:

Participant 4: “Well, the thing is, as a clinical psychologist you are, there are things called scope of practice. ... Ja social and research psychologists, because, uh, from my understanding people who try to

be social psychologists tend to have a background of research and research Psychology. I could be wrong, and they are the ones, they will be able to study from a psychologists' standpoint. Alas, unlike someone being a sociologist, ja, so I do feel for instance we do need much more formalised training in terms of Social Psychology, because, as a clinical psychologist you don't have, as a clinical psychologist you will be stuck in a hospital. Uh, so you don't have time to be doing sort of community research, uh like, someone who is formally trained in Social Psychology. And, a lot of psychologists I find interestingly enough, is that they have, a lot of, well, not a lot, psychologists that I know have interest in social ills and understanding social factors but because we don't have areas of Social Psychology and social psychologists, so they are unviable career options. Let's be realistic, we, all people need to make a living. Ja, so it will be nice that we can make a living also being value to society in a meaningful way." (Line: 92-113)"

Fox et al. (2009) are of the view that psychologists often embrace liberatory practices but are confined to certain roles, limits or by professional norms that may limit this liberatory potential. Further, it is argued that "in any professional field, advanced training transforms would-be do-gooders into cautious professionals who internalise the field's substantive, social and political limits" (Schmidt, 2000, as cited in Fox et al., 2009, p. 11). These professional limits that are referred to link to Participant 4's phrase: "as a clinical psychologist you will be stuck in a hospital" and "you don't have time to do community research". However, from a Critical Psychology standpoint, one can argue that these are perceived limits. For example, clinical psychologists are not necessarily "stuck" in a hospital - they can work in a variety of settings and can also participate in other activities outside of the hospital setting. The phrase "it will be nice that we can make a living also being value to society in a meaningful way" implies that having to make a living would impede one from contributing to society. Most people are "limited by their need to make a living", but a Critical Psychology standpoint would argue that this does not relieve them of their duty to participate in contributing to society. Participant 4 then discussed knowing many psychologists who have an interest in "social ills and understanding social factors" but because there is no formalised training for social psychologists they are "unviable career options". This implies that Participant 4 feels that clinical psychologists could want to do more liberatory work – such as advocacy, but due to the need to make a living and being confined to a scope of practice, this is not always possible. While the point raised by Participant 4 might explain some psychologists' limited interaction with protests such as #FeesMustFall, this point does not justify this non-involvement. Further, when asked if the protests were to reoccur and about the possible involvement of Participant 4 in future protests, Participant 4 noted that Clinical Psychology is very demanding, and the day of a clinical psychologist is very full:

Participant 4: "Well, that is the thing though, because I am a clinical psychologist, I work [identifying data removed]. I have a full, I literally am when I get to work at 8 up until 4 o'clock [that is a busy day]. Ja, it is a busy day. Uh, and even for that, that was my private practice when I had that, but now [identifying data removed], uh, so, I think because of the work that I do, there is not

much that I can do. Unless, for instance, someone is referred to outpatient and I would see them, and I would see out, uh, outpatients”. (Line: 218-228)

The implications of this participant “being busy” means that this participant does not have time to participate in the protests. This links back to what Participant 4 had explained earlier – in that he thinks that social psychologists would be the ones who would be able to do this type of work. However, from a Critical Psychology point of view, one would argue that it is important to bring the fight for social justice to the forefront, no matter what registration (or working hours) you are bound by.

3. Uncertainty and ambivalence about the role of Psychologists

Another theme that emerged was the uncertainty and ambivalence participants experienced in protest situations – specifically regarding thoughts of protests as “something good” but also as “something deeply problematic”. This theme was important to highlight in relation to the research question because these feelings of uncertainty and ambivalence led to participants questioning their role and the protests themselves.

Participant 2 held dichotomous views, understanding that protests were “good” because they highlighted social issues relating to tertiary education but, on the other hand, felt that there were “deeply problematic things”:

Participant 2: “Um, I think on the whole quite a mixed bag, um, ja. I think that there was, there were definitely kind of deeply problematic things that I, um, experienced but also kind of had opinions about, but also, um, I think the one good thing is that it definitely kind of spoke about a kind of, necessary student grants and public opinion around education, and funding, um all of tertiary education in South Africa.: (Line 5-10)

Participant 2 elaborates more on the “deeply problematic things” in the next extract:

Participant 2: “You know, is it, you can’t block a public road, like that is against the law, and, and, I am not going to go into the merits of right and wrongs of the police, but, one of the conflicts was about the problematic ways that the students were protesting, saying absolutely guys, by all means protest. I will, you know, back you and stand there with you if it is a legitimate protest, but, if you kind of, approaching it in a way that infringes on the rights of other people, then I have kind of draw a line in terms of my own politics and philosophy, but also in terms of my own politics and philosophy, but also in terms of what is right and wrong, um, you know and, and to tread this fine line between order and chaos, um, is quite tricky.” (Line 72-79)

As seen in the above extract, Participant 2 felt there were problematic “ways that the students were protesting”. Participant 2 then speaks about feeling supportive of helping people protest “if it is a legitimate protest” but felt that he could not support protests which “infringes on the rights of other people”.

Critical Psychology would acknowledge the importance of being reflexive about who makes this decision about whether a protest is legitimate or illegitimate. It could be argued

that holding this stance also detracts from the real concerns that the protests represent. Ultimately, critical psychologists would try and understand why students would resort to “problematic measures” and why they would need to resort to property destruction, as Participant 3 refers to in the next extract:

Participant 3: “I really acknowledge that, but I absolutely, um, support the fact that everyone should have equal opportunities, so absolutely, from a theoretical stance, right there, but I feel like sometimes movements, sometimes provide a space for people who are quite antisocial. And so, I didn’t agree perhaps when, um property was getting ruined and people were physically threatened themselves” (Lines: 47-53)

As seen in the above extract, Participant 3 also held these two contrasting views: (i) supporting a movement that promotes “equal opportunities” but (ii) disagreeing when there is damage caused by protests, specifically in relation to damage to person and property.

Participant 2 found it very difficult providing therapy to someone while there “were flashbangs and rubber bullets being shot in the street”:

Participant 2: “Ja. It’s completely, it’s like conflicting. Because you have to deal with so many different things at the same time. So, ja, sigh, and I mean sat in this room kind of doing therapy while you know there were flashbangs and rubber bullets being shot in the street. Here, on [name removed], um, and then also walking clients out and you know, making sure they are safe but then while I am standing in the street trying to sort of chat to a friend, and find out what is going on and making sure people are okay, kind of being shot at by the police. And, I, and just, and, you know, it is kind of like crazy stuff. That made it very difficult to do one’s job but also then not knowing what one’s job was” (Line: 53-65)

In 2016, there was uproar when videos of policemen firing rubber bullets at Rhodes University protestors went viral (Gasa & Dougan, 2016). Dr Pithouse, a lecturer at Rhodes University said that the response of the police was brutal and that the protests were peaceful – not violent as they were depicted in the media (Gasa & Dougan, 2016). Therefore, while participants feelings and concerns relating to personal safety should be noted and acknowledged, it should also be noted that the perception that protests are inherently violent is often inaccurate and misleading.

These ambivalent thoughts led to Participant 2 questioning his role in the future protests. For example, Participant 2 was uncertain about whether he would stay in his office or “be a rubbernecker” and see what is going on “in the frontlines”:

Participant 2: “I don’t know whether I would kind of like stay in my office, you know, and only wait for people to kind of come, or to witness and be available and, and, that kind of stuff and I think I have a bit of a proclivity for kind of being a rubbernecker, curiosity kind of killed the cat. So, I do want to know what is going on. But, also, I do kind of have an impulse to kind of be there to make sure people are alright. Um, and ja, not to kind of be a crusader or social-justice warrior or anything horrendous like that, but, but, I think that there is a lot of value, um, cause I was able to communicate to [identifying names removed], that hey this is what is going on, this is what is happening, but also

to see and be seen, and offer an implicit form of support, to kind of people out there, but, um, I think being able to do it in a way a lot more judiciously, um because of the lessons learned from the previous year. Um, but ja, touch wood it doesn't happen again." (Line: 428-442).

Towards the end of the interview, Participant 2 again wondered if the role of the psychologist is to "be on the frontlines" or "behind a closed door that says don't disturb" as seen in the following extract:

Participant 2: "Um, no, I think ja, your question about, what is the role of psychologists, in that context um, are you on the front lines, or are you behind a closed door with a sign that says don't disturb. Ja, I think that is quite a big question for me, um, and that is why I kind of, tongue in cheek, because I am a rubberneck or because I want people up out there I think it would be very interesting to know what role could people play. "(Line: 526-528)

Participant 3 needed to make a choice between withdrawing from protests and seeing people within the traditional confines of closed therapy sessions, or actively engaging in the protests "on the frontlines". The first role would be a more passive role: waiting for the student to come to them, while the second would be a more active role: going out to see if the students are alright. This links back to Arumugam's (2001) descriptions of the difference between the "waiting mode" versus the "seeking mode". Critical Psychology would argue that psychologists should take an active stance.

Ultimately, with regards to the research question, this theme has pointed to the importance of reflexivity in thoughts about protests – and how holding "problematic views" could detract from understanding the legitimacy of these protests and what they present.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the analysis and discussion of these themes will assist psychologists understanding their role within protests. The first part of the analysis and discussion explained the concepts of amelioration and transformation to give context to the overarching themes. Transformative sub-themes which emerged in the interviews included how psychologists could be advocates or negotiators. Ameliorative subthemes pointed to psychologists' work in roles such as trauma debriefing. The limiting factors emerged as sub-themes that highlighted the relevancy of Psychology in South Africa. A strong theme which emerged, and which was also discussed, is the uncertainty of the role of psychologists in protests as was felt by participants in the study. This is reflected in the lack of a clear stance taken by the discipline of Psychology in South Africa in relation to the protests in particular, and in relation to issues of social justice generally.

Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the role of psychologists in the #FeesMustFall movement in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape. This was deemed important for the following reasons: (i) these protests have highlighted the lack of transformation that still exists in universities (ii) these protests have had psychological impacts, including posttraumatic sequelae, and (iii) there has been little information on how psychologists can intervene within these protests. Thus, the research questions were:

- (1) What are psychologists' thoughts and opinions around protests such as #FeesMustFall?
- (2) What do psychologists in Grahamstown think their role is in protests such as #FeesMustFall?

As such, I aimed to investigate how psychologists felt about and responded to the protests. In this concluding chapter, I give a summary of my findings and discussion. I then explain the implications, strengths and limitations of the study. Finally, I give suggestions for further research.

Overview of study

I conducted semi-structured interviews with four psychologists. I analysed the interview findings using Thematic Analysis, specifically following the step-by-step process as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006). After I had identified my themes and extracts, I approached the findings from a Critical Psychology point-of-view. To summarise the principles and themes behind Critical Psychology is not an easy task but Critical Psychology aims for a transformed Psychology that is highly reflexive about how it's practices, ideologies, and activities influence both the individual and society. Further, critical psychologists acknowledge that Psychology is always powerful and political, and so, therefore, cannot be a neutral or value-free science.

Summary of results and discussion

The findings in the research linked to the broader concept of transformative versus ameliorative interventions. This was because the role of the psychologists generally followed a theme of either being more transformative in their approach or on the other hand, more ameliorative. As discussed, transformative approaches are more involved in preventative work

by intervening before something takes place, while ameliorative approaches are more involved in making things better, after they have already taken place. The limiting factors included phenomena which prevented these psychologists from taking a more active stance in the protests.

Consequently, the following themes emerged: (i) transformative practices and advancing social justice, (ii) ameliorative practices and limiting factors, and (iii) ambivalence and uncertainty. Within the first theme, there were two sub-themes: (i) psychologists as advocates and (ii) psychologists as negotiators and advisors. Within the second theme, there were three sub-themes: (i) ameliorative work, (ii) psychologists as bystanders and (iii) scope of practice and professional registration. The last theme was self-standing and did not include any subthemes.

Transformative practices and advancing social justice. The first theme highlights roles in which participants explored taking a more active stance in the protests – either through advocacy, negotiation or taking an advisory role.

The first subtheme, psychologists as advocates, emerged particularly in relation to Participant 4's thoughts on taking an advocacy role within protests. Participant 4 understood that psychologists are advocates when they can assist the “powers that be” (e.g. universities) to gain a clearer understanding of the “lives and stories” of the people behind the protests. Participant 4 placed more emphasis on assisting the university to understand the people behind the protests, as opposed to helping them understand the legitimacy of the protests themselves. Critical Psychology would argue that it would also be important to make the university aware of importance of protests and how they highlight the lack of transformation that still exists in SA universities. It was discussed that the role of a psychologist as an advocate is not clear (Cohen. et al., 2013) but has been explained by models in Community Psychology, such as the social action model, which understands the importance of a psychologist acting as a social change agent and advocating for transforming oppressive structures (Arumugam, 2001). Participant 1, in reference to the RU Reference Protests, suggested psychologists can educate people about their rights.

In the second subtheme, participants highlighted how psychologists' roles in protests could include negotiation (such as between students and police) and advising (helping the university understand how to handle protest situations by explaining group dynamics). Participant 3 struggled to define how a psychologist would negotiate – and wondered if it would

actually be feasible. On the other hand, Participant 4 highlighted that because psychologists have skills in understanding group dynamics, they could advise the university on how to facilitate these negotiations.

Ameliorative practices and limiting factors. The second theme highlighted roles in which participants took more of an ameliorative stance in the protests. The ameliorative stance refers to the “band aid” approach (Arumugam, 2001) – where psychologists often assist in a situation after an event has already taken place. Therefore, the first subtheme, ameliorative work, showed how participants dealt with the aftermath of the protests – such as providing supportive, individual therapy to people who were traumatised. This role was deemed important as it helped people who had been traumatised by the protests. It was discussed, though, that critical psychologists would argue to balance both ameliorative and transformative work in their practices. This could be done by holding in mind the larger social and socio-political context, and how it affects the individual, when providing therapy. Preventative and transformative work would include psychologists incorporating into their work specific efforts to promote social justice. For example, a psychologist could organise with the university and students various workshops and seminars on how to transform the institutional cultures at universities.

The limiting factors referred to phenomena which prevent psychologists from being able to take a role, not only in protests, but in society as a whole. These concepts linked to the literature on the relevance of Psychology. The limiting factors included the idea of the psychologist being a bystander and/or being limited by the professional scope of practice. Participant 4 specifically noted the limiting factors of the “waiting mode” stance – referring to how psychologists often stay “in their offices” and do not take an active stance of going out to people who need the help. The scope of practice theme showed how a participant believed the debate over registration categories, and the registration categories themselves, prevented psychologists from thinking about the “real world”. It was then argued, from a critical stance, that the scope of practice issue does not justify non-involvement in participating in protest movements.

Ambivalence and uncertainty about the role of psychologists. The last theme highlighted the conflicting thoughts and uncertainty participants had regarding their role, and with the protests themselves. For example, Both Participant 2 and 3 felt there were “good things” but also “problematic things” with the protests. According to the participants: the good

things referred to the fact that the protests highlighted critical issues in the social context, but the problematic things were the way in which the students protested. This raises important questions regarding who makes the decision over what constitutes a ‘legitimate protest’, and what actually constitutes a “problematic” protest. Critical psychologists will argue strongly that it is not the role of psychologists to dismiss protests as illegitimate or problematic, but psychologists should rather work within the context of protests to understand the issues of social justice which underpin them.

Implications of this study

The #FeesMustFall protests represents the current lack of transformation in South African universities. Just as protests against apartheid threw the discipline of Psychology into crises by highlighting the disconnect between the responsibility of the profession to address causes of mental health problems and the role of the profession in enabling a harmful and unjust status quo, the current protests against unequal access to tertiary education also raise the issues of unequal access to Psychology, and the relevance of Psychology in the South African context.

Because there is limited research on the role of psychologists within protest movements such as #FeesMustFall, it felt that this study could contribute to clarifying the roles of psychologists in these types of situations and could continue to contribute to the critical debate on Psychology’s role in social justice issues. My findings indicate that the participants think that psychologists, do, in fact, have a key role to play in protest situations and in bringing about social justice. These views, it is hoped, are reflective of the views of the profession more broadly. It was found that there is not one specific role, but rather varying roles which psychologists can play. These roles include: (i) acting as an advocate (ii) facilitating negotiations (iii) giving advice (iv) and providing individual therapy (which either includes containment, support, or debriefing). Further it was shown that psychologists can combine both ameliorative and transformative approaches in their work.

At the individual level, the participants expressed that students or people who have been affected by the protests, would benefit from supportive work or individual work by psychologists. At the organisational level, these participants have noted that universities would benefit from psychologists being negotiators or assisting in providing an understanding of group dynamics. At the societal level, it shows that these participants still are unclear as to what exactly would constitute a psychologist being an advocate or social change agent, and these participants still think that Psychology has a bigger role to play.

Strengths of the study

This study provided an in-depth understanding of what four psychologists who had actual lived experience of protest situations thought of the role of Psychology in protest situations (and by implication, issues relating to social justice). Therefore, these findings add to the discourse on this topic and provide important insights into the roles psychologists could play. Further, this study gave the participants an opportunity to discuss and debate what it was like during the protests and the role they could play if they were to happen again, which may have positively affected their engagement with this important topic.

From a critical point-of-view this study aimed to provide insight into Psychology's role in social justice and the relevance of the field in social justice issues. It aimed to use Critical Psychology's principles of reflexivity and promoting social justice in its analysis. It was also deemed important as it continues to add to the critical debate of psychological practices and their relevance within the South African context in the post-apartheid era.

Limitations of the study

Sample. As noted in the methodology section, a limitation of the study was the lack of diversity of participants. I had hoped for a larger and more representative sample, with regards to race, gender and professional identity. However, due to limited responses this was not feasible. A larger and more diverse sample would have had a significant impact on the findings. Therefore, it would be important for further studies on this topic to have more black psychologists in the sample, specifically to have their views on historical issues regarding education, funding and protest action in South Africa. Additionally, further research could also include other health professionals, in order to ascertain their role in protests movements.

Further, this study was limited to the small town of Grahamstown, which means that the university is central to the town and often there are less boundaries between the town and the university. Therefore, the roles of psychologists could vary in bigger cities, such as Cape Town or Johannesburg. Therefore, suggestions for further research would be to conduct this study with a wider and more diverse range of psychologists.

Interview Schedule. Question 3 of the interview schedule might have skewed the participants' responses as it implies that psychologists "should" do something during the protests. Further studies should include phrasing that is of a more neutral manner. Another limitation in my interview schedule, is that I did not specifically ask participants about their political views, and what they specifically do to contribute to the fight for social justice.

Therefore, a suggestion for further study could be to include a larger focus on how participant's socio-political backgrounds influence their understandings of their role.

Closing

It is hoped that this study will add to the conversation about how psychologists can include social justice in their work. This study cannot provide a single answer to the difficult questions asked of the discipline, but discussion around this topic can lead to a clearer approach to the role psychologists should take in political protest and periods of social upheaval. Ultimately, Psychology needs to act as a force for good by taking action and continue to critically engage with questions of relevancy.

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Appendix I

Letter/Email to gatekeeper

Re: Research Study: A qualitative research study investigating the role of psychology in #FeesMustFall.

Dear

I am currently undertaking a MA in Clinical Psychology at Rhodes University. As part of my assessment I am required to conduct a small research study. The study I have selected is on the role of psychologists in the #FeesMustFall movement and protests. I am writing to you to seek your permission to gain access to psychologists or training psychologists and to request permission to ask psychologists or training psychologists within your institution for their willingness to participate in my research.

It is envisaged that this study will contribute to the discussion on what the role of Psychology is during the protests, and what Psychologists can do. A letter of invitation will be issued to all potential participants with a consent form. If staff members wish to participate, they must sign the written consent. All information will be anonymised and redacted from the final report and interview transcripts. Therefore, the institution from which the participant comes from will not be identifiable.

This study has been passed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Rhodes Department of Psychology and the Rhodes University Ethics Committee (#PSY2017/37). Please feel free to contact the Psychology Department should you wish to talk to someone on the ethics committee about this study. If you have queries about the project itself, you are welcome to contact my supervisor, Natalie Donaldson, at n.donaldson@ru.ac.za.

Thank you reading this letter. I would be grateful for your permission to conduct this research. Once the report has been finalised, you are welcome to have a copy of the research report. Feel free to contact me for further questions on my email at brionyster@gmail.com or on my cell at 083 355 3323.

Kind regards

Briony Kramer

Appendix II

Interview Questions

1. What were your thoughts about the #FeesMustFall protests that happened last year and the year before?
2. In your own words, describe what you think the role of psychology is during protests during #FeesMustFall?
3. What do you think Psychologists should do during protests?
4. How did you respond to the protests in 2016?
5. If the protests happen again in 2017, how do you think you might respond?

Appendix III

Informed Consent

RHODES UNIVERSITY - DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I _____ (participant's name) agree to participate in the research project of Briony Kramer on the Role of Psychologists in the #FeesMustFall movement.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 083 355 3323 or brionyster@gmail.com. The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s), and is under the supervision of Ms Natalie Donaldson in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on 046 603 7383 (office) or n.donaldson@ru.ac.za.
2. The researcher is interested in the role of Psychologists during the #FeesMustFall movement.
3. My participation will involve participating in semi-structured interviews, and would last for the maximum of one hour. The interview, with permission by the participant, will be recorded.
4. I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
5. All identifying information about the participants' place of work will be redacted from the report and interview transcripts so as not to impact on the reputation of the institution or effect the anonymity of the participant.
6. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. Referrals to counselling and psychological services will be given.
7. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
8. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (Date):

Appendix IV**Permission to Record Consent Form****Rhodes University — Department of Psychology****USE OF TAPE RECORDINGS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES PERMISSION AND
RELEASE FORM**

Name of participant			
Participant's contacts details	Email address: Phone number:		
Name of researcher	Briony Kramer		
Level of research	Honours	Masters X	PhD
Brief title of project	The Role of Psychologists in the #FeesMustFall movement		
Name of supervisor	Natalie Donaldson		

DECLARATION*(Please initial/tick blocks next to the relevant statements)*

1.	The nature of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me.	verbally	
		in writing	
2.	I agree to be interviewed and to allow recordings to be made of the interview.	audiotape	
		videotape	
3.	I agree to _____ and to allow recordings to be made.	audiotape	
		videotape	
4.	The tape recordings may be transcribed	without conditions	
		only by the researcher	
		by one or more nominated third parties	
5.	I have been informed by the researcher that the tape recordings will be erased once the study is complete and the report has been written. OR I give permission for the tape recordings to be retained after the study and for them to be utilised for the following purposes and under the following conditions		

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Witnessed by researcher: _____

Date: _____

Participant: _____ Researcher: _____

Appendix V

A 15-Point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis Process (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006., p. 27)

1. The data will be transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts will be checked against the recordings for accuracy.

Coding

2. Each data item will be given equal priority in the coding process.

3. Themes will not be generated from a few examples, but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.

4. All relevant extracts for all each theme will be collated.

5. Themes will be checked against each other and back to the original data set.

6. Themes will be internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.

Analysis

7. Data will be analysed and interpreted rather than just reworded or described.

8. Analysis and data will fit together – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.

9. Analysis will tell a convincing and coherent story about the data and topic.

10. A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts will be provided.

Overall

11. Enough time will be allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately.

Written report

12. The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis will be clearly explained.

13. There will be a good fit between what the researcher claims to do, and what the researcher has done.

14. The language and concepts used in the report will be consistent with Critical Theory.

15 The researcher will be positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just “emerge” from the data.

Appendix VI

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Psychology Department
1 University Road, Grahamstown, 6139, South Africa
PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa
T: +27 (0) 46 603 8500
T: +27 (0) 46 603 7614
E: psychology@ru.ac.za

RESEARCH PROJECTS AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

22 June 2017

Briony Kramer
Department of Psychology
RHODES UNIVERSITY
6140

Dear Briony,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF PROJECT PSY2017/37

This letter confirms your research proposal with tracking number PSY2017/37 and title, *'The role of psychologists in the #FeesMustFall Movement'*, served at the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University on 14 June 2017. The RPERC notes that this project is supervised by Mx. Natalie Donaldson. Your project has been given ethics clearance.

Please note that should your project require consent from institutional gatekeepers, the RPERC requires that you submit written confirmation of this consent. Kindly also ensure that the RPERC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W. Bohmke'.

Mr. Werner Bohmke
CHAIRPERSON: RPERC