

WITNESSING DREAMS OF LIBERATION: UNDERSTANDING RACIALISED  
OTHER EXPERIENCES IN PSYCHOLOGY CLASSROOMS OF PORTUGUESE  
ACADEMIA.

BY

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## Abstract

**Background:** Racism, rooted in colonialism, affects racialised students in Portuguese universities, often through denial. Luso-tropicalism portrays Portuguese colonialism as benevolent, marginalising and excluding knowledge in psychology courses. This research examines the experiences of racialised psychology students in Portuguese Higher Education, adopting a decolonial approach to address colonial legacies. It draws on Liberation Psychology, Radical Humanisation, and Indigenous Frameworks, emphasising dialogue and rejecting marginalisation. **Thesis Aims:** This research aims to understand individual experiences within neoliberal Western universities and their aspirations to reimagine academic spaces through a decolonial lens. **Methods:** The study employed a qualitative methodology grounded in decolonial research approaches, utilising *testimonios* and dream analysis to investigate marginalisation and exclusion while promoting collective reimagining. Twelve participants (n = 12), who identified as Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant psychology students at Portuguese universities, participated in the dialogues. Relational thematic analysis identified patterns in their experiences within Portuguese academic psychology spaces. **Results:** Findings reveal that racialised students in Portuguese psychology programs face mixed realities. Themes of connection and disconnection refer to students feeling a sense of belonging in supportive environments while confronting racism, xenophobia, and linguistic barriers in exclusionary settings. Their experiences reflect a shared hope for reconnection through a more pluralistic future, emphasising community and transformation. **Conclusion:** This thesis investigates the experiences of racialised students in Portuguese psychology Academia, highlighting systemic racism rooted in colonial

legacies. It underscores their struggles and aspirations for change, advocating for a more pluralistic and humanising university environment that embraces diverse perspectives. The research suggests that knowledge from participants' experiences and dreams can effectively resist oppression and promote change in Portuguese Academia. Key strategies include enhancing cultural sensitivity, creating support networks, revising psychology curricula to include non-Western perspectives, and addressing linguistic and structural marginalisation.

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## Dissemination Activities Associated with the Present PhD Thesis

### Book

Batista, D. (2024). *Tudo é racismo (?) : Entender o racismo e pensar a psicologia* (2nd ed.). Lisbon: ISBN 978-989-33-4282-4

### Peer Review Journal Article

Batista, D. (2024). Anger, gratitude, and joy: Inquiring colonial legacies and liberation in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology through a decolonial approach to a literature review. *Decolonial Subversions*. p.XXX (submitted).

### Conferences, workshops and seminar presentations

Batista, D., & Korouma, L. (2024, June). *A storytelling workshop: PhD tales of experiences, relationality, and sharing* [Workshop facilitation]. Connections, Reflections and Intersections. Graduate School Festival. University of Westminster, UK.

Batista, D. (2023). *Speculating future through dreaming: Dialogues on decolonial theory and praxis* [Workshop facilitation]. Westminster University. UK

Batista, D. (2023). *Denial, lived experiences and dreaming: Understanding colonial racism and liberation in the context of Portuguese Higher Education Psychology – An Other literature review*. [Conference presentation]. Amsterdam Summer School: The Coloniality of Migration Politics in Europe. University of Amsterdam.

Batista, D. (2023, September). *Decolonialidade e modernidade no Brasil: Fraturas, fissuras e rotas de fuga pra o Brasil*. [Keynote]. Webinar organized in partnership with NEPE - Study Group in Psychoanalysis and Education, Brazil.

Batista, D. (2022). *Witnessing dreams of liberation: Dialogues on colonial legacies, racism, and Denial in the context of Portuguese Higher Education Psychology* [Conference presentation]. LISBON 34th International Conference on “Literature, Languages, Humanities and Social Sciences” (L3HS2-22). Portugal.

Batista, D. (2022). *Modernity, anthropophagy, and re-anthropophagy: A brief discussion on Brazilian surrealism* [Seminar presentation]. Decolonial Research Collaborative. UK.

Batista, D. (2022). *Coloniality of power and racism denial: Retrospective autoethnographic reflections on Portuguese Higher Education* [Conference presentation]. NTU Building Bridges Conference. UK.

Batista, D., & Araneta, K. (2023, October 31). *The coloniality of knowledge and decolonising psychotherapy* (No. 47) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Pedagogies for Social Justice*. University of Westminster.  
<https://blog.westminster.ac.uk/psj/tools/podcast/> <https://doi.org/10.>

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 The mosquito fallen into the milk.

Dreams carry the possibility of renewal and change. I start this thesis by inviting you, the reader, to engage with this research, which proposes to understand the experiences and dreams of Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous students. This thesis focuses on students from Brazil, Portugal, Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde within the context of psychology universities in Portugal. It aims to foster an understanding of the struggles individuals face in academic spaces and their aspirations for commitment and action to transform the structures, relationships, and communities of universities.

I want to begin this thesis by expressing that I wrote it from a place of sincere remembrance. I immersed myself in texts, memories, and dreams throughout my research. I reflect on the privilege of growing up listening to stories from my grandmother, Cidinha Aparecida. One story that stood out was about her experiences under the dictatorship in Brazil during the early 1960s, where she described the social segregation between Black and white people and the places to which Black individuals were explicitly denied access.

My grandmother frequently reminisced about her early days at dance balls, highlighting the challenges faced by Black and Brown individuals who sought to join social clubs designed for White people. She referred to these struggles as *“mosquitos caídos no leite”* – “a mosquito fallen into the milk,” emphasizing the historical exclusion tied to race. Her stories of racism served to remind us that these issues persist today. As a Black, queer Brazilian, I relate to her metaphor

through my own experiences in Portuguese Higher Education Psychology, often feeling like “a mosquito fallen into the milk”.

The meaning of this anecdote provides a crucial starting point for my thesis on the legacy of colonial power relations and their impact on racism in Portuguese Academia, particularly in psychology courses. Scholars (Chilisa, 2019; Davis, 2023; Gopal, 2021; Huber, 2010; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Majee & Ress, 2020; Mittelmeier et al., 2023; Ploner & Nada, 2020; Smith, 2021; Tynan & Bishop, 2022; Watkins & Shulman, 2010) argue that colonial legacies persist in practices and discourses that foster exclusion and oppression. Ploner and Nada (2020) highlight that universities in Europe have historically been sites of unequal power dynamics influenced by these colonial legacies, affecting relationships with Indigenous, Black, and Brown populations.

Initially, universities in the colonies intended to convert Indigenous peoples and support the colonial expansion. Later, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the British established the first universities in the colonies to facilitate administration in the hands of local elites (Ploner & Nada, 2020; Smith, 2021). According to Ploner and Nada (2020), the development of Portuguese universities in their colonies was rare. In the twentieth century, a few universities were established in Mozambique and Angola, primarily for the children of settlers. In contrast, Portuguese colonial rule in Brazil did not result in the establishment of any universities. This process has resulted in a legacy of education that historically prioritises the demands of hegemonic groups, often neglecting the knowledge systems and experiences of Indigenous and racialised communities.

Colonial legacy refers to the lasting impacts of colonialism on institutions, practices, and attitudes, particularly within Higher Education. (Majee & Ress, 2020; Ploner & Nada, 2020). Research conducted by Abrantes and Roldão (2019), Ploner and Nada (2020), and Maeso and Araújo (2010) reveals several critical issues regarding ethnic discrimination in Portuguese educational institutions, including universities:

- 1) Power dynamics, as the relationships within Western Academia often serve the interests of dominant groups that hold economic, racial, and cultural power.
- 2) Marginalisation and exclusion of racialised individuals<sup>1</sup>;
- 3) Prevalence of racial and ethnic discrimination, as these studies highlight racism as widespread within academic settings.
- 4) The perpetuation of exclusionary practices and discrimination is due to the continuous promotion of exclusion and discrimination in Higher Education.

In this course, racism remains a troubling legacy in Portuguese Academia, compounded by dominant elites' denial of its existence. Araújo (2018) highlights that this denial complicates discussions about racism in Portuguese universities. Previous research links this issue to Luso-tropicalism<sup>2</sup> (Araújo, 2007; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019; Raposo et al., 2019). Brazilian sociologist

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<sup>1</sup> Racialisation classifies individuals into racial categories based on social, cultural, or physical traits, leading to the marginalisation or privileging of certain groups. Scholars like Frantz Fanon (2008) argue that this process dehumanises colonised people by linking them to negative traits, justifying their exploitation.

<sup>2</sup> In the etymology of the word Luso-tropicalism, 'Luso' refers to who or what belongs to Portugal. It refers to the Portuguese. 'Tropicalism' refers, in turn, to the quality of what is tropical: tropicity. The concept of "tropics" is significant in colonial discourse, referring to regions around the Equator, such as the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. These areas were often viewed as exotic and fertile, ripe for exploitation by colonial powers like Portugal. This perspective helped justify the colonisation and resource extraction from these lands and their peoples.

Gilberto Freyre developed Luso-tropicalism in the 1930s (Freyre, 1966), a concept that combines cultural and biological arguments to explain the phenomenon of miscegenation<sup>3</sup> in Brazil. It highlights the unique relationship between Portuguese colonisers and Indigenous and Black populations. Freyre suggested that the Portuguese had a propensity for cultural blending, lacking racial pride and embracing social mixing with 'inferior races' (Castelo, 2011, p. 262). Consequently, Luso-tropical discourse claims that the Portuguese fostered a culture of integration and harmony, positioning them as 'better colonisers' than other European colonial projects (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011). In section 1.1 of the introduction, I further analyse Luso-tropicalism beliefs and their implications for education and identification.

Notably, Portuguese colonialism is often portrayed as an expansionist project encompassing economic, social, political, and psychological aspects (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; De Almeida, 2007; Maeso & Araújo, 2010). The term "*descobrimientos*" (discoveries) is frequently used to describe the colonisation of Brazil (Maeso & Araújo, 2010). This narrative suggests that the territory, initially called *Terras de Vera Cruz*, was later renamed Brazil after the red Pau-Brasil wood (*Ibirapitanga* in *Tupi-Guarani*<sup>4</sup>). However, this perspective on Portuguese colonialism as progress ignores the Indigenous

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<sup>3</sup> Miscegenation refers to the mixing of "different races", particularly in the context of sexual relations between White European and Black and Indigenous individuals. While the term has historically been used in a derogatory manner within racist ideologies, it has also been promoted in specific systems, such as Portuguese colonialism as an approach to justify colonial relationship and differentiate the colonial project.

<sup>4</sup> The Tupi-Guarani are a significant indigenous group in South America, primarily in Brazil. They belong to the Tupi linguistic family and historically inhabited various coastal and interior regions before European colonisation. Their language has contributed many words to modern Brazilian Portuguese, particularly regarding flora, fauna, and geography.

sovereignty of the land, which South American Indigenous peoples named *Pindorama*<sup>5</sup> (Castelo, 2011).

Additionally, before the colonisation of Brazil, Portuguese expansionism was driven by the dehumanising activity of the slave trade. This process began as a military expedition into Africa, where the Portuguese captured individuals they deemed easier to convert to Christianity and more 'docile' than Moorish enslaved people (Castelo, 2011). In 1441, the first enslaved people arrived in Lagos, Portugal. Prince Infante Dom Henrique de Portugal agreed with the Catholic Church to impose perpetual servitude on the enslaved, requiring their conversion to Christianity. This pact justified the exploitation of labour to extract resources from the land (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010).

Furthermore, Portuguese colonialism began in São Tomé between 1470 and 1490 as an economic project that relied on enslaved labour to cultivate sugar cane, coffee, and chocolate (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; De Almeida, 2007). In 1500, Portuguese colonisers introduced this exploitative system in Brazil, which was their newly conquered territory. From that point onward, the Portuguese pioneered a system of exploitation, extraction, and enslavement that lasted nearly 150 years before other European powers joined in this violent process of human, cultural, and linguistic dispossession (De Almeida, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2016; Maeso & Araújo, 2010).

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<sup>5</sup> 'Pindorama' means 'the region of the palm trees' and is often used to refer to Brazil. It is the denomination given by Ando Peruvian Indigenous people to Brazil before its colonisation by the Portuguese.

From 1500 to 1888, slavery was central to the economic framework established by Portuguese colonialism in Brazil, similar to other countries in Africa colonised by Portugal at that time. Castelo (2011) highlights that this system involved the roles of enslavers and the *casa-grande* (large plantation houses). A crucial aspect of Brazilian colonial society was the miscegenation among Europeans, Black people, and Indigenous peoples. Beyond biological mixing, Castelo (2011) emphasises that cultural values and behaviours are also blended through mutual exchange. This idea supports the myths of racial democracy and colour blindness, which promote a false sense of unity in Brazil, ultimately reinforcing racial supremacy and perpetuating racial inequalities (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; De Almeida, 2007; Mootoo, 2017). As a result, racial supremacy leads to the denial and depoliticisation of the debate surrounding race and racism, positioning whiteness as an aspirational ideal. Consequently, it becomes evident in the ongoing structural inequality, colourism, and cultural appropriation, which all significantly affect the experiences of racialised individuals.

Furthermore, political discourse in Portugal emphasises harmonious coexistence between races and cultures—scholars, including Agra Figueiredo et al. (2021), argue that Portuguese colonialism's perceived hospitality and openness set it apart from British and Spanish colonial practices. The Luso-tropical perspective suggests that Portugal pioneered a form of racial democracy in Brazil (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Borges & Afonso, 2021; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010). However, debates exist on how Luso-tropicalism within the Portuguese education system often perpetuates a silence

around race and racism, rooted in denial<sup>6</sup> (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2007; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019; Raposo et al., 2019).

This introduction discusses research on the experiences of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant students facing the legacies of colonialism, racism, and denial in Western neoliberal universities in Portugal. According to Michael Rustin, neoliberalism prioritises “industrial” education over “democratic” and “old humanist” ideals (2016, p. 160), emphasising an economic model that values free markets and individualism globally. Neoliberalism reshapes Higher Education by turning universities into corporations focused on measurable outcomes in teaching, research, and societal impact (Rustin, 2016). This shift treats students as clients and views education as a commodity rather than a path to humanisation and liberation. Thus, neoliberalism operates as a colonial legacy by reinforcing exclusion and inequality through economic exploitation and epistemic marginalisation, prioritising commodification over critical thinking and community development. (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Freire, 2013; Rustin, 2016).

Consequently, the university reflects an ‘architecture of absence’ as it has historically been organised around race, predominantly serving White individuals while excluding racialised Others (Arday & Mirza, 2018). The Western neoliberal university emerged in the late 20th century, driven by shifts towards the commodification of education and global economic changes (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Rustin, 2016). However, issues of race and racism are often

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<sup>6</sup> The psychosocial implications of Luso-tropicalism in Portuguese identity and the issue of racism are further detailed and discussed in this thesis's literature review.

overlooked, creating barriers to policymaking and scholarship focused on radical liberation and humanisation (Arday & Mirza, 2018).

Excluding diverse voices in knowledge, coloniality has shaped the type of knowledge produced by universities over the past five centuries, beginning with scientific racism and justifications for slavery and colonialism (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2008). This legacy continues to influence research that supports mainstream narratives reflecting mainly cisgender, heterosexual, White experiences. For instance, neoliberal Academia further limits funding for projects that challenge the status quo, reducing the agency of Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous communities. In the context of Western neoliberal academia in Portugal, according to Pereira (2015), Portuguese universities have faced significant reductions in core public funding. These policies and practices have led to a greater emphasis on profitability and the pursuit of external funding sources (Pereira, 2015). As a result, academic disciplines and research areas are increasingly evaluated based on their financial viability and capacity to attract funding, rather than solely on academic merit or societal value, or their potential to address inequalities. Moreover, profitability has become a key criterion for assessing knowledge, which reshapes what is deemed valuable or legitimate knowledge within the university environment. These changes reconfigure epistemic hierarchies, favouring disciplines that can demonstrate financial profitability or align with market values (Pereira, 2015). This trend marginalises fields that are more challenging to monetise, liberatory and decolonial work, pressuring scholars to conform to dominant epistemic norms. Such pressures can come at the cost of critical or alternative forms of knowledge production. This shift reinforces a lack of

plurality in perspectives, promotes hierarchies of knowledge, and hinders our ability to understand the world more comprehensively (Pereira, 2015; Andrews, 2018).

It is crucial to emphasise that the exclusionary legacy within Western neoliberal academia is upheld not only by racism but also by other systems of oppression, such as sexism and homo/transphobia. Lugones (2014), an Argentine sociologist, professor, feminist, and activist, argues that, like race, gender is neither a universal nor a neutral category; rather, it is a colonial imposition that is co-constituted with race and sexuality through what she calls the "colonial/modern gender system." This system, established by European colonial powers—including Portugal—enforced binary, heteronormative, and patriarchal norms while pathologising other forms of gender and sexuality (Lugones, 2014; Velez et al, 2020). Colonialism has profoundly shaped gender and sexuality, intertwining them with race as categories of hierarchy and control. Colonial projects, including Portuguese colonisation, imposed racialised, heteronormative, and gendered systems that continue to influence contemporary knowledge production and institutional practices, particularly in Higher Education (Nassiri-Ansari et al., 2024; Velez et al., 2020). Addressing these legacies is essential for dismantling coloniality; neglecting to do so allows colonial notions of gender and sexuality to persist within both academia and society. Moreover, comparative research on Portuguese colonialism reveals distinct legacies in the regulation of same-sex sexualities and gender diversity, shaped by ideologies such as Luso-tropicalism. Unlike British colonialism, Portuguese rule often racialised homosexuality as a European import, influencing contemporary attitudes and policies in former colonies (da Costa

Santos et al, 2019). Therefore, understanding the colonial legacy of racialisation in Portuguese academic spaces requires acknowledgement of the deep intertwining with gendered, cis-heteronormative, and other systems of oppression. This analysis is crucial for dismantling power asymmetries and advancing meaningful change.

Many neoliberal Western universities have colonial roots (Gopal, 2021) and Academia has played a crucial role in the colonial project. According to Achille Mbembe, the curriculum in Academia was ‘...designed to meet the needs of colonialism...’ (2016, p. 32). During colonialism, universities set up agricultural research stations and plantation systems to maximise resource extraction (Chilisa, 2019). European universities legitimised pseudoscientific ideas, using skull measurements to claim White superiority and justify the exploitation of Black and Indigenous communities (Smith, 2021). Thus, historically, the university concentrated on developing theories and technologies that supported colonialism and justified the oppression of Black and Indigenous peoples (Arday & Mirza, 2018). In addition, Mbembe (2016, p. 31) argues that Westernised universities support a Eurocentric academic model prioritising Eurocentric theories in understanding human experience. For example, for years, Western anthropology has portrayed non-Western societies as "primitive" and inferior to Western civilisation (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021). Consequently, the knowledge of Indigenous and Black communities is often marginalised (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Joseph Mbembe, 2016).

By legitimising knowledge production as the exclusive domain of hegemonic elites, Western neoliberal universities reinforce the perception that the creation and ownership of knowledge belong solely to powerful elite groups (Kilomba,

2012). This has involved creating a scholarship that asserts a universal truth about the human experience while marginalising Black and Indigenous peoples. Their experiences are often considered inferior, subjective, and localised (Kilomba, 2012). In addition, as stated by Andrews (2018), "the university is racism," perpetuating myths about merit and knowledge legitimacy, leading to gatekeeping and the maintenance of racial hegemony. As a result, Academia acts like the "milk" in my grandmother's metaphor, trapping the "mosquito" and hindering its fight for liberation against dehumanisation and racism. Thus, dominant Eurocentric narratives impose a universal story (Fanon, 2008), dismissing the knowledge of Indigenous and marginalised communities (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Subsequently, Eurocentrism distorts history and reinforces power structures, thereby preventing marginalised groups from fully participating in the creation of academic knowledge (Fanon, 2008; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This persistence of colonial legacies impacts exclusion and challenges within Academia and affects society (Andrews, 2018). For example, psychology has established general methods for understanding "humanity," making it challenging for researchers trained in these perspectives to adopt alternative approaches (Chilisa, 2019).

Furthermore, universities have historically perpetuated coloniality and racial differences, reflecting the dominance of Whiteness in Academia (Kilomba, 2012). Coloniality refers to the enduring effects of colonialism on contemporary systems and beliefs, which shape knowledge and power dynamics (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000). Consequently, Academia has a complex history with racialised and Indigenous peoples, systematically

invalidating their knowledge and experiences (Kilomba, 2012, p. 300).

Therefore, over time, credibility in knowledge production has been reserved mainly for Whiteness (Harris, 1993; Kilomba, 2012), making the university a space broadly defined by Whiteness.

In addition, coloniality emphasises and exceeds the influence of colonialism on knowledge production, social practices, personal experiences, and political actions. Walter Mignolo (2002) explains that modernity and coloniality in the Western world stem from institutions that structure knowledge and justify colonial practices. For instance, universities have played a pivotal role in producing and validating colonial knowledge, dating back to the Portuguese and Spanish colonial periods and continuing through British colonialism. Their Eurocentric approaches have significantly shaped other institutions and nation-states, promoting a universal way of being and thinking (Mignolo, 2002; Quijano, 2000; Smith, 2021).

Narrowing down to the coloniality across contemporary Portuguese society, the myth of Luso-tropicalism, a concept developed by Gilberto Freyre (1966), suggests that Portuguese colonisers were more benevolent and willing to integrate with the colonised compared to the Spanish and British (Araújo, 2007; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019). This "quasi-theory" (Castelo, 2011) implies that the Portuguese promoted miscegenation and contributed to the establishment of a democratic multiracial society in Brazil (Araújo, 2007). However, it also sustains domination and new forms of racism in contemporary Portuguese society (Araújo, 2007; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019). The following section provides further historical and present contextualisation of Portuguese Higher Education.

### 1.1.1 Giving back the mirrors – reflections on the Luso-tropical Way of Being

Brazil, the PALOP<sup>7</sup> countries, and Portugal shares a historical connection that dates back nearly four centuries of colonialism (Castelo, 2011). This era was characterised by an exploitative socio-economic system reliant on slavery and land extraction, creating hierarchical structures based on racial distinctions (Castelo, 2011). These experiences are often celebrated in history books and education, framed as examples of Portuguese intercultural engagement with Black and Indigenous peoples (Araújo, 2018). Consequently, narratives of glory in Portuguese colonial history reveal a complex relationship with the past and its impact on human experience (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011).

For instance, in my early education, I learned about the "Portuguese Empire" and its expansion in Brazilian history classes<sup>8</sup>. Vivid images from schoolbooks depict the encounters between the Portuguese and Indigenous peoples, often portrayed as peaceful exchanges. Illustrations depict the Portuguese presenting items like mirrors as gifts to build trust while aiming to secure access to resources from the land (de Mendonça & de Mendonça Furtado, 1963; Quijano,

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<sup>7</sup> The acronym PALOP stands for "Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa". It refers to the African countries where Portuguese is an official language: Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Equatorial Guinea (Equatorial Guinea made Portuguese its third official language to join the PALOPs, even though it shares little history or culture with the other member nations). Portuguese connects these nations to Portugal, East Timor, Macau, and Brazil, all of which were formerly Portuguese colonies.

<sup>8</sup> In history, the process of globalisation that happened during the last 5 centuries was the result of colonisation, a process in which Brazil and Portugal are historically bonded as there '... are some lines of research and some biases of thought around the trip to Brazil, its discovery or, who knows, a possible contact or invasion of the lands of the New World, which would later be the Brazilian lands. Sometimes, one does not know the total scope that involves the organisation and size of Cabral's fleet. In Brazilian schools, it is usually taught that Pedro Álvares Cabral discovered Brazil. However, this fact cannot be considered in isolation; it is part of a series of events in Portugal's history, including the circumstances surrounding Portuguese maritime expansion. Gomes, A. M., & da Rocha, R. B. (2016). *Descobrimento/achamento, encontro/contacto e invasão/conquista: a visão dos índios na descoberta da América Portuguesa. identidade!*, 21(1), 91-109.

2000). In this section, I will examine the idea that "Portuguese colonialism was not 'that bad' compared to others" (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021, p. 172) as it adds to the contextualisation of the thesis. I propose reclaiming the mirror given to Indigenous people and holding it up to Portuguese society. This prompts a reflection on how Luso-tropicalism has influenced the Portuguese identity today, particularly the belief in the peaceful and racially democratic nature of Portuguese colonialism (Castelo, 2011; Freyre, 1966).

Firstly, the concept of Luso-tropicalism originated in Gilberto Freyre's first book, *Casa-Grande & Senzala*, published in 1933. In this work, Freyre examined the colonial state of Brazil, focusing on the interactions between Portuguese colonisers and Indigenous and Black populations, highlighting their extensive biological and cultural miscegenation (Castelo, 2011; Freyre, 1966). Additionally, in this analysis, Freyre proposed a psychological-cultural portrait, identifying three key traits of the Portuguese coloniser: mobility, miscegenation, and acclimatisation (Castelo, 2011). The first trait is mobility, referring to the Portuguese people's ability to explore unknown lands. The second is miscegenation, highlighting their tendency to form intimate and social relationships with enslaved Black and Indigenous individuals. The third is acclimatisation, adapting to tropical climates (Castelo, 2011; Silva, 2015). As a result, these traits, as outlined by Freyre, illustrate the Portuguese colonisers' goal of creating a hybrid colonisation project, characterised by their notion of 'confraternisation' between 'superior' and 'inferior' races, a process that confers specificity to Portuguese coloniality (Castelo, 2011; Freyre, 1966; Quijano, 2000).

It is crucial to acknowledge that the Portuguese colonial project, fundamentally rooted in Luso-tropicalism, involves both racialisation and gendering.

Miscegenation, a key element of Portuguese colonisation, is portrayed through Luso-tropicalism as a form of integration, suggesting that the Portuguese colonisers had a propensity to mix with indigenous and enslaved Black people. However, this portrayal is a euphemism for relationships based on sexual violence, birth control, and patriarchal dominance. Castelo (2011, p. 261) discusses miscegenation as a biocultural tool of patriarchal colonial control that, “whether on the biological level, through frequent intermixing between white, Indigenous, and Black peoples, or on the cultural level, through the reciprocal adoption of values and behaviors among the various peoples in contact,” created a unique society in Brazil. In this context, Luso-tropicalism depicts the rape and exploitation of Indigenous and Black women to produce more enslaved and subservient individuals as “intimate coexistence” achieved through “intimate social and sexual ties” (Castelo, 2011, p. 263). This lusotropical language constructs a narrative that erases the experiences of sexual violence, birth control, and experimentation involving racialised female bodies.

Furthermore, this narrative excludes and vilifies same-sex relationships, as well as non-conforming gender expressions, positioning cisgender heterosexual norms as valid while portraying other expressions as distortions, savagery, or inferior practices. The colonial project enforced control and dominance over marginalised communities, particularly by restricting the reproductive rights of racialised women. As a result, it is relevant to acknowledge and understand that gender, race, and sexual orientation are intertwined. Carla Akotirene, an activist,

researcher, author, and columnist on Black feminism in Brazil, discusses how the Portuguese Colonial Administration resorted to sexual violence against Indigenous and Black women's bodies to produce individuals who could be exchanged and sold for the continuation of colonial exploitation—a process she refers to as sexual-racial oppression (Akotirene, 2019, p.19). This analysis clarifies that the argument for miscegenation in Luso-tropicalism tends to obscure the central role of sexual violence in Portuguese colonisation and underscores that race and gender must be understood as interconnected in the operation of systems of dominance. This colonial legacy remains extractive, patriarchal, white, and cis-heteronormative.

Notably, Gilberto Freyre's thesis significantly influenced knowledge and identity in modern Portuguese society. According to Castelo (2011), Luso-tropicalism gained prominence when Freyre presented his ideas at European academic conferences in the 20th century. From King's College in London to the universities of Porto, Coimbra, and Lisbon, Luso-tropicalism developed as a topic of discussion in academic circles regarding the effects of Portuguese colonisation. Freyre examined and defended the positive attributes of the Portuguese colonisers, emphasising that miscegenation in Brazil and the harmonious colonial environment created a unique legacy (Castelo, 2011; Marques, 2008; Valentim, 2011). Initially, Portuguese elites, intellectuals, and the state rejected Luso-tropicalism (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Marques, 2008; Silva, 2015). Associating the Portuguese with Black, Indigenous, and Mixed-race individuals was seen as linking colonisers to notions of primitiveness and degeneration (Marques, 2008). Despite this, the quasi-theory, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, was officially used to highlight

that Portuguese identity is open to integration and multiculturalism, which became recognised as positive aspects of national identity, especially compared to other European colonial projects (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011).

Furthermore, the Portuguese dictatorial regime, in power until 1974, promoted Luso-tropicalism during global tension. After World War II, international pressure from the United Nations and European countries increased regarding Portugal's remaining colonies (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2007; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019; Castelo, 2011; Raposo et al., 2019). To address current political views and maintain sovereignty, the Portuguese state revamped official documentation and trained diplomats to promote a Luso-tropical narrative. This narrative portrayed Portugal's relationships with its former African colonies as rooted in natural hospitality and harmonious coexistence (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021, p. 176). Consequently, Luso-tropicalism became a state-appropriated myth of tolerance, systematically infused into society, media, and education to legitimise colonial history and its persistence. It evolved from a description of Portuguese exceptionalism to a normative framework for national identity (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011).

Portugal leveraged Freyre's ideas to connect nationalism and Luso-tropicalism, integrating this ideology into university curricula (Castelo, 2011). The goal was to educate the Portuguese and colonised individuals about human rights and the perceived 'benevolence' of Portuguese colonisation, depicting the Portuguese as inherently antiracist and culturally tolerant (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011). This narrative downplayed the structural nature of racism in Portuguese coloniality, presenting colonialism as beneficial and

legitimising historical violence. The legacy of Luso-tropicalism reinforces coloniality as a dominant ideology, naturalising racist rhetoric and practices towards specific groups. It encompasses both the Myth of Racial Democracy and its legacy, while also reinforcing the denial of race and racism as issues within Portuguese society (Araújo, 2007; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019).

Luso-tropicalism has undeniably contributed to the concept of a 'species consciousness' (Castelo, 2011, p. 266), portraying a bond between colonisers and the colonised as one of peace and harmony. This notion suggests that the desire for miscegenation and multicultural exchange among Portuguese, Black, and Indigenous peoples was crucial for understanding the colonial world established by the Portuguese. However, this myth allowed Portuguese Colonialism to evade accountability for its brutal colonial past, distorting the reality of violence—rape, genocide, and mutilation—inflicted upon racialised individuals for centuries (Castelo, 2011; Marques, 2008). Ultimately, Portuguese colonisation was characterised by racism, epistemic violence, and atrocity.

Racism in Portugal presents itself through the renovation of coloniality in the political marginalisation of black people and the Eurocentric imaginary (Raposo et al., 2019). The Luso-tropical legacy often leads to the denial or minimisation of racism in Portugal, suggesting the country is immune due to its history of integration and miscegenation. However, Ramos et al.'s (2020) study reveals that 52.9% of the population holds biological racist beliefs about race, and 54.1% view certain cultures as superior. Other studies (Araújo, 2007; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019; Ramos et al., 2020; Raposo et al., 2019) have highlighted the challenges of discussing racism openly; its implications continue to persist, illustrating a troubling reluctance to confront these issues head-on.

Despite the portrayal of Portugal as a multicultural democracy, racialised and minoritised communities face systemic racism daily (Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019; Ramos et al., 2020; Raposo et al., 2019). This systemic racism includes disparities in health care, access to justice, and educational opportunities, compounded by a hostile environment for immigrants.

The absence of prejudice and discrimination is a characteristic that defines the Portuguese experience and its uniqueness within the Luso-tropical myth (Marques, 2008). A study on social perceptions found that Portuguese participants viewed themselves as good, sympathetic, and culturally open, while many defined African individuals as marginal criminals and ignorant.

Conversely, Black African-descent participants often viewed the Portuguese as racist and conservative (Valentim, 2011). The differing perspectives highlight how Luso-tropicalism has shaped social representations, contributing to narratives of Portuguese identity as anti-racist and culturally inclusive. This phenomenon illustrates a unique coexistence based on cultural colour-blindness toward race and racism.

Luso-tropicalism reflects a lack of self-reflection and dialogue about racism in Portuguese society, leading to the perception that Portugal is inherently antiracist. This view enables subtle forms of coloniality and racial discrimination, which maintain power among political and economic elites. The immunity to racism created by the Luso-tropical legacy is a process of how coloniality blinds subjects in a manner that they cannot acknowledge structural oppression, affecting their subjective and intersubjective experience. For instance, Luso-tropical identification reflects a lack of self-reflection and critical socio-political awareness. It avoids recognising social inequalities driven by structural racism,

sexism, and homophobia, impacting all people, including in educational settings. This identification minimises the oppressive dynamics in everyday life. While Luso-tropicalism suggests that being Portuguese means embracing other cultures, acknowledging racism conflicts with this view, leading to its repression and denial.

Perhaps the most essential aspect of Luso-tropicalism is the notion of denial, claiming to situate the Portuguese identity as immune to racism. Kilomba (2021) describes racism denial as a psychological defence mechanism that represses uncomfortable truths, allowing individuals to avoid recognising their complicity in everyday racism (Essed, 1991; Van Dijk, 1992). Additionally, luso-tropical beliefs dismiss the knowledge and experiences of racialised individuals about race. This leads to the de-racialisation of social relations in schools and workplaces, maintaining the existing power dynamic (Araújo, 2007; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019). Thus, Luso-tropicalism acts as a means of denying racism in modern Portuguese society, reinforcing colonial power structures and influencing social and political realities.

The Portuguese identification with Luso-tropicalism, its ideological ties to cultural coexistence, and a predisposition toward inclusion and diversity create an association in which these traits are considered integral to the national identity. The alignment suggests that concepts such as goodness, fairness, and truth are closely tied to Portugal's actions and history regarding its colonial past. By associating these positive attributes with the Portuguese Luso-tropical identity, it becomes challenging to acknowledge any negative traits (Kilomba, 2021; Marques, 2008). In Portuguese universities, structural racism often affects racialised students, and many overlook this issue. This denial of racism

is critical in maintaining the myth of a positive Portuguese identity (Castelo, 2011; Marques, 2008). Such narratives serve as a socio-political tool for national identification, which is invested in and shared silently across generations (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Marques, 2008).

Luso-tropicalism defines the Portuguese colonial project and promotes a specific Portuguese identity (Castelo, 2011). The Portuguese state engages in this ongoing process to construct a national myth that preserves global sovereignty (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Marques, 2008). Instead of feeling shame about the colonial past and seeking reparations, today's practices, discourses, and policies frame it as an ideal present, where people dismiss race and racism as unrealistic (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Marques, 2008). Hence, Luso-tropical ideologies distort the colonial past, leading to a cognitive bias that interprets racial mixing and harmony as a unique integrative feature of the Portuguese colonial experience. Therefore, this process is based on the alleged inclination of Portuguese colonisers towards miscegenation, downplaying systemic racism, power imbalance and exploitation in the colonial relationships (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011).

Luso-tropical ideologies have been adopted by institutional discourse and policies, creating a paradox where Portuguese identity is framed as antiracist, thereby legitimising domination over former colonies (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019; Marques, 2008). This narrative suggests that Portuguese colonialism was harmonious and inclusive, reinforcing a hierarchy over territories and cultures (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Marques, 2008; Quijano, 2000). Thus, when used in political discourse, Luso-tropicalism offers a distorted view of history regarding black, brown and

Indigenous populations, denying the inhumane conditions of colonialism through narratives of benevolence. This underlying logic perpetuates a racially modern state that remains blind to the historical wounds caused by racism.

The assimilation of social representations concerning the Portuguese and racialised others, alongside Luso-tropical beliefs, often obscures discussions about racism in spaces like universities (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Silva, 2015). For instance, the myth of Luso-tropicalism, which promotes the idea of harmonious coexistence, tends to suppress the discrimination, prejudice, and fear experienced by racialised individuals. Thus, academic dialogues and self-reflection regarding lived experiences and other knowledge approaches in this Luso-tropical context are often viewed as unnecessary, superficial, and undesirable. To illustrate, a study of Portuguese psychology students revealed that, despite a growing awareness of colonial history, they believed they coexisted harmoniously with Black individuals and were open to diversity (Silva, 2015). This reflects a lack of critical self-awareness and a misguided perception of Portuguese identity as immune to racism (Marques, 2008; Silva, 2015; Valentim, 2011).

This reflection unfolds when racialised Others confront the mirrors that the Portuguese colonisers once held up to Indigenous peoples to justify their exploitation. The same mirror that can cast light also blinds those who align themselves with Luso-tropical ideologies, preventing them from recognising the horrific realities of colonial genocide and its lasting impact today. Many people feel inadequate or different as they navigate the frontiers of academic spaces in Portugal. In critical moments, we often lose our voices and agency, facing racial slurs, limited job opportunities, and invisibility, especially regarding Black and

Indigenous individuals in positions of power. This struggle raises an important question: Who are the actual humans among us?

It is fundamental to recognise that the tendency to avoid examining both our past and present stems from a shared understanding: it is easier to deny racism than to confront the intersubjective, political, and personal consequences of this profound manifestation of colonialism—racial oppression. The status quo remains intact by refusing to look into this mirror and reflect on the structural issues within Portuguese society and institutions, such as the university. This denial obscures hope for a liberated, equitable, and fundamentally humanised future for all (Bell et al., 2019; Freire, 2013; hooks, 1989; Kilomba, 2012). The following section contextualises Higher Education and contemporary issues in Portugal.

### 1.1.2 Contextualisation – Portuguese Higher Education

Historically, universities have served as institutions where human knowledge is cultivated and transmitted across generations. These institutions investigate various phenomena to enhance understanding, and they exist in diverse locations worldwide. People seek to learn about these phenomena, specialise in different disciplines, and gain social recognition to pursue their careers.

However, like many enduring institutions, Academia reflects the interests of the privileged elite (Arday & Mirza, 2018). As such, it has adapted to meet social demands in research, policy, practice, and education. This research focuses on Higher Education in Portugal, and this section provides further context regarding Portuguese Academia. I will pay special attention to the Western

neoliberal university, established as a "legitimate space of knowledge production" (Arday & Mirza, 2018, p. 145).

Since 1973, Portuguese laws have governed public and private Higher Education, organised in a binary system (República, 1986), which includes universities and polytechnic institutions. Universities focus on research and critical thinking skills, while polytechnic education emphasises the practical application of knowledge in areas like development and innovation (República, 1986). From 2005 onwards, Portuguese Higher Education was restructured under the Bologna Process, which involves 48 European countries, aiming to enhance academic progress (Monteiro et al., 2018). This initiative promoted common standards for inclusion, innovation, research collaboration, and recognition of qualifications. Since 2006, Portuguese universities have organised their programs into three academic cycles—bachelor's, master's, and doctoral—while implementing the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) (Monteiro et al., 2018).

Portugal has established the Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES) to ensure quality in Higher Education. According to A3ES (2007), recognised universities must meet the following criteria:

- a) Offer six bachelor's and master's programs and one doctoral program in at least three areas;
- b) Have a qualified faculty;
- c) Provide adequate facilities;
- d) Engage in research and contribute to culture;

e) Maintain evaluated and recognised assessment centres (A3ES, 2007).

Additionally, Portugal guarantees access to Higher Education by law. National and international students can apply if they meet prerequisites such as completing secondary school, fulfilling course requirements, or passing a national exam or admission test (República, 1986; Vinagre, 2017).

Access to education in Portugal is a fundamental human right. As a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, Portugal recognises education as a universal right, stating that primary education should be free and that "Higher Education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit" (Assembly, 1948, p. 4). The declaration also considers that education must allow human development, respect fundamental human rights and freedom, and shall '...promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups... for the maintenance of peace' (Assembly, 1948, p. 4).

The Portuguese government has implemented educational policies to promote student mobility with countries in Asia, Africa, and South America, where Portuguese is the official language (PALOP). This includes agreements with Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé, Príncipe, Brazil, and Portugal (Vinagre, 2017). This overview provides an overview of the Portuguese Higher Education system, including the regulations and international agreements that govern it. It establishes Higher Education as a human right and emphasises the principles of freedom and accessibility for all. Despite the political arrangements made in education, the socialisation and individual experiences of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant students in Portuguese Higher Education have raised significant concerns about the official

framework. In the following section, I will address the issues related to experiences of racism within Portuguese Higher Education in psychology.

## 1.2 Racism in Portuguese Psychology Higher Education.

Despite the portrayal of Portuguese Higher Education as accessible and collaborative, Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant students continue to experience marginalisation, exclusion, and dehumanisation due to racism and its denial (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Araújo, 2007; Maeso & Araújo, 2010; Raposo et al., 2019). The following section addresses racism in Portuguese Academia, beginning with a narrative vignette<sup>9</sup> (Chilisa, 2019; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Glesne, 2016) that highlights the psychological conditions of those in psychology academic spaces (Bell, 2018b, p. 1). By combining my experiences with systemic issues, I aim to critically reflect on racialisation in Portuguese Higher Education and advocate for the validity of subjectivity as knowledge (Bell et al., 2019).

### 1.2.1 A Lived Experience

It is October 2020, and the following hateful graffiti has been displayed on university walls: *'morte aos pretos – por uma faculdade branca'* – 'death to blacks – for a white university'; *'fora com os pretos'* – 'out with the blacks'; *'viva a raça branca'* – 'long live the white race'; *'Europa aos Europeus – viva a Europa Branca'* – 'Europe to the Europeans – long live White Europe' (Antunes,

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<sup>9</sup> A "narrative vignette" is a brief, descriptive passage highlighting a specific moment or interaction in research or storytelling. Many scholars (Chilisa, 2019; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Glesne, 2016) explain that in qualitative studies, vignettes present key themes and insights from data, making real-world experiences more vivid and relatable. These vignettes often showcase interactions and reactions related to the study's themes in psychology, education, and social sciences

2020; Pinto, 2020). The corridors are like cold labyrinths. Cold as the rainy, windy weather of long, winter dark days. Corridors in which Portuguese white students react, for no apparent reason, with shock after seeing a Black person with dreadlocks walking in the same space. At the lobby entrance is a box with stones inside and the following sign on the outside: '*Gratis se for para atirar a um zuca*<sup>10</sup>' – 'Free if it is to shoot a zuca' (Guimarães, 2019).

In my experience at distinct psychology academic spaces in Lisbon and Braga, I have observed classrooms where students are often seated in an implicitly ordered fashion: white individuals are typically positioned at the front and middle, while racialised Others frequently find themselves relegated to the back and sides. There is an avoidance of contact in the relationship between White and Black students. However, white students do not refrain from jokes or sharing their views on racialised students' cognitive capacities. In such a space, I observed that the dialogue was minimal or not expected. The professor owns the legitimacy to speak. Students must acknowledge the faculty credentials in this dynamic: "*Sr. Doutor*" - "Mr. Doctor. "The 'not usual students' names in this landscape will likely be forgotten and replaced by misspelt attempts, as they usually combine letters in a 'funny way', which is uncommon in European Portuguese.

I noted that the curriculum has a predefined and non-arguable canon. The sources of knowledge must have traditional Portuguese surnames; otherwise, markdowns are justified. The topics of research, methods of investigation, and analysis frameworks are defined vertically. The lessons are mainly monologues

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<sup>10</sup> 'Zuca' is a term used informally in Portugal to define a Brazilian person. It is short for 'Brazuca' and can be used in a derogatory form in the country.

from white males and a few white women. The dominant language in writing and speaking must be European Portuguese. The European variant of Portuguese is a requirement for delivering assignments. References primarily need to cite the work of Portuguese scholars and researchers.

Supervision is a bureaucratic and scripted encounter. The supervisee must accept the responses and solutions the supervisor offers to their questions, demonstrating due obedience and compliance. The space for dialogue tends to be nonexistent. Attempts to share a point of view or different understandings of a given topic are part of a hierarchical process. In collective settings, European Portuguese speakers receive priority, creating a sense of implicit hierarchy.

In classrooms, cafeterias, and auditoriums, I have noticed that Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant students from the same national backgrounds often gather in small groups, rarely interacting with others. In these experiences, I observed long queues of non-traditional students dealing with the fear of being unable to afford food or rent, which occupied the departments dedicated to supporting access, finances, and documentation.

In the courses I attended, race and discussions about racism were not part of the curriculum. Of the three psychology classrooms I have been in between 2012 and 2019, there were no discussions about race. When such discussions happen in class, the narrative shifts to the understanding that that is not a problem in Portugal. '*Somos patrícios!*' – 'We are like brothers!'. The defined narrative is that racism is a Third-world issue, '*isso há de ser um problema no vosso país.*' – 'This is more like a problem in your country'. It is common to mobilise the argument that '*nem há tantos pretos aqui.*' – 'There are not even

that many Blacks here'. Racism is thereby discursively constructed as a minor or nonexistent problem in Portuguese society.

I noticed that psychology is taught and studied in the academic settings I mentioned. It is crucial to recognise that neoliberal Western universities are not neutral; the notion of objectivity and neutrality is a myth (Kilomba, 2012).

Presenting Academia as a universal reference for human experience perpetuates colonial legacies and reinforces epistemic hierarchies (Grosfoguel, 2016). For instance, psychology has historically developed universal theories of human behaviour based mainly on Western cultural parameters, often overlooking the perspectives of Indigenous communities in the global South (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021).

I have experienced being an “outsider-within” in Portuguese neoliberal universities from 2012 to 2019. Drawing on Patricia Hill Collins's concept (Collins, 1998, p. 24), I consider my experiences in Portuguese Higher Education psychology to be navigating at the frontiers, experiencing not belonging through racial microaggressions whenever I used non-European references, wrote and spoke Brazilian Portuguese, and dared to have something to say. This feeling of being foreign, or “*estrangeiro*,” resonated with my grandmother’s story, making me feel like a ‘mosquito fallen into milk’ in these spaces.

My experiences motivated me to explore the challenges faced by other racialised students encountering racism in Academia. This research invites them to envision ways to transform Portuguese Higher Education collectively. Deanne Bell et al. (2019, p. 301) note that racialised students often feel “exhausted, depleted, and defeated” due to ongoing marginalisation in

Academia. I believe that their existential condition is one of absence. How can Academia be a zone of absence? This section provides a personal account of my experiences in Portuguese psychology Academia. The following section presents a critical perspective on the challenges faced by racialised students in this context.

### 1.2.2 Racial Exclusion and Colonial Legacy in Portuguese Academia

Recent educational policies in Portugal highlight equal opportunities, interculturality, and diversity within a neoliberal university framework (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2018; República, 1986; Vinagre, 2017). However, socialisation in Academia is still affected by issues of race, cultural hierarchy, and the exclusion of non-European knowledge, particularly impacting racialised students (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2007; Doutor et al., 2018; Raposo et al., 2019). In Portuguese Higher Education psychology courses, Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant students face ongoing challenges related to human rights violations, primarily due to racism and its denial in university (CERD, 2023). Issues include securing housing and financial stability, adapting to social norms, and encountering educational and racial discrimination (Araújo, 2007; Doutor et al., 2018; Duque, 2012; Jardim, 2013; Mourão, 2016; Oliveira, 2013; Pires, 2000; Seibert, 2013; Semedo, 2010; Vinagre, 2017). To illustrate, fewer studies have linked this racism and its denial to colonial legacies associated with Luso-tropicalism (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Ploner & Nada, 2020; Raposo et al., 2019).

Despite discussions of harmonious relationships and multiculturalism in Portuguese Higher Education, students identified as the racialised Other still face enduring colonial legacies of racism. Research has shown a complex relationship between education and oppression, particularly concerning racism in Portugal (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2007, 2018; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019; Maeso & Araújo, 2010). These studies demonstrated that Indigenous, Black, Brown, and immigrant students experience ongoing marginalisation throughout the Portuguese education system. Additionally, Luso-tropical narratives support the denial of racism rooted in Portugal's historical relationships with former colonies, including PALOP countries, Brazil and Angola, São Tomé, Mozambique, Cape Verde, and Guiné-Bissau. As a result, this dynamic perpetuates racial, cultural, and linguistic superiority, leading to the suppression of alternative ways of knowing and existing.

The colonial legacy in Higher Education psychology courses allows the continuity of the dehumanisation of the lived experiences of racialised students in Portugal. For that reason, it is relevant and urgent to develop a study focused on contributing to the comprehension of *testimonios*, a '...verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racial, classed, gendered, and nativist injustices they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more humane present and future' (Huber, 2009, p. 644). This contextualisation is relevant to understanding the ongoing colonial legacy of racism and its denial in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology courses. It illustrates a historical and continuous process of dehumanisation faced by racialised students. This highlights the importance of developing

knowledge to reimagine the dynamics of marginalisation, exclusion, and disenfranchisement towards a more humanised university. This open and horizontal future holds space for diverse knowledge for all people. The following section provides details on the scope of this study.

### 1.2.3 Study Scope – From Marginalisation to Emancipation in Psychology Education

In this section, I introduce the study scope. The study explores the experiences of racialised students in Portuguese psychology education, focusing on exclusion, marginalisation, and racism denial. It employs decolonial methodologies centred on relational and liberatory practices to promote epistemic justice and academic transformation, aiming to reimagine Higher Education as a more inclusive and welcoming space. The "mosquito fallen in the milk" goes beyond an anecdote from my grandmother, Aparecida. It embodies cultural codes (hooks, 1989) meant to convey a viewpoint of historical racism and its dehumanising effects (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) on racialised Other people. My grandmother illustrated how marginalisation and difference shaped her life amid racial division in Brazil. She shared intergenerational knowledge through verbal journeys about cultural norms and beliefs (Brabeck, 2006; Huber, 2009). By recounting her experiences as a Black woman in an oppressive context, she reclaimed her agency against the lingering effects of colonial logic (Samuel & Ortiz, 2021). These narratives serve as acts of love and resistance, offering tools for healing and hope for a radically reimagined future (Bell et al., 2019; hooks, 1989; Zavala, 2016).

I reconstruct my grandmother's memories while also creating new narratives for myself (hooks, 1989). This process involves crafting a language of resistance

against the colonial legacy in Academia. My thesis is rooted in hope, liberation, and imagination for the future. Facing the sense of inferiority in Portuguese Academia means recognising that struggle relates to having a "broken voice" (hooks, 1989, p. 16). Nevertheless, it is also about understanding what it means to be unheard, finding ways to stand tall against marginalisation, and reimagining possible futures. This research aims to understand the experiences of individuals in neoliberal Western universities and their aspirations to reimagine academic spaces.

Additionally, this research opens by integrating my grandmother's wisdom with the theories of scholars concerned about understanding dehumanisation in Portuguese Academia. Through this strategy, I advocate for a relational approach (Tynan, 2021) that values alternative ways of knowing grounded in respect, reciprocity, and sharing. This perspective emphasises the interconnectedness of communities, individuals, spaces, and nature, contrasting with the individualism prevalent in Western knowledge systems (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). This framework invites researchers to actively engage in the relationships among the people and knowledge they study. I further explore relationality in this research in Chapter 2, Literature Review, and Chapter 3, Methodology.

Furthermore, guided by the anecdote of "the mosquito fallen into the milk" and the hope of gaining insight into experiences within Portuguese Psychology Academia, this research addresses the lack of attention to racism and challenges various forms of marginalisation. It invites racialised students to share their experiences in Portuguese psychology courses, facing ongoing exclusion and separation (Ambrósio et al., 2019; Doutor et al., 2018; Gabriel &

Tate, 2017; Maeso & Araújo, 2010). In this context, solidarity, horizontality, and mutual respect are critical to a transformative pedagogy centred on care (Freire, 2013).

This research questions Portuguese Academia as a structure that perpetuates the exclusion of racialised subjects (Andrews, 2018). It discusses how Portuguese Higher Education continuously fails Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant students, who encounter racism and its denial in their daily lives (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Doutor et al., 2018; Jardim, 2013; Maeso & Araújo, 2010; Vinagre, 2017). To understand these ongoing experiences within the context of Portuguese Higher Education, I engaged with "decolonial dreaming" as a radical tool for reimagining and transforming hierarchical and exclusionary practices, particularly in spaces such as the Western neoliberal university (Nirmal & Dey, 2022). Dreaming allows historically marginalised communities to rewrite their narratives and participate in a reimagined future (Bell et al., 2019; Freire, 1996; hooks, 1989; King et al., 2011; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Additionally, this work focuses on the lived experiences of marginalised people, hoping to promote re-humanisation and resilience (Bell et al., 2019; Freire, 2013). I further explore these concepts in Chapter 2, where I present the literature review.

It is essential to highlight that standard psychology has historically struggled to adequately address the lived experiences of racialised students in Higher Education, particularly concerning issues of oppression, racism, and colonial legacies. Mainstream psychological approaches (Watkins & Shulman, 2010) often overlook or inadequately engage with these realities, prompting calls for more critical, reflexive, and justice-oriented frameworks.

Within a mainstream approach to psychology, there is often an oversimplification of human diversity, treating individuals as interchangeable and neglecting the richness of their lived experiences. These approaches lead to a standard setting the white population as the norm. The field's focus on WEIRD – Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (Shultz et al, 2018) populations reinforces this bias, presenting these characteristics as universal and marginalising other ways of knowing and living. For example, research conducted by Jankowski et al. (2017) highlights the Western dominance in psychological scholarship, with editorial boards, authorship, and research participants primarily from Western countries. Their audit of 215 assigned readings revealed that 96% of the authors were white, 99% were Western, and 64% were male. This analysis allowed the recognition of a curricular imbalance that mirrors systematic patterns and a call for self-examination in the face of epistemic imbalance.

In addition, even though psychologists work across sectors such as education, healthcare, and the prison system, these fields consistently report absences of professionals from historically marginalised communities, alongside persistent struggles to engage meaningfully with racial and oppression issues. However, the populations these professionals serve—children excluded from mainstream education, individuals experiencing mental health challenges, and those incarcerated—are disproportionately drawn from these significantly marginalised groups. Although research around these systemic disparities is more and more evident (Gill, 2020; Fazir-Short, 2020), including within counselling psychology (Charura & Lago, 2021) and clinical psychology (Memon et al., 2016), the longstanding availability of critical literature makes the

current state of the profession a continuous epistemic challenge. This problem is far from new. In 1976, Robert V. Guthrie published *Even the Rat Was White: A Historical View of Psychology* (see Guthrie, 1998), which exposed how the weaponisation of race science within psychology had justified the oppression of Black communities in the U.S. and beyond. Guthrie also highlighted the contributions of Black psychologists whose work, both then and now, has been systematically undervalued. The 1998 edition revisited these themes, assessing progress and identifying ongoing challenges, including the persistence of eugenicist ideologies and the flawed premise of mental measurement, both of which continue to fuel harmful stereotypes about oppressed groups. These foundational critiques remain vital for engaging critically and more deeply with the intersections of race and mental health, particularly in the teaching and learning of psychology in universities, a reality also present in Portugal.

Furthermore, traditional psychology tends to rely on quantitative, positivist methods that prioritise objectivity and generalizability (Durrheim, 2023; Strunk & Andrzejewski, 2023; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). However, these dominant perspectives often marginalise or overlook the nuanced experiences of racialised students, failing to capture the complexities of systemic oppression and colonial legacies. In contrast, the widespread adoption of approaches focusing on qualitative, participatory, and critical methodologies—such as hermeneutic phenomenology, reflexive thematic analysis, and case studies—has increased since the early 2000s (Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Smith, 2021). These methods emphasise lived experience, voice, and context (Durrheim, 2023; Strunk & Andrzejewski, 2023; Dutta et al., 2022; Bell, 2018b; Bell et al., 2019; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Additionally, decolonial and postcolonial

theories are increasingly demonstrating examinations of how racism and colonialism influence educational experiences.

Moreover, this study employs decolonial methodologies, *testimonios* and dreaming (Bell et al., 2019; Cervantes et al., 2021; Huber, 2009; Lawrence, 2003; Samuel & Ortiz, 2021; Smith, 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Zavala, 2016), to understand the experiences of racialised students in Portuguese Academia. This approach offers an alternative perspective that emphasises the importance of marginalised voices, contrasting with dominant research methods. The choice for decolonial inquiry stems from the possibilities of understanding and promoting change which can arise from a discipline engaged with 'centring concerns and world views of non-Western individuals and respectfully knowing and understanding theory and research from previously "Other(ed)" perspectives' (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021, p. 2). By incorporating *testimonios* and dreaming, this thesis critiques exclusionary practices and proposes methods to foster coexistence in education, supporting a broader movement that challenges Eurocentrism and promotes epistemic justice (Freire, 2013; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In Chapter 3, I outline the methodology, detailing the various research approaches.

Furthermore, liberatory psychological practices such as conscientisation, humanisation, and critical dialogue guide this research (Comas-Díaz & Rivera, 2020; Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero & Sonn, 2009; Todd, 2011; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). These practices support the critique of systems of oppression in Portuguese Academia while empowering marginalised communities to share their experiences and reimagine academic spaces.

Decolonial approaches to psychology provide a framework for critiquing and

understanding the ongoing effects of colonial legacies in contemporary psychological science. They emphasise how mainstream psychology often universalises Eurocentric knowledge while marginalising alternative ways of knowing. These approaches include the imposition of Whiteness as the standard, the occurrence of epistemic violence, and the pathologisation of non-Western identities and experiences. Scholars (Readsura Decolonial Editorial, 2022a; Readsura Decolonial Editorial, 2022b; Decolonial Psychology Editorial Collective, 2021) have presented research that illustrates the theoretical and practical aspects of decoloniality in psychology. These studies involve methods such as *testimonios*—relational, reflective narratives that resist colonial oppression and envision social justice. These methods are applied in both teaching and research to create opportunities for liberation and to dismantle oppressive systems within the discipline. As a result, these practices help uncover and challenge the harm caused by colonial legacies in academic settings (Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). I employ thematic analysis to understand participants' lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2022; Clarke & Braun, 2017). This method's relevance lies in its flexibility and capacity to honour individual and collective voices, aligning with decolonial methodologies in understanding marginalised perspectives (Kovach, 2021). In this course, thematic analysis combined with decolonial approaches allows space for experiential and alternative ways of knowing. By analysing students' *testimonios* and dreams, the study reveals themes and patterns of experience in Higher Education, systematising narratives of exclusion and enhancing understanding of the role of dreams in changing academic settings (Bell et al., 2019). The analytical approach is also detailed in the methodological chapter.

This inquiry focuses on shared lived experiences and dreams, highlighting the importance of shared narratives among participants. In doing so, I aim to understand how naming and sharing experiences can transform academic relationships and spaces. The research poses two key questions: What are the experiences of Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology? What dreams and aspirations do they hold? This study employs decolonial methodologies, such as *testimonios* and social dreaming, to examine the experiences of racialised students in psychology courses in Portugal. I present and discuss the *testimonios* and dreams in chapters 4, 5 and 6. These approaches help address and understand how these students envision a new, oppression-free university that promotes freedom and emancipation for marginalised individuals (Bell et al., 2019; Freire, 2013; hooks, 1989).

Focusing on liberation, I aspire that this research encourages reflection and re-imagination. As professionals in Higher Education—whether psychologists, researchers, educators, or policymakers—you, along with psychology students and the public, will engage with narratives of struggle, fostering solidarity with experiences of marginalisation and inferiority. I yearn that through this invitation, you will join in envisioning a collective utopian future that seeks to dismantle the university's current role under the framework of coloniality as a model of ways of knowing and relating (Bhambra et al., 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2002; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Quijano, 2000).

I aspire for this work to inspire and contribute to ongoing engagement in transforming Academia into a space of humanisation where individuals are no longer subjected to surveillance and silencing. I envision an environment where

our ontologies and epistemologies are valued rather than marginalised, free from continuous epistemic violence (Spivak, 2023; Readsura Decolonial Editorial, 2022a). I also want to recognise and address the persistent social and political domination and dehumanisation in Higher Education (Bell, 2011; Bell et al., 2019; Teo, 2010). In Chapter 7, I propose suggestions for change supporting the engagement in further research and academic practices.

Ultimately, this research hopes to contribute to decolonising the university and transforming it into a *pluriversity*—an inclusive space that embraces diverse perspectives (Joseph Mbembe, 2016, p. 37). A university that can be called land and home for all, a "...place which enables and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers and differences" (hooks, 1989, p. 16). The study focuses on the experiences of racialised students confronting epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007), dehumanisation, and racism denial in Portuguese Higher Education psychology.

This introduction outlined the thesis's primary goal: to understand the experiences and dreams of racialised Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology programs. Using a decolonial framework, it examines spaces and relationships of absence, marginalisation, and racism denial in academic settings. It connects my grandmother's narratives of exclusion, symbolised by the metaphor of a "mosquito fallen into the milk," to current experiences of dehumanisation in Portuguese psychology Academia. Through methodologies like *testimonios* and social dreaming, this study highlights how these students navigate and resist their academic environments. The key research questions are: What are the

experiences of racialised students in Portuguese psychology courses? What are their dreams and aspirations for the change and future of Portuguese psychology academic spaces? The following section introduces the approach in the literature review.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Reimagining Literature Review – A Decolonial and Relational Approach in Psychology

To understand the experiences and dreams of racialised students in Portuguese psychology Higher Education, I propose a decolonial approach to literature review as an alternative to the traditional method, which often surveys existing knowledge on a specific theme. A typical review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of published work, including theoretical and methodological approaches, while identifying gaps in the research. According to Cunningham (2004, p. 145), a literature review should be "as comprehensive as possible" and offer an "appropriate background" for the research.

In Western approaches to knowledge, a literature review is crucial for establishing legitimacy and scholarly relevance regarding a research topic. It serves as a guide through essential knowledge in a field and helps legitimise a researcher's expertise. The literature review facilitates the scientific pursuit of knowledge by elucidating realities, identifying patterns, and highlighting gaps in existing research. Randolph (2009, p. 2) states that its primary purpose is to demonstrate a researcher's understanding of critical theories, methodologies, and historical context. It also aims to create a framework for discussing new findings concerning prior investigations, providing insights into advancements in the field (Randolph, 2009).

In addition, researchers commonly adopt a scientific voice and a "neutral perspective and present the review findings as fact" (Randolph, 2009, p. 3).

Kilomba (2012, p. 301) argues that neutrality and objectivity reflect hierarchical power dynamics in Western academia, where institutions often "denied

positions of authority and command within the academy". Grada Kilomba asserts that the scientific method is "not a simple apolitical study of truth, but the reproduction of racial power relations...that we encounter in the academia" (2012, p. 301). Racialised individuals often encounter scepticism, as their research is viewed as subjective and emotional, thus considered unscientific (Kilomba, 2012). Additionally, Dudgeon and Darlaston-Jones (2021) argue that notions of neutrality and objectivity in research support dominant ideologies, reinforcing power hierarchies. Exploring alternative approaches to literature reviews represents a significant shift from conventional knowledge-creation methods.

Western frameworks in psychology continue to dominate discussions about the experiences of oppressed communities (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 276). However, research that elevates marginalised voices allows for counter-narratives, challenging traditional storytelling (Dutta et al., 2022). This shift helps move knowledge production from the margins to the centre. Furthermore, Indigenous and racialised perspectives enable marginalised individuals to "claim and speak about extremely painful events and histories," but also for the survival and renewal of "language, arts, and cultural practices" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 276).

This literature review examines the experiences of racialised students in Portuguese psychology programs. It adopts decolonial and relational perspectives while exploring emotions such as anger, gratitude, and joy. Beginning with a decolonial literature review approach, this section emphasises relationality to understand the lived experiences of racialised students better. It

also discusses the conceptualisation of anger, recognises gratitude for scholars addressing racialisation, and explores joy as a way to reimagine the future.

### 2.1.1 Mapping Knowledge Otherwise – A Relational Literature Review through Anger, Gratitude, and Joy

A literature review that shifts from conventional to liberated research methods enhances the recognition of marginalised knowledge and scholars. Watkins and Shulman (2010, p. 278) emphasise that liberatory practices, such as *testimonios* and dreaming, validate local knowledge and deepen understanding of experiences. This review advocates an approach aligned with the ongoing project of decolonisation, which aims to go "beyond the gap" and "surveying the field" (Tynan & Bishop, 2022, p. 7) to centre Indigenous and racialised scholarship, highlighting its role in addressing colonial legacies such as oppression and racism (Gopal, 2021; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Smith, 2021; Tynan & Bishop, 2022; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Fostering these approaches allows engagement with unlearning and exploring alternative ways of knowing (Dudgeon & Darlaston-Jones, 2021; Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003).

Decolonising the literature review, I advocate for reclaiming alternative ways of knowing, relating, and being. This approach serves as an epistemological recovery, critically examining the connections between historical colonial legacies and contemporary Western Academia. Smith notes:

"Decolonisation, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (2021, p. 39).

By decolonising the literature review process, I aim to redefine the relationship with sources of knowledge and incorporate marginalised perspectives, ultimately decentralising dominant ways of knowing in qualitative inquiry.

Western Eurocentric inquiry models construct reality based on binaries such as universal versus specific, theoretical versus practical, scientific versus unscientific, and progress versus stagnation (Chilisa, 2019; Kilomba, 2012; Smith, 2021). In contrast, decolonising the literature review suggests alternatives for reframing research questions and problems away from these binaries. This contrast signifies pluriversality. It refers to an Onto-Ethico-Epistemological positioning that seeks to interrupt the Cartesian divide created by Eurocentric models. It emphasises centring subjectivity and lived experiences in the inquiry process as a way to move beyond extractive, exploitative, and exclusionary methods of knowledge production. To illustrate, Chilisa (2019, p. 59) notes that missionaries, travellers, navigators, historians, and anthropologists have often produced literature on formerly colonised societies. As a result, this body of knowledge continues to influence our research practices. Therefore, decolonising the literature review is an approach that requires epistemic justice and acts of disobedience.

Colonial legacies refer to the lasting effects of colonialism that persist in the present day, including historical racism, social inequalities, and labour exploitation. These legacies continue to impact the research process, particularly in literature reviews. Chilisa suggests that Western researchers should not only strive to understand the "psychological harm, humiliation, embarrassment, and other losses" (Chilisa, 2019, p. 60) inflicted by racial power and oppressive dynamics but also commit to research that centres the voices

and knowledge of Indigenous and racialised communities. This approach is essential for theorising their experiences of marginalisation and their lived realities.

I propose a literature review that embraces the concept of relationality as an alternative to extractivist and hierarchical research approaches. Tynan points out that relationality is about connection to the land and people, the understanding that "all things exist in relatedness" (2021, p. 5). In the research practice, relationality emerges as an option in response to extractive research models running "deep through the veins of research in neoliberal universities" (Tynan, 2021, p. 9). Relatedness is fundamental to well-being, and its absence in research risks perpetuating exclusionary ways of knowing.

Relationality, as emphasised by Tynan (2021) and Tynan and Bishop (2022), shifts research focus from isolated knowledge production to interconnectedness. It stresses the importance of cultivating respectful, reciprocal, and responsible relationships in research. Unlike traditional methodologies, relational accountability within Indigenous paradigms views knowledge as inherently linked to the land, community, and shared responsibilities. This approach asserts that knowing is both ethically and relationally situated, meaning that researchers must honour the voices and experiences of marginalised groups while recognising that land, culture, and community play vital roles in contributing to a meaningful understanding of experience.

As a practice, relationality serves as an alternative aimed at rehumanising research methods. Tynan further explains that:

"consider[ing] Indigenous Peoples as "less than human" represents a non-relational and hierarchical practice that defined/defines colonial relations in settler colonies, positioning the "Other" as outside this matrix of relatedness" (2021, p. 5).

A relational literature review emphasises the researcher's connection to the context, individuals, and knowledge. It involves acknowledging past contributions, giving back, and pursuing new research opportunities (Tynan & Bishop, 2022). Therefore, the employment of relationality in the literature review is an option in recognising that:

"...sometimes we are out of practice or taught by the university to research in non-relational and extractive ways, using strict time frames, restrictive academic writing styles, hierarchical notions of expertise and colonial discourses of "discovery", "finding the gap" and "collecting data" (Tynan, 2021, p. 3).

A relational approach to literature reviews offers a decolonial option for respectful, contextual, and accountable knowledge production, moving away from colonial extractive research practices. This approach emphasises connectedness and envisions alternative futures (Tynan & Bishop, 2022). Additionally, this approach emphasises contextualisation by honouring the cultures and histories of marginalised communities (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021) and promotes reciprocity, ensuring research benefits racialised students (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). Accountability is vital for establishing a moral commitment to these communities, while care focuses on building trust-based relationships and prioritising their needs (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Tynan & Bishop, 2022).

Ultimately, this literature review stems from my experience as a racialised Other studying psychology at Portuguese universities and my research into

marginalisation, exclusion, and dehumanisation in these contexts. Using a relational approach, I will explore the emotions of anger, gratitude, and joy as they relate to navigating Western neoliberal universities, offering an alternative perspective in psychology for those who feel marginalised or excluded. By focusing on these emotions, I aim to reconnect with the crucial aspects of the human experience during the research process. The section on anger will examine how it arises from feelings of being wronged and its role in understanding exclusion and marginalisation, highlighting anger as a catalyst for mobilisation, change, and transformation.

The section on gratitude focuses on thankfulness and alternative ways of knowing, as well as the processes of learning and unlearning in research. It highlights the importance of community and focuses on the knowledge of Indigenous and racialised individuals. Prioritising alternative ways of knowing aims to conceptualise better and understand these communities' experiences. This approach opens up possibilities for shifting perceptions of the realities of marginalised individuals within the academic context. In the final section, driven by anger and gratitude, I focus on joy as a foundation for well-being and happiness in human relationships. Through the lens of joy, I examine the connections between dialogue, dreaming, hope, liberation, and envisioning a future where we coexist horizontally and humanely.

Engaging with these three emotions is essential. Anger is a valid response to the disconnection caused by the dehumanisation rooted in colonial legacies. Gratitude is fundamental for maintaining connections that foster humanisation in the research process. Finally, joy represents the possibilities that reconnection practices provide for rehumanising the experiences of racialised individuals in

Academia. The following section focuses on anger and the experiences of racialised individuals in Higher Education.

## 2.2 Anger

Anger is a fundamental human emotion that people often experience, such as frustration and irritation. It carries a wealth of information and energy (Lorde, 1997, p. 3) and serves as a catalysing force (Phoenix, 2019). Anger can be translated into action towards change and justice as a response to continuous dehumanisation caused by racism (hooks, 1996; Lorde, 1997). Fueled by anger, people can unite to challenge unequal, dehumanising, and divisive ways of relating to one another. This section explores anger and the experience of the racialised other with Academia. It addresses the colonial legacies of exclusion, marginalisation, invisibility, and denial. The segment engages critically with the challenges and opportunities for using anger, exploring conceptualisations of existential rage, psychic revolt, and epistemic disobedience, and considering paths for sociopolitical change.

According to Phoenix (2019), psychologists define emotions as a combination of internal and external forces that create bio-physiological and psychological responses triggered by a stimulus. Similar to emotions like enthusiasm, fear, and pride, Phoenix argues that anger "inspires people to actually roll up their sleeves and engage in the work of advancing political change" (Phoenix, 2019, p. 7). For instance, historical examples of collective revolt include the Apartheid liberation movements in South Africa during the 1990s, the liberation struggles against dictatorial regimes in Brazil and Ecuador in the 1970s and 1980s, and the independence movements from Portuguese colonial rule in Africa during the

1970s. These movements were driven by oppressed Indigenous and racialised communities resisting power and violence (Watkins & Shulman, 2010; West, 1996). However, there are divergences in using anger as a transformative force. Historically, racialised Others have been stereotypically marked as savages, ungovernable and full of rage (Phoenix, 2019). With that, in Western societies, the engagement of Black, Brown, Indigenous and Immigrant individuals in collective demonstrations of anger is subjected to control as it tends to fall under the categories of inadequacy, danger and irrationality.

Firstly, to understand the anger experienced by racialised individuals, we must acknowledge the ongoing struggles caused by inequalities and oppression.

Phoenix highlights that those in positions of power and privilege often attempt to control the responses of racialised individuals, reassuring them that, despite a colonial past, political and social structures, including universities, are "making steady upward progress toward racial equity" (2019, p. 15). I argue that these narratives contribute to dehumanising practices and denial, such as failing to recognise the impact of historical and contemporary racism. This minimisation of social and political accountability often pushes the responsibility for their challenges onto the racialised individuals themselves.

Furthermore, encounters with racism often characterise the experiences of racialised students in Academia (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Kilomba, 2012; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016; Reyes, 2022; Tate & Bagguley, 2017). Audre Lorde (1997, p. 4) states, "anger is an appropriate reaction to racist attitudes". These students frequently confront ambiguity about their place in academic settings, accompanied by a persistent sense of being under surveillance and classified. They also endure overt racism based on their

origins, accents, writing styles, thought processes, and articulation (Bell et al., 2019). Lorde (1997) emphasised that discussions about racism must acknowledge the role of anger. Therefore, for racialised students in Academia, anger often becomes a recurring emotional response as they navigate the challenges posed by their experiences at Western neoliberal universities, a reaction to ongoing racialisation (Gabriel & Tate, 2017).

Additionally, many racialised students in Portugal face continuing struggles to achieve and progress in educational settings, including universities (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; dos Santos, 2020; Doutor et al., 2018; Ploner & Nada, 2020).

While studying psychology at Portuguese universities, these students may be among the few racialised individuals in predominantly White spaces (Kilomba, 2012). Consequently, they might experience fear and isolation, worrying that they are not good enough, are frauds, or do not belong (Gabriel & Tate, 2017).

Moreover, Doutor, Marques, and Ambrósio (2018) examine racism in Higher Education, focusing on the everyday discrimination faced by African students from Portuguese-speaking African countries, PALOP, in Portuguese universities. According to Doutor et al. (2018, p. 170), “being a university student from the PALOP in Portugal means facing racial prejudices, suspicions about their competencies and, also, colonial representations of Africa”. Their study highlights overt and subtle practices, such as racial profiling, social exclusion, and microaggressions, which create feelings of otherness. These barriers not only impede academic progress but also reinforce racial hierarchies and socio-cultural isolation within Portuguese Academia.

Similarly, Ambrósio et al. (2019) examine the systemic challenges African students from Portuguese-speaking countries face at two universities in

Portugal. The study highlights structural barriers, including limited support networks, cultural isolation, and experiences of discrimination. Through their research, Ambrósio et al. (2019, p. 388) emphasise “prejudice and discrimination as hindrances experienced by international students” and challenges to “establish relationships with home students”. These students often confront stereotypes and microaggressions that undermine their academic abilities and cultural legitimacy, further marginalising them in an already tricky academic environment.

Anger may also arise as these students reject the stereotype that racialised Others are intellectually inferior and, therefore, dispensable (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 259). Discussing anger as a form of enablement, hooks (1996) asserts that expressing anger against injustice is a means of self-assertion that dismantles victimhood and restores humanity, providing a pathway toward personal and collective liberation. Similarly, Lorde (1997) views anger as a vital tool for confronting oppression, particularly racism and other forms of marginalisation. She believes anger is a source of strength and clarity that enables marginalised communities to resist silencing and advocate for change. Therefore, anger perhaps can be a response "of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation" (Lorde, 1997, p. 1) in the context of Academia.

In addition, many of these students are immigrants, whether first, second, or even third-generation members of immigrant families. They view Higher Education as a dream and a pathway to escape the lack of professional opportunities and poverty. More importantly, they seek to break free from a

continual state of colonial violence that has deeply affected the lives of Indigenous peoples, women, and Black and Brown individuals in their communities, as well as the lands, languages, and cultures to which they share connection and belonging (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Raposo et al., 2019).

For instance, Borges and Afonso (2021) examine the racial dynamics of Brazilian students in Portuguese Academia, revealing post-colonial tensions that lead to exclusion and marginalisation. Their analysis shows how structural inequalities and subtle prejudices contribute to experiences of isolation and microaggressions. The study suggests that Brazilian students in Portugal feel the ongoing “effect of inequalities in social interactions in an academic context, especially when ethnic-racial, gender and nationality conditions are superimposed” (Borges & Afonso, 2021, p. 140). This work highlights the ongoing colonial mentality in Portuguese institutions and calls for systemic changes to support racialised students.

Similarly, in examining Brazilian students in Portugal, dos Santos (2020) highlights the ongoing discrimination and marginalisation of these students. Brazilian students often face sideways glances in both academic and social environments. The study documents the challenges of integration and the subtle exclusionary behaviours they encounter. Dos Santos (2020, p. 87) suggests that the absence of support and adaptation politics penalises and reinforces inequality in Brazilian students' experiences in Portuguese Academia. The study illustrates how microaggressions, stereotyping, and linguistic prejudice serve as structural barriers, affecting these students' sense of belonging. These cases reveal the layers of discrimination as

students confront overt and hidden biases that hinder their full participation and recognition within Portuguese academic settings.

Students in Portuguese Academia are not only focused on their learning; they also face constant implicit and explicit reminders of their racial and ethnic identities as Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant individuals in predominantly White environments (Bell et al., 2019; Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Kilomba, 2012). For these racialised students, being seen as "the Other" in Portuguese Higher Education means frequently confronting myths of cognitive inferiority and racial stereotypes. Historically, these myths have depicted racialised individuals as being culturally and intellectually inferior (Dupree & Boykin, 2021). Such external reminders of "difference" are normalised within academic settings as "natural responses to the Other" (Maeso & Araújo, 2010, p. 20). These practices serve to legitimise and normalise the Otherness experienced by racialised students.

Ploner and Nada (2020) examined how postcolonial legacies in European Higher Education affect international students from Africa in Portugal and the UK. They note that these students face interpersonal challenges linked to historical colonial hierarchies, leading to feelings of exclusion and marginalisation. In this study, Ploner and Nada (2020, p. 384) claim that European Higher Education often sees racialised students as lacking and tries to make them fit into existing systems rooted in colonial legacies of racism and epistemic violence. The authors highlight how persistent Eurocentric structures in Higher Education hinder the presence of racialised students.

Examining the experiences of racialised Other students in "racially toxic institutions" (Gabriel & Tate, 2017, p. 54) allows for an understanding of anger

as a possible bodily response to colonial legacies re-enacted in human relationships in Academia. It also highlights a fraught relationship between the Western neoliberal and the racialised Other (Gopal, 2021). Academia is a space where epistemic violence (Spivak, 2023; Teo, 2010; Readsura Decolonial Editorial, 2022a) and coloniality (Mbembe, 2016) intersect with multicultural and intercultural discourses and practices (Maeso & Araújo, 2010) in the name of diversity, inclusion, and equality policies. These practices and discourses represent an ongoing racial project of ontological and epistemological surveillance, domination, and erasure (Bell et al., 2019; Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Kilomba, 2012).

In psychology, colonial legacies manifest in the curriculum, often prioritising Western, Global North sources of knowledge. Traditionally, psychology tends to focus on the standard, "normal" individual, neglecting how social and political dynamics affect the well-being and mental health of marginalised or "Othered" populations (Dudgeon & Darlaston-Jones, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). I argue that recurrent exposure to racism, objectification, and the questioning of the humanity of racialised Other students in Academia (Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Maldonado-Torres, 2007) can lead to anger, which serves as a valuable starting point for understanding the lived experiences of these students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology.

Several studies indicate that racialised individuals in Portugal have faced a persistent history of institutional racism, segregation, and discrimination, particularly regarding scepticism about their academic abilities in Higher Education. For instance, research by Ambrósio et al. (2019), Borges and Afonso (2021), dos Santos (2020), Maeso and Araújo (2010), Nada and Araújo (2019),

Nada et al. (2018), and Ploner and Nada (2020) have shown that these students often feel they do not belong in academic settings. They encounter limited support networks, discriminatory academic practices, pervasive racial stereotypes, and a lack of diverse perspectives in the curriculum. Consequently, racialised students continue to grapple with dehumanisation, defined by being separated and alienated (Haslam, 2022) in an academic system that suggests their lives do not matter (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Phoenix, 2019; Raposo et al., 2019).

Consequently, acknowledging and expressing suppressed emotions, such as anger, is essential for facilitating positive change. Gabriel and Tate (2017) suggest that racialised individuals should keep their anger visible. By recognising and voicing these suppressed feelings, they can understand the potential for change through expression. Lorde (1997) also teaches that transforming anger into action supports future envisioning and liberation. I argue that reframing the depiction of the "angry Black person" can serve as a theoretical framework for navigating the frontiers of predominantly White spaces, including settings like the Portuguese university. This involves rejecting stereotypes that shape the experiences of racialised students. Anger enables us to reclaim our voices and challenge the status quo. It offers an opportunity for re-humanisation, as:

"...from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonised, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back', that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice" (hooks, 1989, p. 9).

Consequently, embracing anger in this task is to recognise rage's potential to:

"think through our feelings, to analyse and theorise racism through them rather than being immobilised by them because of fear that we are not strong enough, is already a show of strength" (Gabriel & Tate, 2017, p. 59).

A counterargument for embracing the anger of the racialised Other as a mobilising force revolves around understanding Black rage and its consequences, such as the phenomenon of "early black death" (West, 1996, p. 97). Cornel West, an American philosopher, critic, and political activist, analyses Malcolm X as the "prophet of black rage" (West, 1996, p. 96) in 1960s America. Malcolm X, a Black leader driven by both love and anger, candidly addressed the persistent denial of racism in the United States. He advocated for a psychic conversion that rejected notions of racial inferiority and supremacy, emphasising the importance of community, humanity, love, care, and concern among the racialised Other (West, 1996, p. 104). However, while recognising "boiling black rage" as a motivating force, West raises a critical question: How can anger be harnessed for change without inflicting harm? (West, 1996, p. 101). He suggests that anger needs direction. It should focus on issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, or economic injustice that obstruct opportunities (West, 1996, p. 104).

Furthermore, the concept of existential rage provides a deeper understanding of the relationship that marginalised racial groups have with the university. It is a battleground for struggle, resistance, and refusal, driven by efforts to dismantle colonial legacies. Whitaker defines existential rage as "one means of responding to the loss of contact with reality" (2019, p. 3). Additionally, Grada

Kilomba highlights that marginalised individuals often contend with reality disconnection enacted by everyday racism, which frames their perspectives as emotional, specific, and subjective, thus positioning them as inferior within the colonial hierarchy of Higher Education (Kilomba, 2012). Hence, existential rage represents the potential to spark change within ourselves in response to adversity and absurdity, highlighting the university's indifference toward the circumstances of racialised individuals. It serves as a cathartic outlet for frustration in an often meaningless world. This anger enables continuous questioning of indifference, denial, and a feeling of oppression by the system (Bell, 2018c; Kilomba, 2012, 2021).

Considering ways to introduce change, Bell (2022) proposes four essential tasks to decolonise university classrooms. The first task is to create an environment where all students can develop and participate in education as equal participants, actively challenging coloniality. The second task involves providing space and encouraging students to resist colonial legacies in the classroom by employing decolonial praxis and theory to explore the implications of coloniality for identity and knowledge. The third task emphasises that teachers are accountable for creating these spaces of resistance against colonial legacies, regardless of the discipline. Finally, the fourth task is to break away from colonial cultures of silencing by listening to historically marginalised voices and focusing on personal and social aspects of knowledge sharing. In these approaches, anger transforms from a negative stereotype associated with racialised individuals into a catalyst for changing oppressive experiences within the university setting.

According to Kristeva, "revolt is indispensable to both psychic life and the bonds that hold society together, as long as it remains a living force and resists accommodation" (2003, p. 38). This suggests that revolt is crucial for questioning structural, cultural, and social dynamics and is fundamental to change. Hence, reconstruction, reparation, and restitution can guide a decolonial commitment and action in reimagining alternatives to a system that is complicit with colonial legacies in terms of relationships (Chilisa, 2019).

Insubordination and disobedience can serve as powerful forms of resistance and essential tools for combating structural racism in Higher Education.

According to Mombaça (2021), acts of insubordination allow individuals to confront both overt and subtle forms of colonial oppression and dehumanisation within academic settings. Mombaça advocates hacking the "informatics of domination" (Mombaça, 2021, p. 75) to disrupt exclusionary practices in the academy and strive for liberation from Otherness. This hacking process involves ongoing efforts to decolonise academic curriculum design, often centring on Eurocentrism (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021). It also promotes horizontal, student-led discussions and peer learning activities in the classroom (Bell, 2022; Freire, 2013). Additionally, exploring the role of art—such as poetry—can help challenge the rigidity of knowledge production in Academia (Kilomba, 2016).

Moreover, Mignolo and Walsh (2018) argued that epistemic disobedience involves rejecting dominant Western knowledge in favour of prioritising non-Western and marginalised ways of knowing. This approach offers a potential pathway for disrupting coloniality, as it calls for reevaluating academic structures and enabling scholars from marginalised backgrounds to

redefine valid knowledge outside colonial hierarchies. According to Mignolo and Walsh (2018), epistemic disobedience is a radical stance within the processes of decolonisation (Chilisa, 2019; Laenui, 2000), as it challenges the prevailing narratives surrounding the experiences of racialised individuals. It is a decolonial strategy for achieving "emancipation and freedom" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 121). By refusing to adhere strictly to traditional Western epistemologies, epistemic disobedience calls for recognising diverse forms of knowledge, including storytelling, *testimonios*, and dreaming. Consequently, epistemic disobedience can transform pedagogy in academic settings by fostering decolonial environments (Bell, 2018a), promoting epistemic freedom and radical humanisation.

Ultimately, anger, psychic revolt, and epistemic disobedience are potent forces for liberation. They drive change in practices, discourses, and policies related to colonial legacies (Bell, 2022; Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Kristeva, 2003; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Therefore, I propose viewing anger as a starting point to transform the relationship between racialised students and Academia. In this proposal, anger can catalyse radical reconstruction, reimagination, and re-humanisation. This process enables individuals to share their experiences of confronting racism from a position of resistance and resilience.

In addition, epistemic disobedience extends beyond individual identity and position. It refers to acts of nonconformity against dominant epistemological perspectives that have historically justified power imbalances (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Mombaça, 2015). Beyond exposing structural racism, epistemic disobedience envisions a university where everyone is interconnected and interdependent. In this context, anger can catalyse epistemic disobedience,

validating alternative forms of knowledge such as *testimonios*, dreams, storytelling, and poetry (Tynan & Bishop, 2022). These forms of expression play a crucial role in humanising the experiences of marginalised individuals.

The aspiration for social transformation and dismantling ongoing colonial legacies through decolonial liberation calls for epistemic disobedience. One example is the research project "Decoloniality and Partnership in Higher Education" (Justice, 2022) from the research group Pedagogies of Social Justice. This project demonstrates how students and scholars can collaborate horizontally to co-create new possibilities and reimagine pedagogies and relationships within the context of Higher Education. The following poem, published by this research group, presents alternative approaches for engaging in the transformation of universities:

Anger

To be revolted, a rebellion to be me  
Desire to be whole, I invite anger to come close

Disobey, recreate, An open collective rage.  
Towards a humanised future (Justice, 2022).

This section examined how anger arises from ongoing dehumanisation within Portuguese Higher Education. Historically, anger has fueled marginalised communities in their pursuit of liberation. In this academic context, it serves as a form of resistance against entrenched colonial legacies, enabling racialised students to confront epistemic injustice and advocate for recognition and humanity. Therefore, anger emerges as a vital emotional, individual, social and

political response that can challenge exclusionary academic practices, allowing racialised students to express their experiences and imagine an inclusive, humanised educational environment. The next section of this literature review focuses on gratitude, centring the body of knowledge of Indigenous/racialised scholars, and pointing to possibilities for change in colonial legacies that dehumanise the experiences of the racialised Other in the context of Higher Education.

### 2.3 Gratitude

I engage with gratitude to recognise and honour the intellectual and emotional labour of those who have addressed coloniality and its legacies. According to Chilisa (2019, p. 309), gratitude in research means appreciating the contributions of Indigenous and racialised communities. By adopting a gratitude-based approach to literature review, I aim to acknowledge scholars' work respectfully, rather than merely identifying gaps (Tynan & Bishop, 2022). This approach promotes a non-extractive method of knowledge and fosters research practices rooted in reciprocity and care. This section examines gratitude as a relational approach, focusing on the experiences of racialised individuals in Academia. It acknowledges previous research discussing and theorising the relationships and experiences of these individuals within Higher Education. Furthermore, it highlights scholars using decolonial and psychosocial frameworks to understand racism and its impacts, offering an alternative to Eurocentric perspectives.

Firstly, anger drives and enables me to engage with academic spaces often marked by exclusionary knowledge (Andrews, 2018). I understand the

significance of honouring the contributions of Indigenous and racialised scholars. Recognising the challenges of theorising from a place of exclusion and silencing,

“I am grateful to the many women and men who dare to create theory from the location of pain and struggle, who courageously expose wounds to give us their experience to teach and guide, as a means to chart new theoretical journeys. Their work is liberatory” (hooks, 2014, p. 74).

These scholars have been exploring what is known as epistemic reconstitution (Mignolo, 2017), which represents "the opening path(s) of liberation" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 225). In this study, I am grateful for the knowledge I accessed and engaged with while respecting the intellectual, emotional, and embodied labour of the authors who contributed to my doctoral inquiry.

Mignolo and Walsh (2018) understand epistemic reconstitution as a praxis of repairing “ourselves from the modern/colonial academic epistemology that permeates our lives beyond the university” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 246). They emphasise that this epistemic reconstitution involves delinking from the colonial power matrix and exploring new possibilities for re-existing. Here, "re-existing" refers to moving away from the detrimental conditions of the colonial legacy and toward a social and radically humane collectivity (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Decolonial thinking and practice provide a framework for critiquing and transforming colonial legacies that perpetuate a binary division of mind, body, and land. These legacies also sustain the hierarchy and domination of racialised individuals (Nirmal & Dey, 2022). In Academia, this is evident in the lack of diversity and presence, barriers to accessing academic spaces, and the

prevalence of Eurocentric theories and practices that marginalise Indigenous and non-Western knowledge (Bhambra et al., 2018; Gopal, 2021; Joseph Mbembe, 2016). Thus, decolonisation is an unfinished project (Maldonado-Torres, 2020) aimed at shifting our relationships with one another, as well as the structures of power and knowledge systems (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000). With this context in mind, I express my respect and acknowledgement for scholars engaged in liberation, decolonisation, and critical thinking, particularly those who actively resist and reject the colonial legacies embedded in hegemonic and structural systems, such as the Portuguese University.

I want to acknowledge the vital work of Portuguese sociologist Cristina Roldão, who focuses on the realities of racialised individuals in Portugal. She explores issues related to police violence, housing, and access to education. Through Roldão's insights, I have gained a deeper understanding of the intertwined relation between the discourse surrounding racism in Portugal and narratives of "national, cultural, and colonial exceptionality" (Raposo et al., 2019, p. 8). This narrative often minimises discussions about the legacies of colonial violence in education, creating an image of Portugal as an "ontologically democratic" nation (Raposo et al., 2019, p. 8). As noted by Abrantes and Roldão, Portugal:

"...as in other countries, the academic debate and political action is colour-blind and has not privileged the issue of school desegregation, leaving it to the politics of non-decision-making, which nonetheless is a way of making invisible some social conflicts and, by doing so, to reproduce the preexisting relations of power" (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019, p. 31).

Roldão's work emphasises the challenges of discussing race and racism in Portuguese society. Additionally, Roldão's critiques highlight the Portuguese

educational system's political alignment with a neo-liberal agenda. In her work (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Raposo et al., 2019), she discusses an ongoing segregation project in schools located in peripheral areas<sup>11</sup>. She points out that students from racialised groups face underrepresentation in the Portuguese educational system due to inequalities and racist practices related to social control and surveillance. Engaging with Roldão's work has deepened my understanding of Portuguese coloniality, which plays a critical role in the challenges surrounding discussions of race and racism in Portugal. Her insights have also opened avenues for exploring the shared beliefs within Portuguese society, which contribute to the lack of debate and acknowledgement of the persistent structures of oppression in the country.

Guided by Roldão's work and a desire to better understand the indifference toward exclusionary policies and practices in Portuguese Academia, I explored the contributions of Portuguese scholars who contest and critically analyse policies shaped by colonial logic in Portugal. I am grateful for the insights provided by Marta Araújo, Silvia Maeso, and Cláudia Castelo, which enhanced my understanding of Luso-tropicalism (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010) and its connections to prevailing beliefs about Portuguese identity and nationality, a concept I discussed in section 1.1.1 of this thesis introduction. Castelo's analysis of Gilberto Freyre's (1933) theory of Luso-tropicalism offers insight into a unique perspective on the Portuguese colonial experience. Luso-tropicalism suggests that the Portuguese are psychologically and sociologically predisposed to miscegenation and

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<sup>11</sup> The notion of peripheric school addresses inequalities caused by geographical differences in pedagogy, opportunity, achievement, and teacher expectations, resulting from the lack of political, economic and social investment.

sociocultural integration, making them supposedly immune to racism. This theory describes them as "tolerant, fraternal, plastic people with an ecumenical vocation" (Castelo, 2011, p. 273). During the 1950s, the Portuguese dictatorial state systematically incorporated this narrative, leading to the infusion and legitimisation of the Luso-tropical thesis in academic and scientific circles. As a result, it continues to reinforce the notion of a supposedly benign colonial history (Castelo, 2011).

In their analysis of the historicity of race discourses in Portugal, Maeso and Araújo (2010) argue that "racism continues to be naturalised in the policies and practices" (p. 8). Consequently, students from racialised backgrounds frequently encounter stereotypes suggesting they possess inferior cultural and linguistic skills within academic contexts. They are often exoticised and denied equal treatment and opportunities. The Luso-tropical myth serves to deny and seemingly absolve the Portuguese of the colonial past, portraying Portuguese identity as immune to racism (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010). This phenomenon directly reflects on the Portuguese nation, as "the naturalisation of racism was inextricably bound with the process of naturalising a racial and culturally homogeneous Portuguese nation" (Maeso & Araújo, 2010, p. 10). I am grateful for the critical insights of scholars like Marta Araújo, Silvia Maeso, and Cláudia Castelo, who have highlighted the challenges in acknowledging the role of the colonial legacy of Luso-tropicalism in reinforcing coloniality within Portuguese society and institutions. Understanding Luso-tropicalism has informed my subsequent inquiry into the psychology of racism denial in the context of Portuguese Higher Education.

Delving into the understanding of a psychosocial portrait of racial relations in Portugal, I express my deepest gratitude to Grada Kilomba, a Portuguese psychologist and interdisciplinary artist who wrote *Africans in Academia – Diversity in Adversity* (2012). In her analysis, Kilomba critiques the university as a space where epistemic violence and racial hierarchies often go unchallenged, reinforcing colonial dynamics that marginalise the experiences of racialised individuals. This work allows insights into the lived experiences of Black individuals in predominantly White spaces. It illustrates how these environments perpetuate feelings of estrangement and psychological harm, comparing them to ongoing acts of colonial subjugation. Kilomba's framework encourages a radical rethinking of academic spaces, urging scholars to challenge Eurocentric narratives and embrace diverse epistemologies to pursue genuine decolonial transformation.

Kilomba's exploration of the intersection of race, gender, and memory has significantly shaped my understanding of identity and belonging in socialisation, as discussed in the book *Memories of Plantation: Episodes of Everyday Racism* (Kilomba, 2021). This form of racism manifests through patronising comments about language, assumptions of inferior academic abilities, and the expectation that racialised students remain silent in classrooms. In this book, Kilomba employs a Freudian psychoanalytical framework and Frantz Fanon's critical perspective, using storytelling to deconstruct and expose the dehumanising politics that affect the lived experiences of racialised individuals. In the chapter titled "The Mask," Kilomba discusses the memories and stories surrounding the mask as an artefact used in the European colonial project to silence enslaved individuals (Kilomba, 2021). This object effectively muted the

oppressed, making it impossible for enslaved people to eat—both metaphorically and practically—preventing them from possessing anything considered legitimate property of the coloniser, for instance, knowledge. Symbolically, the mask represents "the sadistic politics of conquest and its cruel regimes of silencing" (Kilomba, 2021, p. 16), which suppresses the voices, narratives, languages, and truths of marginalised individuals, allowing the coloniser to avoid confronting the realities of the Othered subject.

The mask symbolises the silencing of racialised others, with repression and denial serving as defence mechanisms against uncomfortable truths about colonial oppression (Kilomba, 2021). Kilomba contends that the Freudian concept of repression, aligned with racism, functions as a mechanism to keep uncomfortable truths on the margins. Acknowledging these truths can evoke feelings of shame, guilt, and repression. In this context, denial is "the defence by which the ego controls and exercises censorship of what is perceived as an 'unpleasant' truth" (Kilomba, 2021, p. 21). Ultimately, the mask signifies Whiteness's ongoing effort to control the voices of racialised others (Kilomba, 2012). Acknowledging these voices is essential for recognising their existence and belonging in spaces historically shaped by Whiteness, such as the Western neoliberal university.

Denial is a defence mechanism that refuses to recognise truths (Kilomba, 2021). The racism denial serves as a way to manage emotional conflicts stemming from racial segregation and violence. Individuals often avoid confronting the distress associated with recognising their racist actions and words. This process can affect anyone and helps people avoid the stress of facing a negative self-image (Kilomba, 2021). Through Kilomba's work and her

exploration of the psychology of racism at the individual level, I discovered fundamental arguments that connect personal experiences tied to colonial logic with broader sociological and political concepts. Consequently, I gained vocabulary that enabled me to articulate that the university is not a neutral space and that the voices of the oppressed are frequently marginalised and deemed inferior. Understanding that science often aligns with Eurocentric models of knowledge production, which exert power and create hierarchies (Kilomba, 2012). I argue that students identified as Racialised Others frequently experience a sense of inferiority while studying in Portuguese Higher Education psychology courses. The silencing of the oppressed and the denial of the dynamics of oppression contribute to an ongoing politics of exclusion and absence.

Moving on to authors from the Global South, I felt a sense of gratitude as I engaged with the work of South American scholars who challenge coloniality. One such scholar is Jota Mombaça, a non-binary Black *bicha*<sup>12</sup> and interdisciplinary artist focusing on anti-colonial justice and queerness through poetry and critical theory. In line with Kilomba's exploration of the silencing politics that impact the experiences of racialised others, Mombaça (2015) argues that the marginalisation of Black voices in Academia stems from an epistemological framework in the human sciences. Disciplines like sociology, anthropology, and psychology have historically theorised the experiences of

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<sup>12</sup> "*Bicha*" is a Brazilian slang word that was historically used against gay men in derogatory ways but has been reclaimed as identity. The idea of a "Black *bicha*" represents the dimensions of the intersectional, peripheral, and Latin queer identity, which is crossed by human conditions that contradict the hegemonic model of power relations that legitimises the expression of the White, Western and heterosexual man as a standard, that is, in conformity with coloniality normative standards for sexuality, gender and race.

racialised individuals without considering their unique perspectives, ways of thinking, and methods of explanation (Mombaça, 2015).

As a result, otherness shapes the presence of the racialised "Other" in academic spaces. Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant students navigating Higher Education often face feelings of inadequacy in environments "where White scholars have developed theoretical discourses that formally constructed us as the inferior 'Other'" (Mombaça, 2015, p. 2). Consequently, "the university reveals itself to be a site for violence and the propagation of domineering content, always taking certain voices as absent in favour of its preferred ones" (Mombaça, 2015, p. 2). These reflections led me to question who has the right to speak and articulate thoughts intellectually and dialogically in spaces where discourse is limited and colonial non-listening prevails (Mombaça, 2015, p. 5), leaving the racialised "Other" unheard and unacknowledged. In the context of Portuguese Higher Education, students from racialised backgrounds often encounter assumptions and accusations regarding their language skills. Their writing, verbal expressions, and aesthetic choices are frequently scrutinised and deemed inadequate according to academic standards. These students often approach language in a way that people tend to perceive as specific, exotic, and subjective, but primarily unintelligible (Kilomba, 2012; Mombaça, 2015).

Students from racialised backgrounds in Portuguese Higher Education often face stereotypes suggesting they lack proficiency in the European variant of Portuguese (Ambrósio et al., 2019; Doutor et al., 2018). I am grateful to learn from Lélia Gonzalez (1988, 2018) how to recognise the colonial legacy within this academic discourse and to challenge these silencing practices. Gonzalez, a Black feminist scholar who significantly influenced the Black movement in

Brazil, theorised the intersections of race and gender in South America. She proposed a subversive and restorative concept for using the European Portuguese language in former colonies, which she termed '*pretoguês*'— meaning “Black Portuguese” or “*blackguese*”. According to Gonzalez (1988), the Portuguese spoken in Brazil and the former African colonies have been shaped by African and Indigenous languages, affecting their formation, characteristics, phonetics, and grammatical rules. Gonzalez argues that *Pretoguês* serves as a practice through which the racialised Other reclaims their identity. It acts as a form of resistance against the established norms of writing and verbal expression in Portuguese (Gonzalez, 2018, p. 208). A critical insight I gained from this concept is that racialised Other students frequently confront beliefs suggesting they lack the civilising and academic language skills necessary to thrive in a university environment.

Challenging this logic concerning language in Academia involves integrating the resistance found in the fluency and vocabulary of racialised students as a form of epistemic restitution. This includes reclaiming subjective anger as a mobilising force and recognising ancestral ways of knowing in response to colonial legacies. The poet and award-winning artist Hafsath illustrates this process through her spoken word performance:

"To the girl in English class what is funny? What is hilarious about my painful attempt to communicate in a language that is not even my own. See, this accent tells the story of survival. Tells how my mother tongue endured until this day, so I expect you treat my tongue with some respect. Every word, every syllable I utter comes from a riot within my mouth, is a Babel between subconscious, tongue, teeth and vocal cord. So excuse you, if my speech does not soothe you. See, this speech comes from the slaughterhouse I call a mouth. See my mouth is a battlefield, a clash of unyielding cultures, warring for dominance. See, my tongue as a traumatised survivor. Lost in this alien fluency. See, this accent is how I find my way home...[ How I say inikpi without biting my

tongue]. See, my tongue is forever at war with itself, forever fighting to decolonise itself, fighting to lose and regain itself all at the same time..." (Abdullahi, 2022).

The colonial legacy of racism manifests as a power dynamic expressed in everyday interactions within Higher Education, often through various forms of violence. The concept of the "mask of mutism" illustrates coloniality as a silencing project (Kilomba, 2021). This silencing is continuously evident in everyday encounters within academic spaces in Portugal and beyond, situating the racialised Other status as "Other" through discourses, policies, and dominant epistemic traditions (Joseph Mbembe, 2016). This creates a contradictory experience of being both included and excluded simultaneously.

I want to thank Professor Rita Segato, an Argentine anthropologist and decolonial feminist scholar, for enabling me to apply the psychoanalytical concept of foreclosure to analyse race and racism as a colonial symptom in contemporary society (Segato, 2006). In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the notion of forclusion (*Verwerfung* in German) refers to a mechanism of psychosis in which an individual rejects the reality or existence of something or someone. When a person cannot integrate this excluded aspect of reality into their unconscious, they experience it again through hallucinations. This concept stems from Freud's idea of a subject's refusal to acknowledge the facts of a negative reality (Roudinesco & Plon, 1998; Segato, 2006). I argue that racism in spaces shaped by colonial legacies, like Western neoliberal Academia, likely causes forclusion, where society displaces the racialised Other from the reality of Higher Education. In this context, the racialised Other is denied agency and dehumanised, remaining simultaneously present yet excluded. Consequently, they are viewed merely as bodies that support the continuation of the colonial

project while being segregated from its benefits. Segato (2006) highlights that the racialised Other may be present physically but is defined as fundamentally different, thus excluded from being recognised as someone who thinks, speaks, and theorises. Forclusion is a defence mechanism linked to exclusionary practices, discourses, denial, and repression. This process seeks to prevent the acknowledgement of persistent colonial dehumanisation.

I am deeply grateful for the contributions of Indigenous scholars such as Bagele Chilisa (2019), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021), and Margaret Kovach (2021). Their works illuminate alternative pathways to knowledge that challenge the colonial and Eurocentric frameworks that dominate Academia. Engaging with their research has supported my development of theoretical and methodological approaches throughout the research process. Chilisa's book, *Indigenous Research Methodologies* (2019), emphasises the need for culturally relevant research approaches that honour Indigenous worldviews. Her approach supports the resistance to extraction and marginalisation often imposed on Indigenous communities and prioritises relational accountability, recognising the interconnectedness of all beings, nature, and the land as central to knowledge creation. This focus on relationality challenges the objective, detached stance typically characteristic of Western research paradigms, opening pathways for Academia to embrace knowledge as a tool for healing and social justice.

Similarly, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book *Decolonising Methodologies* (2021) is foundational in asserting that Indigenous ways of knowing deserve a central place in academic discourse. Smith (2021) argues that Western research has historically marginalised Indigenous knowledge systems, treating them as objects of study rather than sources of valuable insight. Her work advocates for

the reclamation and validation of Indigenous knowledge, methodologies, and ethics, proposing work towards dismantling the structures of marginalisation and inferiority imposed upon these ways of knowing, including the Western neoliberal university. Similarly, in *Indigenous Methodologies*, Margaret Kovach (2021) expands on this by asserting that Indigenous knowledge systems have unique epistemologies that must be respected, centred, and understood on their terms. Together, these scholars provide critical frameworks for decolonising Academia, recognising the importance of Indigenous methodologies in dismantling oppression and colonial legacies, and proposing possibilities for engaging in decolonial efforts towards envisioning and rehumanising relationships and knowledge production in Academia.

Oppression seeks to confine the racialised Other to their skin colour, resulting in a process of fixation of inferiority to one's epidermis (Fanon, 2008). In Fanon's teachings, the internalisation of inferiority, referred to as "epidermisation", describes a mechanism through which individuals subjectively assimilate racism. This occurs as the Black body grapples with the subjugation imposed by the White gaze, leading to a form of self-deception. The racialised Other feels compelled to meet standards established by a matrix of power—specifically, by Whiteness. When successfully reinforced, this mechanism leads individuals to associate knowing, writing, and speaking in academic settings with Whiteness (Kilomba, 2012). Frantz Fanon was a psychiatrist, philosopher, and psychoanalyst who examined the experiences of racialised individuals. He is a key figure in the decolonial debate and has had a significant impact on the field. Fanon explored not only the psychological origins and effects of racism but also the social dimensions of this oppressive system. His work is essential for

understanding the dynamics of racism faced by Black and Brown individuals and theorising pathways toward liberation from oppressive power structures (Fanon, 2008).

With Fanon, I explored the complexities of living in a predominantly White world—a world where the racialised subject confronts a perceived flaw: race (Fanon, 2008). The knowledge produced by Western neoliberal universities is rooted in coloniality and serves as a historical site of racial power (Andrews, 2018). Consequently, Academia defines and categorises Others as different from the White norm, assigning them distinct positions within a hierarchised social structure. The irrationality of racism leads the racialised Other to feel alienated in these environments. In these spaces, they encounter the barbarism of the White world (Fanon, 2008). This power disparity is persistent and arises from the struggle that positions Black, Brown, and Indigenous individuals and immigrants as strange, foreign, distinct, specific, and uncommon (Fanon, 2008; Kilomba, 2021). Through the insights of Fanon, I have learned that under a colonial system dominated by Whiteness, existence confronts the objectification of the body. The colonial legacy shapes those racialised as the Other, leading to the perception of them as more body than reason. In contrast, this colonial legacy renders people racialised as White as more reason than body (Fanon, 2008). This dynamic leads to an inferiority complex among the racialised Other, stemming from the psychological effects of the struggle for self-determination, racism, and oppression. In contrast, individuals racialised as White tend to experience a complex of superiority (Fanon, 2008).

According to Fanon, the experience in the White world unfolds through hierarchies divided into zones of being and zones of non-being. He describes

these zones as "an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born" (Fanon, 2008, p. 10). This barren place, shaped by colonial legacies in Higher Education, becomes a source of anger. However, this anger can catalyse mobilisation, inviting us to reclaim ancestral ways of knowing and move forward in reciprocal relationships. In this context, gratitude plays a vital role in acknowledging the contributions of racialised Others and Indigenous peoples who have theorised and resisted these dehumanising historical circumstances. The narratives and lived experiences of racialised individuals in Higher Education highlight discourses and practices that often marginalise them. Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant students face the ongoing challenge of resisting colonial legacies within Academia. Denial, otherness, and exclusion tied to racism perpetuate a cycle that silences their voices and undermines their agency. Classrooms that exclusively prioritise reason in knowledge production reflect colonial legacies, becoming spaces that teach a psychology model that treats "other" ways of being as pathological deviations from the norm (Gomez-Ordonez et al., 2021, p. 55). However, psychology, which focuses on centred marginalised experiences, has the potential to foster critical consciousness. As such, psychology oriented by liberatory and alternative approaches can be vital in transforming exclusionary realities.

This section emphasises the importance of gratitude in research, recognising the intellectual and emotional contributions of Indigenous and racialised communities in their efforts to challenge colonialism within Academia. By embracing gratitude, I offered a literature review that moves beyond merely identifying gaps to honour these contributions in ways that promote reciprocal,

non-extractive knowledge-building practices. This approach encourages meaningful engagement with the lived experiences of racialised individuals. It also acknowledges the work of decolonial scholars who seek to dismantle Eurocentrism, promoting frameworks focused on epistemic reconstitution and social justice. Ultimately, this fosters a horizontal and humanising educational environment. The next section of this literature review focuses on joy and proposes alternatives for transforming lived experiences in spaces of colonial legacies. This section aims to situate liberatory practices in psychology, exploring the realms of dreaming and storytelling.

## 2.4 Joy

I view joy not merely as lasting satisfaction, pleasure, or happiness but as a shared feeling—a "life force" (Lorde, 1984)—where individuals collectively experience alternative realities and envision futures that resist colonial legacies (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020). This section examines joy as a transformative force fostering reconnection and humanisation in Higher Education. I discuss joy as a liberatory option to traditional ways of knowing and relating. I propose these as alternatives to conventional learning and connection methods by envisioning joy practices through dialogue and dreaming.

After having introduced and discussed the ideas of epistemic disobedience and restitution in previous sections, I posit that joy comes as a catalysing and transformative alternative to educational practices and discourses, an option progressing into a "road to disalienation" (Fanon, 2008, p. 184)". For instance, the Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant individuals in Portugal often confront racial violence with calls to "go back to your land" or "*volta para tua*

*terra*". However, alternative approaches in education, such as poetry and art, serve as means to convey narratives of resistance and dreaming (Melo & Vaz, 2021). Fanon asserts that persistent colonial attitudes prevent the racialised Other from fully engaging with the world (Fanon, 2008). Additionally, for Fanon, the experience of joy is vital in reaffirming the humanity of the racialised Other as they seek to connect with a world that typically diminishes their joy (Fanon, 2008, p. 115). Namely, the colonial world pressures the racialised Other to "stay within bounds" and "go back" to where they are supposed to stay (Fanon, 2008, p. 115). Therefore, through both anger and joy, the momentum for change draws strength and enthusiasm from a commitment to interrogating and transforming the legacies of colonialism toward more humanised futures (Fanon, 2008; Lorde, 1984; Soares, 2021).

In the ongoing project of decolonisation, joy serves as an alternative to a history marked by colonial exploitation and dehumanisation. According to Negrón-Muntaner (2020, p. 183), decolonial joy involves envisioning a future where "neither colonialism nor colonality rules over our lives". In this context, ancestral knowledge found in alternative approaches to telling narratives includes pathways to reimagination, wisdom, joy, and liberation (Nirmal & Dey, 2022, p. 119). Furthermore, Mignolo and Walsh assert that if:

"...coloniality is a frame of subjection, decoloniality shall be the opening path of liberation. But this cannot be achieved without epistemic disobedience and the creative joy of knowing beyond the disciplines, the modern/colonial system of ideas and institutionalisation" (2018, p. 225).

In addressing the legacies of colonialism, psychologists, educators, administrators, policymakers, and changemakers must examine what society

recognises as knowledge and explore alternative ways of relating. Similarly, Watkins highlights that people can find joy even in complex and oppressive circumstances. Joy emerges from the "mending of one's being that is deeply yearned for" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 18). Therefore, joy serves as an epistemological concept in psychology, which "could awaken us to our entanglements in strategies of dissociation, to the despairs of trauma, to grief from mourning, and potential joy in restoration and healing" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 31).

Moreover, joy represents a powerful approach to connectedness and liberation, inspiring psychology to commit to an ongoing project aimed at epistemic restitution for a rehumanised future. The concept of liberation psychologies emerged as an epistemological stance within the context of Latin American liberation movements. Ignacio Martín-Baró, who coined the term "Liberation Psychology," was a priest and social psychologist deeply engaged in human rights, social justice, and equality in El Salvador. He advocated for collective healing from the wounds inflicted by systems of structural oppression (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 10). Baró dedicated his efforts to supporting the movements of oppressed peoples striving for freedom in Central America. Liberation psychology critiques psychological models that support existing inequalities in conceptualisation, policy, mental health services, and training psychologists and mental health professionals (Dudgeon & Darlaston-Jones, 2021). In line with Watkins, the praxis of liberation psychology aims to create an alternative perspective that challenges "repressive government discourse and public amnesia about suffering" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 20).

In addition, an essential aspect of liberation psychology is its potential to transform experiences of suffering into critical thinking, consciousness, action, resilience, and a joyful reimagining of the human experience. Through liberation psychology, individuals can evolve from past patterns characterised as "dysfunctional, dissociative, and destructive" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 28) to more constructive ways of relating, which include "imagining, voicing, connecting, empathising, and celebrating self and others" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 29). Liberation psychology is an integrative and dialogical approach that "links the interior with the exterior, widening its focus to include community, holding 'self' and 'other,' body and soul together" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 46). I argue that ancestrality, Indigenous and marginalised experiences, cultures, commonalities, and voices can potentially (re)unite and find mobilisation within emotions such as anger, gratitude, joy, and many others. This can create opportunities to challenge the dominant and exclusionary logic in Western neoliberal universities, allowing for equal human existence and a plurality of ways of knowing in socialisation spaces, such as the Portuguese Psychology Academia.

Adopting liberatory practices in Academia promotes the integration of diverse ontological and epistemological perspectives. Ailton Krenak, a professor, Indigenous leader, poet, and philosopher from Brazil's Krenak tribe, argues that Coloniality continuously invites us to embrace an understanding of humanity that often disregards the life and joy found in people's deep connections to the land, nature, and community (Krenak, 2018, 2019a, 2019b). Therefore, liberatory practices can provide a humanising alternative to dismantling colonial legacies in psychology's teaching, research, and practice. Rehumanisation

opens up a horizon of possibilities. Committing to liberatory and ancestral practices can pave the way for an alternative future. In this context, we mutually recognise the "joy of being alive" and connect through reimagining "another possible world" by re-coordinating our relationships with nature (Krenak, 2019a). Dialogue is central to these relational dynamics, allowing us to reshape marginalising and exclusionary practices within structures like Western neoliberal universities.

Dialogue is the process of human connection that occurs through joy when people share spaces. Following the ideas of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian philosopher and educator known for his contributions to critical pedagogy, dialogue is defined as the exchange between individuals to express the significance of their experiences. This exchange is essential for a genuine human connection (Freire, 1996, 2007, 2013, 2016). Freire defines dialogue as "the encounter in which individuals are co-subjects in denouncing the world, contributing to the transformation of that world" (Freire, 2013, p. 169). This definition highlights that dialogue is not merely a simple technique or method but represents an epistemological relationship. Each participant in the dialogue brings valuable knowledge to share. As a result, dialogue plays a crucial role in understanding both oneself and the social and political contexts, potentially leading to revolutionary action as the:

"...radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a 'circle of certainty' within which reality is also imprisoned. On the contrary, the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into dialogue with them" (Freire, 2013, p. 39).

Dialogue goes beyond conversation; it engages with reality to foster change. Freire highlights that hope, criticality, and liberation arise through action-oriented dialogue (Freire, 2013). In this course, humans engaging in dialogue can identify alternatives to oppressive systems, leading to conscientisation, a movement in which we “go beyond the spontaneous sphere of apprehension of reality, to arrive at a critical sphere in which reality is given as a knowable object and in which man assumes an epistemological position” (Freire, 2007, p. 15). In the tradition of Freire, dialogue in education represents the relationship between individuals rooted in a shared reality of collective existence. To name this reality is to practice freedom. Therefore, dialogue can only occur when both parties come together with love, humility, and trust without denying reality, imposing hierarchy, acknowledging otherness, or prohibiting the right to express oneself. Consequently, dialogue is described as “an existential necessity” because it enables people to articulate their world, seek ways to change it, and ultimately discover meaning in their humanity (Freire, 2013, p. 88).

In this view, the mutual exchange inherent in dialogue underscores horizontality as a fundamental aspect of human relationships, offering a path to liberation and a radical transformation of oppressive structures to overcome denial of “communion in the revolutionary process, avoidance of dialogue with the people under the pretext of organising them, of strengthening revolutionary power, or of ensuring a united front, is a fear of freedom” (Freire, 2013, p. 129). I argue that a dialogical encounter is essential for creating genuine opportunities for humanisation.

Dreaming is a transformative, shared alternative filled with joy and hope, allowing us to move beyond history and the present, marked by dysfunctional

colonial relationships (Chilisa, 2019; Goncalves & Ojha; Nirmal & Dey, 2022). Decolonial dreaming honours the struggles faced by Indigenous and racialised communities in the context of colonial rule. It facilitates the "unravelling of the threads of our past and weaving futures into creation" (Nirmal & Dey, 2022, p. 145). Through dreaming, we can engage in counter-storytelling, reclaim our identities, and forge healing pathways from dehumanising practices (Zavala, 2016). This process helps us understand different ontological realities and ways of knowing, as dreaming "explains the creation process through the stories of how and why life came to be" (Nirmal & Dey, 2022). Thus, dreaming embodies liberatory practices of joy, allowing us to experience freedom as we strive to be (re) humanised. As expressed by Conceição Evaristo, "dreams fertilise life and avenge death" (Mombaça, 2021, p. 13).

Liberatory practices that promote expression and joy can create healing spaces for marginalised individuals. For instance, Augusto Boal, founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed, argues that recognising joy within ourselves brings significant benefits, including:

"...the joy of the oppressed, when conscious, is therapeutic because it is expansive; sadness is withdrawn. Joy questions values taken as absolute by sadness, which perpetuates situations that joy makes transitory. Joy is dynamic and fast, social and critical; sadness tends to be immobilist, solitary and fatalistic. What does not prevent sadness from being able to produce magnificent works of art, as it has done" (Boal, 2009, p. 241).

As a result, emotions such as anger, gratitude, and joy are powerful forces that can transform individuals through shared words, stories, and dreams among the oppressed. Joy enables us to understand the world more deeply as we engage in collective dialogue to reimagine our realities. Dreaming is not an escape from

reality; it is a form of healing that allows us to explore possibilities for practical dilemmas, decision-making, and context awareness (Krenak, 2019a, p. 41). In the decolonisation processes discussed by Chilisa (2019) and Laenui (2000), dreaming is crucial before commitment and action. The decolonisation processes (Chilisa, 2019; Laenui, 2000) entail a five-stage non-linear approach:

1. **Rediscovery and Recovery:** This stage involves reclaiming traditional knowledge and cultural practices suppressed during colonisation;
2. **Mourning:** In this stage, individuals and communities acknowledge the losses caused by colonisation, including cultural disconnection and historical trauma;
3. **Dreaming:** People envision alternative futures based on self-determination and cultural resurgence.
4. **Commitment:** This stage focuses on mobilising individuals and communities to dedicate themselves to transformative practices;
5. **Action:** This stage involves implementing the changes necessary to achieve social transformation.

This framework fosters steps towards a shift in rebuilding ways of relating and knowing based on Indigenous cosmologies. Alongside joy, dreaming enhances liberatory practices and discourses, particularly in the face of political silencing within Higher Education.

Dreaming, combined with dialogue, is essential for committing to and taking action on decolonising Higher Education, as highlighted by Chilisa (2019) and Laenui (2000). These processes address the ongoing politics of exclusion and epistemological violence (Spivak, 2023). Dialogue and dreaming are alternatives to confronting dehumanising paradigms and realities, creating

pathways for emancipation (Bell et al., 2019) and allowing for the telling of diverse narratives. Through dreaming, we envision a future where the Global South is at the centre of knowledge and existence rather than being trapped in a state of epistemic inferiority (Grosfoguel, 2016) and non-being zones (Fanon, 2008) or the milk from my grandmother's anecdote about the mosquito.

Through joy, we mobilise resources for collective healing as we recover and envision a future in Portuguese Higher Education psychology, much like other Western neoliberal universities. By channelling emotions such as anger, gratitude, and joy, we disrupt oppressive and divisive structures within the university. We must actively promote, learn, and unlearn opportunities for decolonising knowledge and subjective/intersubjective relationships through dialogue and dreaming. Healing the self is intertwined with healing the dominant discourse, enabling us to dismantle the silence imposed by the Western neoliberal university (Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Kilomba, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Zavala, 2016).

Dreaming of the future is possible today because Indigenous and racialised ancestors and elders dared to seek freedom in the past. The existence of the historical "Other" embodies the dreams reflected in the narratives of love, joy, and resistance against indifference from those who came before us, like my grandmother. Alternative ways of relating to the land and one another have emerged from gratitude, joy, and anger. In the effort of the racialised "Other" to reclaim voices and reimagine the academy, a shift towards a liberated future for all of us begins with revolutionary dreams:

"I used to dream militant dreams  
of taking over America to show

these white folks  
how it should be done

I used to dream radical dreams  
of blowing everyone away  
with my perceptive powers  
of correct analysis

I even used to think I'd be the one  
to stop the riot and  
negotiate the peace

then I awoke and dug  
that if I dreamed natural  
dreams of being a natural  
woman doing what a woman  
does when she's natural

I would have a revolution" (Giovanni, 1970).

In this literature review, I argue that colonial legacies continue to have lasting effects on contemporary society, reinforcing social structures based on race and creating disparities between groups, as well as epistemic inferiority and zones of non-being (Fanon, 2008; Grosfoguel, 2016). Racism, marginalisation, otherness, denial, and linguistic discrimination are direct consequences of centuries of colonialism and remain prevalent in various contexts, including universities. In Portugal, the legacies of colonialism resonate in policies and discourses that promote Luso-tropicalism—a myth that portrays Portuguese colonialism as benign. This myth of colour blindness leads to the denial and invalidation of racism, which negatively affects marginalised groups. I prioritised

alternative ways of knowing, epistemic restitution, and disobedience by employing a decolonial approach to the literature review process. In this framework, anger, gratitude, and joy serve as motivating forces in confronting the ongoing dehumanisation present in Western neoliberal universities.

As a form of psychological revolt and epistemic disobedience, anger can inspire change in practices, discourses, and policies rooted in colonial legacies. Thus, anger becomes a legitimate option for epistemological disobedience, where various means of knowledge creation—such as dreams, storytelling, and poetry—are recognised as vital to humanising lived experiences. Gratitude, epistemic restitution, and the acknowledgement of the work done by Indigenous and racialised scholars lie at the heart of this literature review. Consequently, alternative ways of knowing and possibilities for dismantling oppressive realities are emphasised. Joy is a powerful means of fostering connectedness toward liberation, inspiring commitment and action for an epistemic project focused on dreaming of a rehumanised future.

This approach to a decolonial literature review creates non-extractive, non-violent, non-exploitative opportunities for transforming colonial legacies. It contributes to a broader effort to decolonise psychology by rethinking the discipline to promote social justice and liberation while fostering reflexivity regarding marginalised knowledge and its social and political implications (Dudgeon & Darlaston-Jones, 2021; Gomez-Ordonez et al., 2021; Readsura Decolonial Editorial, 2022a). This thesis aims to give the racialised students in Portuguese psychology Academia a voice through alternative liberatory practices—such as dreaming, storytelling, and dialogue—envisioning the Western neoliberal university as a future space for the coexistence of diverse

knowledge systems and radical humanity. The following chapter introduces the methodological approaches rooted in the decolonial framework, combining *testimonios* and social dreaming to understand the experiences of Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant students in Portuguese psychology Academia.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Decolonising Research in Psychology

Research was crucial to the colonial project, facilitating the expansion of trade, knowledge, and colonies (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021). Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Māori scholar, highlighted "imperial knowledge that measured everything" (Smith, 2021, p. 84) as a critical aspect of European colonialism, alongside the exploitation of land and people. According to Smith, during the colonial rule, researchers "were also missionaries, amateur botanists, surveyors, officials, traders – any European" (Smith, 2021, p. 85) people who engaged in the colonial project and assumed the role of researching, describing and explaining the culture, costumes, languages, and bodies of Indigenous/racialised Others for the "West Archive" (Smith, 2021, p. 84) of knowledge. Thus, research became a significant part of colonisation, influencing various scientific fields, including the social sciences.

The colonisers' desire to acquire knowledge and objects from the colonised peoples while exploring the "new world" became a tool for conquest and domination (Smith, 2021). Recording, collecting, and archiving information about Indigenous and racialised groups was gradually integrated into "the language and became ways of representing and relating". It served as a strategy of power and control (Smith, 2021, p. 82). Through these procedures, Europeans positioned themselves as scholars and experts, labelling Indigenous and racialised peoples as savages, exotic, and primitive (Kilomba, 2012; Smith, 2021).

Additionally, the "science" that developed from these encounters relied on "systematic note taking, checking and rechecking of sources, interviews with informants and, eventually, the publication of results" (Smith, 2021, p. 87). This body of work has supported theoretical arguments claiming the inferiority of Indigenous and racialised peoples, portraying them as culturally and physically less developed compared to Europeans (Smith, 2021). For instance, Smith (2021, p. 85) argues that disciplines such as craniometry trace their origins to colonial research and have had a significant influence on psychological research, theory, and practice. The ways we theorise and understand knowledge shape our realities. Kilomba (2016, p. 5) explains that epistemology—the study of knowledge acquisition—influences research problems, topics of interest, and methods to generate reliable expertise. She contends that viewing research as synonymous with objectivity, neutrality, and universality perpetuates a "colonial hierarchy, in which Black and racialised people are demarcated" (Kilomba, 2016, p. 5). Consequently, Western Eurocentric research methods are seen as the norm, while Indigenous and racialised knowledge systems remain on the periphery (Kilomba, 2016).

Colonial legacies in research have defined who holds the authority to speak. Chilisa (2019) notes that academic hierarchies position Indigenous and racially marginalised individuals as silenced and inferior. She argues that "the subjugation of knowledge formations from the position of the Other is further entrenched along the lines of race, ethnicity, social class, age, and gender" (Chilisa, 2019, p. 74). This illustrates how "Western-informed research methodologies" (Chilisa, 2019, p. 75) sustain established ways of knowing,

determining who can conduct research and represent Indigenous and racialised individuals. Grada Kilomba further examines this issue:

"...academia is neither a neutral space nor simply a space of knowledge and wisdom, of science and scholarship, but also a space of v-i-o-l-e-n-c-e. She has one very problematic relationship with Blackness. Here, we have been objectified, classified, theorised, dehumanised, infantilised, criminalised, brutalised, sexualised, exposed, displayed and, sometimes, dead" (Kilomba, 2016, p. 7).

Decolonising knowledge involves recognising that academic discourses are not neutral and that the researcher operates from a specific context of relationships (Kilomba, 2016; Larkin et al., 2019). In continuity, Kilomba explains that:

"When white academics claim to have a neutral and objective discourse, they are not acknowledging that they also write from a specific place, which, of course, is neither neutral nor objective, nor universal, but dominant. They write from a place of power" (Kilomba, 2016, p. 8).

Thus, decolonising research involves "creating new configurations of knowledge and power" (Kilomba, 2016, p. 8), recognising that praxis and discourse are diverse in specific contexts.

The recognition that psychology, like many other social sciences, has contributed to the colonial project helps us understand how this discipline shapes the norms, standards, and hierarchies of human experience.

Mainstream psychological research often overlooks Indigenous and marginalised perspectives, treating them as deviations from the norm (Gomez-Ordonez et al., 2021; Kilomba, 2016; Smith, 2021). As a result, psychology has leaned towards a traditional standpoint that centres "White" or Western perspectives, presenting them as universal while marginalising other ways of knowing (Kilomba, 2016; Smith, 2021). Namely, Modern Western psychology is

often traced back to 1879 with the establishment of Wilhelm Wundt's laboratory in Leipzig. This key moment occurred just two decades after Darwin's "Origin of Species," which reshaped the understanding of life and humanity (Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Buss, 2009). By this time, race science had already become well established, creating racial categories to justify the violent subjugation of individuals. The emergence of psychology, along with evolutionary theory, further fuelled these efforts. People often misappropriated Darwin's ideas to support notions of human difference, specifically creating a pseudo-scientific rationale for white supremacy (Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). This distorted application of evolutionary thought suggested a racial hierarchy defining white populations as more "evolved" and thus biologically superior. Acts of colonial violence and domination were interpreted not as moral failures but as evidence of this supposed evolutionary advancement.

Similarly, the development of intelligence testing highlights how Eurocentric methodologies have distorted our understanding of human cognition. The Binet-Simon intelligence tests, developed by Alfred Binet and Théodore Simon in early 20th-century France, aimed to identify children who needed educational support to promote inclusion rather than placement in psychiatric institutions (Hergenhahn, 2001). Binet warned against permanently labelling children as intellectually deficient and believed cognitive development could improve with educational intervention. When the United States adopted these tests, it replaced Binet's educational philosophy with a more reductive and deterministic view, continuing a colonial legacy of human categorisation (Hergenhahn, 2001). The transition to the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score shifted the focus from a relational understanding of intelligence to rigid classifications and rankings.

These approaches reflect a Eurocentric perspective in psychology that prioritises standardisation and quantification while overlooking important cultural and contextual factors. Ultimately, these methods have perpetuated exclusionary and racialised assumptions about human ability, reinforcing colonial hierarchies of intellect.

Consequently, these examples show a psychological colonial legacy that typically neglects or only superficially addresses issues of racism and colonialism, concentrating more on individual-level problems than on systemic or historical factors. These approaches reinforce epistemic violence (Spivak, 2023), sustain white supremacy, and silence racialised voices. In response, scholars (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010) advocate for critical reflexivity and anti-racist/decolonial frameworks to transform research, teaching, and practice. For instance, Ordonez et al. (2021, p. 55) propose two strategies for decolonising psychology: first, centring the lived experiences of Indigenous and racialised individuals, and second, reconfiguring the dominance of individualistic and normalised concepts in psychological research. This shift allows research to extend beyond defining individual normality and address the social and structural sources of human suffering (Gomez-Ordonez et al., 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

Decolonising research in psychology requires the discipline to reveal how dominant ways of knowing have historically upheld hierarchies in human experiences. According to Ordonez et al., "decolonial psychology insists on revealing the economic, political, and cultural structures and ideologies that shape, and are shaped by, psychological establishments, studies, and practices" (Gomez-Ordonez et al., 2021, p. 56). In this context, the psychology

that engages with the decolonial unfinished project shift (Maldonado-Torres, 2020) addresses, details, and contributes to dismantling the impact of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2002; Quijano, 2000) on the psychological lives of individuals and communities. In their call to decolonise psychology, Ordonez et al. (2021, p. 56) highlight the significance of collective and interdisciplinary–transdisciplinary efforts that extend beyond the traditional confines of psychology. This broader approach allows for three key outcomes:

- a) redefining the goals of psychology to focus on liberation and community justice;
- b) transforming the discipline to embrace marginalised forms of knowledge and;
- c) examining the boundaries of psychology while considering its historical role in shaping and organising social experiences.

An interdisciplinary collaboration between psychology and pedagogy can play a significant role in decolonising research methods. In this context, the decolonial methodology strategies in education outlined by Zavala (2016) develop a framework for understanding and theorising the experiences of Indigenous and racialised communities. According to Zavala, the foundations of these decolonial methodologies in education involve Reclaiming, Counter-storytelling and Healing (2016, p. 2). These strategies reflect Indigenous traditions and are interconnected, emphasising their dynamic relationship. In this sense, reclaiming represents the recovery of identities, practices, and spaces. Reclaiming is essential for the coexistence of mainstream knowledge and marginalised ways of knowing. Storytelling is vital in naming the lived experiences of marginalised people while critically analysing and challenging

dominant and oppressive cultural structures. Through storytelling, individuals can remember their identities, practices, and spaces, which is crucial to reclaiming these aspects and addressing sites of struggle. Healing is a process that focuses on recovering from the effects of colonialism, emphasising community self-determination and interconnectedness. This approach challenges the prevailing status quo and fosters the creation of spaces for psychological healing, narrative reconstruction, and envisioning the future (Zavala, 2016). Applying these strategies to research, teaching, and practice in psychology consequently promotes epistemic justice and recovery. This shift moves the discipline away from extractive methods of knowledge acquisition towards a practice of liberation, contributing to the ongoing and unfinished journey of decolonisation (Maldonado-Torres, 2020; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Zavala, 2016).

The decolonial critical paradigm is an approach to decolonising research and curriculum (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021) outline four principles in this paradigm:

- 1) The first principle of this paradigm is the essential practice of reflexivity. This approach involves understanding the researcher's positionalities, including their epistemological assumptions, the formulation of research questions, and the ethical considerations regarding the subjects involved in the research.
- 2) The second principle, reciprocity and respect for self-determination, involves active listening and dialogue with others. This means that obtaining consent from participants to collaborate with the researcher is

an ongoing process. Reciprocity also entails shared responsibility for the research process, data analysis, and the dissemination of results.

- 3) The third principle emphasises the importance of embracing diverse ways of knowing. This means adopting, integrating, and considering dominant and marginalised perspectives in pursuing knowledge. It emphasises that experiencing oppression and inflicting it can often overlap in today's world. Thus, it is essential to centre Other epistemologies in research.
- 4) Finally, the fourth principle of transformative praxis involves integrating collective practices aimed at liberation, which allows us to reframe colonial legacies and open pathways toward reimagining humanisation, dreaming, affection, and hope for everyone.

Decolonising methodologies in psychology involve a fundamental shift in how the discipline interacts with its research subjects. This approach transforms spaces of marginalisation into areas where resistance and hope can thrive (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021, p. 1). Engaging with decolonial research methods in psychology means prioritising the diverse ways of knowing and existing that come from Indigenous and racialised individuals. This approach seeks to counter the ongoing dehumanising relationships that stem from colonial legacies (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021; Zavala, 2016).

Recent research in decolonial psychology (Readsura Decolonial Editorial, 2022a; Readsura Decolonial Editorial, 2022b; Decolonial Psychology Editorial Collective, 2021; Dudgeon & Darlaston-Jones, 2021), particularly within

community-social psychology, has identified several "waves" of decolonial practice. These include:

1. Relationally based research that challenges power hierarchies (Kilomba, 2012; Bell, 2018a).
2. Research grounded in emotion and lived experiences (Dutta & Atallah, 2023).
3. Sociohistorical intersectional consciousness (Dutta et al., 2022).
4. Future-oriented, desire-based research aimed at rehumanisation and utopian transformation (Bell et al., 2019; Huber, 2010; Cervantes et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2022).

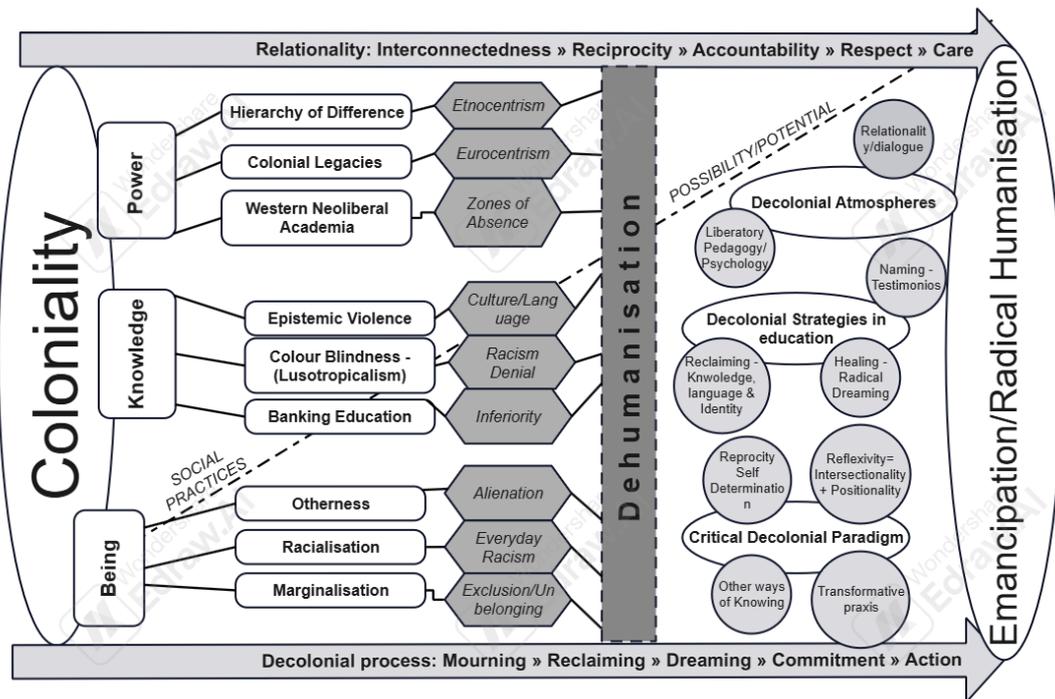
While the global movement for decoloniality in psychology is growing, this remains an evolving topic within research focused on the Portuguese context. Although a body of work (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2007; Doutor et al., 2018; Raposo et al., 2019) explores the legacy of Portuguese colonialism and examines the experiences of Afro-Portuguese and other marginalised communities, the application of decolonial frameworks in local realities remains largely overlooked.

This section highlights how research has historically supported colonial projects by privileging Western knowledge and marginalising Indigenous and racialised perspectives. Scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Bagele Chilisa highlight that colonial frameworks in Academia have deemed non-Western peoples inferior, utilising knowledge as a surveillance strategy. Decolonising psychology involves recognising these legacies and challenging Western epistemologies by centring Indigenous methodologies and practices of healing.

Strategies like reflexivity and respect for self-determination promote diverse perspectives, aiming for epistemic justice and liberation. This shift critiques traditional knowledge structures and redefines psychology as a discipline committed to collective well-being and decolonial transformation. The following section outlines this research framework. Then, I present the research design, which is composed of *Testimonios* and Social Dreaming. Following this, I discuss research participants, procedures, analysis methods, reflexivity, and ethical considerations.

### 3.1.1 Research Framework

This section outlines the research framework for this study. The chart below represents an examination of the concepts of coloniality and decoloniality within Portuguese Higher Education in psychology. It outlines essential concepts and principles, based on decolonial and liberatory practices, that inform this research and shape the analysis. The concepts in the chart provide frameworks for understanding experiences and dreams. Drawing inspiration from the decolonisation process (Chilisa, 2019; Laenui, 2000) and relationality (Tynan, 2021), this framework symbolises a movement that moves from coloniality toward liberation, humanisation, and social change. Below is a visual representation of the framework:



**Figure 1: Research Framework**

Breaking down the framework in the image, I will describe how it positions decolonial strategies against colonial structures:

1. Coloniality of Power, Knowledge, and Being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007;

Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000):

- Power: The framework highlights a "Hierarchy of Difference"(Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) perpetuated by Western neoliberal Academia. This structure maintains power by producing Eurocentric and ethnocentric values, which exclude non-Western perspectives. This exclusion creates "Zones of Absence" (Fanon, 2008), where marginalised voices are either absent or devalued.
- Knowledge: The framework introduces "Epistemic Violence"(Fricker, 2007; Spivak, 2023; Readsura Decolonial Editorial, 2022a) "Colour Blindness (Luso-tropicalism),"

(Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010) and "Banking Education", that is, educational systems that view students as passive recipients of knowledge (Freire, 2013). These concepts refer to the ways colonial structures manifest the denial and distortion of marginalised knowledge, upholding racism denial (Kilomba, 2021) and treating students as passive recipients instead of active participants in their education.

- Being: The coloniality of being encompasses "Otherness," "Racialisation," and "Marginalisation" (Chilisa, 2019; Fanon, 2008; Freire, 2013; Kilomba, 2012; Smith, 2021; Spivak, 2023; Tynan, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). These highlight the manifestation of marginalisation of systematically devalued communities, leading to social exclusion, alienation, and experiences of continuous exclusion and racism.

## 2. Dehumanisation and the Possibility for Transformation:

- The central section focuses on "Dehumanisation" (Haslam, 2022) resulting from colonial practices in Academia. However, it introduces "Possibility/Potential" as a transformative space where dehumanising structures find dismantlement through relationality and dialogue (Freire, 2013; Tynan, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

## 3. Decolonial Strategies and Emancipatory Practices:

- Decolonial Atmospheres (Bell, 2022): This concept involves creating environments that promote "Relationality/Dialogue" and

"Naming" colonial legacies. These spaces validate marginalised experiences and foster community through reciprocal interactions.

- Decolonial Strategies in Education (Zavala, 2016): These strategies include "Reclaiming Knowledge, Language, and Identity" and engaging in "Radical Dreaming" to envision decolonised futures. Fundamental approaches involve "Reflexivity," "Intersectionality," and "Positionality," all of which encourage self-awareness and challenge power imbalances (Malterud, 2002; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).
- Critical Decolonial Paradigm (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021): Central to this approach is an alternative paradigm that emphasises "Other Ways of Knowing," "Transformative Praxis," and engaging in "Liberatory Pedagogy/Psychology."

#### 4. Emancipation/Radical Humanisation:

- The ultimate goal of this framework is "Radical Humanisation"(Fanon, 2008; Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994) through decolonial processes. This section emphasises "Mourning, Reclaiming, Dreaming, Commitment, and Action"(Chilisa, 2019; Laenui, 2000) as stages in the journey toward a rehumanised and equitable educational environment.

Overall, this framework provides a structured method for addressing decolonisation in Academia by tackling the roots of colonial power in knowledge production and social practices. It promotes strategies for restructuring education to be more inclusive, dialogical, and human-centred, particularly for

Indigenous and racialised groups whose perspectives have faced historical marginalisation. This model aligns with similar decolonial frameworks advocated by scholars (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010), who champion an educational paradigm that resists colonial structures and affirms Indigenous and Afro-diasporic knowledge systems. The following section outlines the research design.

### 3.2 Research Design

This qualitative inquiry employed decolonial approaches to research, utilising *testimonios* and social dreams to gain insights into the experiences of racialised students within Portuguese Psychology Academia. Guided by decolonial epistemology and liberation paradigms (Chilisa, 2019; Comas-Díaz & Rivera, 2020; Glesne, 2016; Montero & Sonn, 2009; Smith, 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021; Todd, 2011; Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Zavala, 2016), this research was situated within the field of psychology and concerned with community liberation. In this research, Indigenous and racialised students actively shared *testimonios* and engaged in dreaming, but they had limited involvement in defining the problem and the research process. As a researcher, I identified the problem through a literature review and lived experiences, while the research participants' engagement mainly occurred during data collection. This inquiry explored the narratives of racialised students' lived experiences within the context of psychology in Portuguese Higher Education. To achieve this, the research combined *testimonios* (Brabeck; Cervantes et al., 2021; Chilisa, 2019; Huber, 2009; Huber & Villanueva, 2019; Oliver, 2004; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010) and dreaming (Bell et al., 2019; Chilisa, 2019;

Dutra & Ojha, 2016; Lawrence, 2003; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

It is important to emphasise that relational and storytelling methods are inherently subjective, relying on the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and the participant (Chilisa, 2019; Glesne, 2016; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). In this course, I recognise that positionality, intersectionality, identity, and the researcher's interpretive lens all influence data collection and analysis. Therefore, reflexivity and transparency are critical when reporting findings. In section 3.4, I further discuss how intersectionality and reflexivity impact this research. These methods, drawn from decolonial practices, principles, and theory, are valuable for capturing nuanced, context-dependent experiences. However, they also require careful consideration of subjectivity, particularly in contrast to mainstream approaches in psychological research.

Furthermore, this desire-centred research approach aimed to illuminate individual accounts of people navigating neoliberal Western universities and their aspirations for liberation from the reproduction and reiteration of colonial legacies within these spaces. A desire-centred approach is an essential alternative to deficit-based frameworks that focus on the suffering of marginalised communities. Tuck (2009) critiques these approaches for reducing communities to their victimhood and reinforcing colonial hierarchies by depicting them as reliant on external help. In contrast, the desire-centred approach emphasises these communities' agency, resilience, and aspirations, highlighting their potential for self-determination and futures beyond oppression. This method provides a more humanised view that includes their joys and

complexities. By prioritising desire over damage in this research, I employed transformative and reciprocal methodologies that contribute to a decolonial shift (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) toward liberation. In the following section, I introduce the notions of *Testimonios* and Social Dreaming. Then, I discuss the combination of both methods. Later, I will introduce the research participants and the research procedures.

### 3.2.1 *Testimonios*

The concept of the racialised or Indigenous "Other" is a socio-political and historical construction rooted in colonial legacies. The approach of *Testimonio* in research provides an alternative way to represent the Other, serving as a means to "interrupt Otherness" (Brabeck, 2006, p. 253). According to Brabeck (2006), the practice of *testimonio* started alongside Latin American human rights liberation movements, which voiced injustices and sought conscientisation (Freire, 2007) during the second half of the 20th century. *Testimonio* refers to the "expression, not of a single autonomous account but of a collectively experienced reality" (Brabeck, 2006, p. 253). As such, the speaker conveys their identification with a community and narrates an ongoing collective struggle against marginalisation (Brabeck, 2006).

For instance, a widely known *testimonio* is Rigoberta Menchú's narrative. The book *Me Llamo Rigoberta Menchú y Así Me Nació La Conciencia* (I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala (Menchú, 1984), reveals a *testimonio* of Menchú, an Indigenous Guatemalan activist, demonstrating the experiences of oppression of Indigenous communities in Guatemala, shining a light on other knowledge possibilities in denouncing marginalisation and Otherness (Brabeck,

2006; Huber & Villanueva, 2019; Menchú, 1984). *Testimonios* should not generalise the experiences of racialised or Indigenous individuals. Instead, they should highlight each individual's unique and personal narratives (Brabeck, 2006). In South and Central America, scholars (Cervantes et al., 2021; del Alba Acevedo et al., 2001; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Guerrero-Guajardo, 2018; Huber, 2010; Rodriguez-Campo, 2021; Silva et al., 2022) have been using *testimonios* to highlight how coloniality results in marginalisation and Otherness while also sharing narratives of resistance against oppression (Huante-Tzintzun, 2020).

Brabeck identifies four critical features of *testimonios*. The first is that a *testimonio* reflects a “collective understanding of self-belonging”. This means the speaker is connected to their community and expresses their relationship with a shared memory (Brabeck, 2006, p. 255). The second feature is that the speaker does not aim to represent a universal experience; instead, they invite dialogue that fosters identification with a “distant reality” through care and respect (Brabeck, 2006, p. 255). The third feature emphasises that *testimonios* encompass alternative ways of knowing and challenge traditional notions of knowledge and who can produce it. This approach shifts the focus from hierarchical, extractive research practices to highlighting lived experiences as valid sources of knowledge, serving as a “strategy of cultural resistance and survival” (Brabeck, 2006, p. 256). Finally, the fourth feature illustrates that *testimonios* allow us to understand reality from the perspective of the Other. *Testimonio* practices are closely related to storytelling; when speakers share their experiences, they also portray their communities, ideologies, and relational dynamics. This creates opportunities to discuss cultural boundaries and

differences, fostering cooperation, solidarity, and coexistence (Brabeck, 2006, p. 256).

*Testimonios* provide an alternative method for exploring experiences of Otherness in psychology through dialogue, collectiveness, and solidarity (Brabeck, 2006; Cervantes et al., 2021; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Huber, 2009; Huber & Villanueva, 2019; Rodriguez-Campo, 2021; Silva et al., 2022). Cervantes et al. define the practice of *testimonios* as an approach that aligns with liberation psychology. This method incorporates collective features to foster action, build relationships, and promote conscientisation (Cervantes et al., 2021, p. 4). The interplay between liberation psychology and *testimonios* fosters personal growth and a sense of self-determination (Cervantes et al., 2021, p. 2). By merging liberation psychology practices with *testimonios*, researchers can explore alternatives for humanisation in relating to the racialised Other and challenge various systems of oppression, including racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and xenophobia (Cervantes et al., 2021, p. 3 ). Additionally, combining *testimonios* and liberation psychology methodologies allows for examining how “mental health and community advocacy” (Cervantes et al., 2021, p. 4) inform psychological practices and pedagogies.

*Testimonios* are compatible with research in psychology, knowledge creation, and pedagogical practices (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). They represent a form of theorisation from the perspective of racialised individuals and their experiences with difference and marginalisation, particularly in university contexts (Carmona & Luciano, 2014; Cervantes et al., 2021; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Huante-Tzintzun, 2020; Huber, 2010; Reyes & Ríos, 2005; Silva et al., 2022). Using *testimonios* as a research method in Higher Education allows for

exploring reciprocity and relationality. As noted, “the *testimonio* in academia disrupts silence, invites connection, and entices collectivity—it is a form of social justice scholarship in education” (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 370). Through *testimonio* methodologies, scholars have investigated alternative pedagogical approaches to traditional ways of knowing in Academia. This work challenges structural inequities and highlights narratives of resistance and change (Carmona & Luciano, 2014; Cervantes et al., 2021; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Huber, 2010; Reyes & Ríos, 2005; Silva et al., 2022).

*Testimonios* played a crucial role in shaping this inquiry approach process for this qualitative research, which focused on the lived experiences of Black, Brown, immigrant and Indigenous individuals in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. The use of *testimonios* in this research allowed for a deeper understanding of verbal accounts of ongoing colonial oppression and the possibilities for reframing, dreaming, and reimagining current and future academic spaces and relationships (Huber & Villanueva, 2019). In adopting *Testimonios*, my goal was to invite participants to engage with an opportunity to create knowledge based on their experiences related to oppressive dynamics and their methods of resistance and refusal (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). This approach enabled a better understanding of the ongoing colonial legacies in Portuguese Higher Education from the students' perspectives. As a research method, *Testimonios* can help transform spaces of pain into avenues for healing by mobilising emotions such as anger. *Testimonios* are “a process that brings together critical consciousness and the will to take action, connecting with others through love and compassion to foster collective healing” (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 368). *Testimonios* are fundamentally “rooted in

raising critical consciousness” (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 369), which Paulo Freire refers to as conscientisation (2007). This process emphasises dialogue, reflection, and praxis as tools for changing oppressive structural and systemic realities.

The analysis of *testimonios* offers alternative ways to understand the connections between personal, social, and political aspects of life (Cervantes et al., 2021). The experiences and narratives of marginalised groups inform practices in Liberation Psychology, aligning with *Testimonio's* foundational goal of understanding both individual and collective experiences of the racialised Other (Cervantes et al., 2021). Since *Testimonio* emphasises the importance of naming, storytelling, and healing, this approach aligns with decolonial strategies in education (Zavala, 2016). Ultimately, *testimonios* support the humanisation of the racialised Other by making their experiences visible through their narratives (Cervantes et al., 2021; Rodriguez-Campo, 2021; Silva et al., 2022).

Colonial legacies result in the ongoing oppression of Black, Brown, racialised, and Indigenous people. In this context, *testimonios* as a pedagogical approach highlight the significance of dreams at personal and community levels (Carmona & Luciano, 2014; Cuádriz, 2006; del Alba Acevedo et al., 2001; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Huber, 2010; Rodriguez-Campo, 2021; Rosiles, 2018; Silva et al., 2022; Tywoniak & García, 2000). For many racialised communities, education is often neglected or denied as a fundamental human right, and gaining access to quality Higher Education remains a distant dream for both past and present generations (Huber, 2010; Tywoniak & García, 2000). *Testimonio* is a robust methodology enabling racialised individuals to articulate their experiences. It provides a platform to share their "most intimate fears and

dreams for the future" (Huber, 2009, p. 648) while navigating academic spaces. By engaging with *testimonios* in research, we can explore alternative ways of connecting, as "listening to, sharing, and transcending struggles, pain, hopes, and dreams yields a type of interdependent solidarity" (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 368).

Dreaming in *testimonios* can be considered aspiration capital (Huber, 2010; Rosiles, 2018; Yosso\*, 2005). Yosso explains that aspirational capital refers to the "ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (Yosso\*, 2005, p. 77). This ability is essential to *testimonios*, as it reflects aspirations passed down through generations via storytelling practices, embodying a communal culture of possibilities (del Alba Acevedo et al., 2001; Huber, 2010; Rosiles, 2018; Yosso\*, 2005). This way, the connection between *testimonio* and social dreaming highlights the overlap between personal and social experiences. A person's *testimonio* conveys individual feelings and embodies the collective hopes, aspirations and dreams of an entire community for future change (Huber, 2010). Consequently, when colonial legacies in Academia suppress the dreams of racialised individuals, they interrupt the possibilities for liberation for their entire community.

The operationalisation of *testimonios* in this research transformed the theoretical framework into practical steps, allowing participants to share their experiences in line with decolonial methodologies. This process was presented as dialogical and relational, encouraging reflection on their experiences of oppression, resistance, and dreams in Portuguese Higher Education in psychology. Throughout the dialogues with Participants, they framed their narratives within a collective struggle, highlighting the interconnectedness of

their experiences with broader systemic realities. Semi-structured dialogues and reflective sessions facilitated this process, using prompts to draw out accounts of personal journeys, community ties, and visions of change.

Engagement with the *testimonios* of marginalised communities offers us a chance to transform academic realities shaped by colonial legacies. It encourages us to dream and reimagine our relationships and ways of knowing, particularly within the university context. This engagement serves as an invitation to

“...be grateful for such small miracles as the joy and inner strength that comes from conquering a fear, the reciprocity of an open-handed sharing of ideas, or the sweet beauty of an unconditional, platonic love. While our hunger for intellectual and social justice still propels the utopian dreams that have nourished us, only the homemade theories we create out of our shared lives really help us to make sense of everything that we are and all that we find to love” (del Alba Acevedo et al., 2001, p. 26).

In the following section, I will explore the social dreaming approach, which inspires the methodologies used in this research inquiry.

### 3.2.2 Social Dreaming

Dreaming is essential to Indigenous ways of relating, existing, and knowing (Nirmal & Dey, 2022). The methodologies of social dreaming inspired this qualitative inquiry, which aimed to uncover knowledge from the perspectives of the research participants. As noted by Nirmal and Dey (2022), decolonial dreaming connects the past, present, and future through storytelling, creating opportunities to envision new ways of being together in this world. In this context, dreaming involves collective storytelling practices that link individual experiences to social narratives, thus "unravelling the threads of our past and

weaving futures into creation" (Nirmal & Dey, 2022, p. 146). Consequently, by integrating *testimonios* with social dreaming, this inquiry explored storytelling as a means for research participants to share their experiences in light of colonial legacies. It served as an invitation to reimagine and dream about these experiences within the psychology programmes in Portuguese Higher Education.

This inquiry examined social dreaming as a methodological approach, articulating principles of liberation psychology for a new praxis (Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Martín-Baró's proposal for research in psychology emphasises the importance of encouraging individuals to collectively explore diverse perspectives, reimagine experiences, and uncover shared desires (Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Watkins describes this approach as an opportunity to transform and humanise oppressive socio-political dynamics. Through this process, individuals navigating these structures can also find opportunities for personal growth by imagining, dreaming, and discussing alternative possibilities (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 27). Thus, social dreaming fosters shared practices of resistance and mobilisation through storytelling, allowing groups to envision and dream of renewed spaces for human experience (Bell et al., 2019; Dutra & Ojha, 2016; Lawrence, 2003; Lawrence, 2018; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

Social dreaming is a practice that involves creating and maintaining a space where individuals can share their dreams collectively. Lawrence introduced the term "social dreaming" to describe this process (Lawrence, 2003; Lawrence, 2018). The underlying principle of social dreaming is that dreaming serves as a

means for the mind to process daily events and anticipate future challenges (Lawrence, 2003, p. 611). Departing from psychoanalytical theories of dreaming, which focus on the creative process of dreaming reflected in societal culture (Lawrence, 2003, p. 610), and the concept of free association—where participants openly share their images and dreams (Lawrence, 2003)—Lawrence introduces the idea of social dreaming as a process occurring within a "matrix." This matrix is:

"...the name given to the collection of people meeting to share dreams. 'Matrix' refers to the web of mental processes, thinking and emotions that underpin all social relationships and mirror the infinite/unconscious processes that produce dreaming in the first instance. The purpose of the social dreaming matrix is freely to associate to the dreams that are made available, so as to make links and find connections in thinking" (Lawrence, 2003, p. 610).

This research engaged with the dreams of racialised and Indigenous Others involved in exploring alternative ways of knowing. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the contextual and socio-political aspects addressed in these dreams, fostering new ways of relating. Social dreaming revolves around expansion and opportunity (Lawrence, 2003; Lawrence, 2018). Dreams occur in the space between what we know and do not know, which Lawrence calls "the infinite"—"a mental space that contains all that has ever been thought and is capable of being thought" (Lawrence, 2018, p. 2). Therefore, dreaming exists at the intersection of the known and the unknown.

Dreaming manifests the participants' known and unknown aspects within the matrix (Lawrence, 2018). In social dreaming, individuals derive meaning by sharing and connecting their dreams in a collective environment. Lawrence describes this matrix as a container of dreams, which "evokes a different array,

or suite, of dreams" (Lawrence, 2018, p. 4). The participants in social dreaming, referred to as dreamers, make sense of the dreams shared in this space. This matrix advocates for an egalitarian and social experience, encouraging participants to focus on connection and collectivism (Lawrence, 2018). Social dreaming focuses on the free association of dreams (Lawrence, 2003; Lawrence, 2018). Participants, known as dreamers, are encouraged to explore connections between shared dreams and to discover new possibilities. Lawrence emphasises that the dream and the dreamer are equally important in this process (Lawrence, 2003; Lawrence, 2018).

Using dreams as a methodological approach enables a pedagogical and speculative way of knowing. This change emphasises relationality and radical imagination rather than rigid patterns of connection and problem-solving (Dutra & Ojha, 2016). For Dutra and Ojha (2016, p. 24), social dreaming is a pedagogy that "recognises that if the future is uncertain, then uncertainty becomes the very possibility to imagine it". In this context, it highlights the collaborative efforts between researchers and research participants, guided by five core principles:

- I. The future drives change;
- II. Emotions, affections, and socialisation are central to making sense of reality;
- III. It lays the groundwork for action toward change and promotes critical reflection;
- IV. Each individual has a unique perspective on the world;
- V. Engaging in social transformation requires researchers, teachers, psychologists, and others to rethink their roles (Dutra & Ojha, 2016, p. 26).

The Dream Matrix is a space for dialogue and reflection, presenting an alternative way of knowing where participants can share and reconnect with their narratives (Price, 2017). It facilitates connections through dreaming and serves as an opportunity for developing critical consciousness (Freire, 2007, 2013; Lawrence, 2018; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). As a methodology, it aligns with decolonial principles in education, liberation psychology practices, and decolonial approaches in research (Chilisa, 2019; Comas-Díaz & Rivera, 2020; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Zavala, 2016). This inquiry invited research participants to engage with their dreams and envision new forms of relationality and connectedness within their community through the research encounters (Chilisa, 2019, p. 282). This process stimulated utopian imagination and the possibility of a different world through critical dialogue (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 196).

Nevertheless, it is essential to emphasise that the approach of social dreaming in this research focused on the individual encounters with participants. Although the strategy developed by Lawrence centres on group dynamics, the exploration of dreams was adapted to understand the “interface between the individual and social reality” of racialised people (Lawrence, 2018, p. 25).

Applying social dreaming at an individual level enabled in-depth meaning-making of dreams and the exploration of personal dreams alongside the relationships between individuals and their lived experiences. In this research, I focused on dialogical encounters with participants, encouraging an exchange between the researcher and participants to enhance the associations of dreams in light of their relationships within the Portuguese psychology Academia. By maintaining the dialogical and associative features of social dreaming, the

individualised approach to the method provided an opportunity to engage with and learn from participants about their relationships and realities.

The coloniality in Higher Education interferes with the aspirations and dreams of marginalised racial groups. By centring alternative ways of knowing as decolonial and liberatory strategies in research, we can "radically dream new futurities into being" (Bell et al., 2019, p. 851). This approach can potentially disrupt and transform colonial legacies in Academia, specifically within Portuguese Higher Education psychology. The following section will introduce the research participants and the sampling methods used in this study.

### 3.2.3 Design Mestizo – *Testimonios* and Social Dreaming

This section explores the combination of *testimonios* and social dreaming in this research. *Testimonio* is an alternative method of understanding from the perspectives of racialised and Indigenous people in response to coloniality (Brabeck; Cervantes et al., 2021; Huber, 2009; Huber & Villanueva, 2019). Huber (2009, p. 644) describes the research methodology of *Testimonio* as a "verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racial, class-based, gendered, and nativist injustices they have experienced. This process serves as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more humane present and future". In liberation and community psychology, Cervantes et al. (2021, p. 2) describe *testimonios* as a "praxis. This dynamic process is central to psychological growth and self-empowerment, emphasising healing and strength within the individual's immediate environment and community".

As a methodological approach, *testimonios* embody a "critical, ethical, and transformative" (Huber & Villanueva, 2019, p. 12) perspective that helps to

understand the complex nuances of the lived experiences of racialised and Indigenous people confronting the legacies of colonialism within the context of Western neoliberal universities. Engaging with *testimonios* can facilitate shifts in our relationships with one another. Huber and Villanueva (2019, p. 12) explain that marginalised individuals can use *testimonios* to achieve healing and social transformation by sharing their experiences. Watkins suggests that listening to the *testimonios* is a way to "confront one's denial and awaken benumbed pathways to connection and action" (2010, p. 316). Similarly, Cervantes et al. describe *testimonios* as both "personal and political" to foster larger-scale change to improve the lives of individuals (2021, p. 4).

Dreaming involves a commitment to radical imagination to transform systems of oppression. This transformation occurs as people engage in collective practices such as participating in the arts, expressing their emotions and thoughts, and having meaningful dialogues (Bell et al., 2019; Chilisa, 2019; Dutra & Ojha, 2016; Lawrence, 2003; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). According to Lawrence (2003, p. 611), dreaming "is the material the mind uses to grow as it processes the events of the day and anticipates the issues it has to face in the future". This approach fostered healing, the reclamation of university space, storytelling, relationality, and reciprocity through methods such as *Testimonios* and social dreaming (Cervantes et al., 2021; Chilisa, 2019; Dutra & Ojha, 2016; Huber, 2009; Lawrence, 2003; Oliver, 2004; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Zavala, 2016).

*Testimonios* and social dreaming are interconnected approaches rooted in collective struggles and shared experiences, making them practical tools for transformative research in decolonial and critical inquiries. *Testimonios* are

narrative accounts of oppression, resistance, and survival, often shared to highlight injustices and inspire solidarity (Brabeck, 2006; Huante-Tzintzun, 2020; Huber, 2009; Huber & Villanueva, 2019). They emphasise the relationship between individual narratives and collective experiences. Social Dreaming involves the shared articulation of dreams to explore social realities and envision future possibilities. Watkins and Shulman (2010) argue that shared approaches to dreaming reveal insights into structural issues, focusing on community aspirations rather than individual experiences. Indigenous scholars (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021) define Dreaming as essential to Indigenous epistemology, connecting ancestral knowledge, fostering cultural continuity, and envisioning decolonial futures. When used together, *testimonios* provide historical context concerning colonial legacies, while social dreaming facilitates the collective reimagining of futures in which coloniality does not rule people's lives (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020). Incorporating these methods into this research honoured individual voices and shared agency. This integration enabled participants to actively produce knowledge and express aspirations for social change, reinforcing their commitment to revealing and transforming oppressive realities in Portuguese Psychology Academia, respecting community knowledge, and fostering renewed and alternative approaches to knowing.

The research design consisted of individual encounters, inviting participants to share their *testimonios*—verbal accounts of their experiences in Portuguese Higher Education psychology courses. In these encounters, I employed dialogue, dreaming, and storytelling as tools to explore and envision alternatives for transforming systems of oppression within Portuguese Higher Education psychology. In the encounters with participants, I proposed a shared

space for participants to engage in dialogue. After sharing their *testimonios*, I invited participants to shift the narrative: to dream these realities otherwise. Using the questions as prompts, I asked participants to share their hopes, aspirations, and dreams related to their academic experiences, futures, and communities. Through this approach, I explored blending *testimonios* and dreaming methodologies, offering an epistemological alternative for understanding the ontology of these experiences. Finally, this design method allowed the creation of spaces for reciprocity, connectedness, mobilisation, liberation, critical reflection, and conscientisation between the researcher and participants. Paulo Freire teaches that the key to achieving change in oppressive dynamics and systems is through dialogue, emphasising that the "conviction of the oppressed that they must fight for their liberation is not a gift bestowed by the revolutionary leadership, but the result of their own *conscientização*" (2013, p. 67).

Freirean dialogue, *testimonios*, and dreaming are complementary methodologies that promote collective understanding and transformative action by emphasising relational knowledge and mutual reflection. Through dialogue, *testimonios* serve as a shared denunciation of oppression, enabling participants to connect their narratives with broader collective struggles and inspire solidarity-based actions. An interview can imply a more formal, extractive process; I have chosen to engage with dialogue, which incorporates relationality, co-creation, and mutual learning. While the encounters began with a semi-structured inquiry to explore specific research questions, they intentionally evolved into dialogical exchanges, fostering reciprocity and mutual understanding between participants and the researcher. Similarly, social

dreaming incorporates Freire's commitment to critical consciousness, allowing participants to envision and reflect on alternative futures. This process can potentially guide historically marginalised communities toward liberating colonial legacies. According to Watkins and Shulman, *conscientização* is a "process of critical discernment" (2010, p. 48), an enabling collective commitment "that allows one to actively engage with the socioeconomic structures one has previously identified with and been blind to" (2010, p. 193). Through shared efforts towards conscientisation, this research design aimed to transform academic spaces in Portugal into a conceptual, collaborative, and liberatory praxis within psychological research practice (Orford, 1992; Todd, 2011; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). The following subsections describe the research participants and procedures.

#### 3.2.4 Research Participants

Racialised/Indigenous Students were at the centre of this research. Participants included individuals who had completed or were in the process of completing an undergraduate degree, a master's degree, or a PhD in psychology at a Portuguese university. This study welcomed those who self-identified as Indigenous, Black African, Black Caribbean, Black Brazilian, Black Portuguese, Other Black, Mixed, or immigrants. Concerning participants' backgrounds, there was a balance of 1 participant who was born in Portugal, being black and of second generation to Mozambican parents, and 11 participants who were immigrants in Portugal and came from Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde, and Mozambique, former Portuguese colonies. Concerning the one participant who identified as indigenous, they described being part of a family of direct

descendants of Tupi-Guarani indigenous peoples communities in the northeast of Brazil, having been born and living in the urban areas of Recife. All participants were at least 18 years of age, provided verbal consent, and signed an informed consent form (Appendix 5). Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were fully informed about the nature of the research.

The majority of participants in this research identified themselves as women, which is significant given previous findings on gender differences in research engagement. Past studies (Gil-Lacruz et al., 2017; Demir et al., 2019; Xiao-fan Guo et al., 2017) indicate that women are more likely than men to volunteer for research studies, particularly in areas related to health, social issues, and education. In traditional approaches to psychological research, this trend can lead to disparities in representation based on gender. Various social factors and individual interests influence this tendency, with women often gravitating towards research that is social and community-oriented. They frequently seize these opportunities to highlight the imbalances and injustices they encounter in their lives. Moreover, multiple studies (Gil-Lacruz et al., 2017; Demir et al., 2019; Xiao-fan Guo et al., 2017) have demonstrated that women are more likely to accept invitations to participate in academic research, particularly in studies focusing on social, health, or relational topics. This pattern stems from socialisation and differing interests, with women exhibiting a greater willingness to engage in research that resonates with their values and experiences. Liberatory and decolonial principles in research orient this research; this context was essential, as my analysis concentrated purposefully on participants who voluntarily chose to engage with a study centred on the lived experiences,

relationships, and narratives of navigating the educational landscape as racialised individuals in Portuguese psychology Academia.

The information collected about participants was anonymised to protect their confidentiality and analysed for publication in this PhD thesis, academic journals, blogs, vlogs, and conference presentations. Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality was an ongoing process, and participants could choose to have their names and details included or removed according to their preferences. Participants were contacted by me or through the universities via institutional email or messaging (see Appendix 3) with an open invitation to participate and detailed information regarding the research (see Appendix 4). The participant recruitment also relied on the support of student unions, NGOs, collectives, or individuals who were aware of those interested in participating in this research. The interactions with participants for this project took place online via MS Teams calls for the data collection.

#### 3.2.4.1 Recruitment and Sampling Strategy

Recruitment began with individuals who expressed interest in participating in the research and received my initial contact. I primarily used social media platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, as well as invitations from universities, to reach out to psychology departments at 14 Portuguese universities. These universities included the University of Évora, the University of the Algarve, the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, the Catholic University of Portugal (Lisbon), the University of Beira Interior, the University of Aveiro, the University of the Azores, the University of Minho, the University of Madeira, the University of Coimbra, the University of Porto,

Lusófona University of Humanities and Technologies, ISPA – University Institute, and Lusíada University. Additionally, I contacted collectives and associations that work with racialised individuals in Portugal or support psychology students, such as Queer Tropical, Casa do Brasil, Grupo Educar, and ANEP-Portugal (the National Association of Psychology Students). This approach aimed to gauge potential participants' interest in the research. I then presented the research purpose, the consent form (Appendix 5), and the participation information sheet (Appendix 4). We subsequently scheduled an online call via Teams.

This qualitative research utilised purposeful sampling, which enabled a more profound understanding by focusing on the information-rich experiences of the participants (Glesne, 2016, p. 50). The study employed a non-probability sampling strategy (Chilisa, 2019; Glesne, 2016; Kovach, 2021), specifically designed to include a particular group of participants: racialised students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. The aim is to explore their experiences in depth. Given the relational and dialogic nature of the research, which relied on building trust, participants had an opportunity to share their *testimonios* and dreams. Additionally, the sampling strategy included participant recommendations, effectively creating a network sampling method (Chilisa, 2019; Glesne, 2016).

Participant selection often involves narrowing down a larger group to a smaller, more focused sample, ensuring that key accounts relevant to the research questions are included (Alarie & Lupien, 2021). In this study, I initially received 33 individuals who expressed interest in participating. I conducted 19 recorded research sessions, engaging 12 participants from a pool of 19 who provided in-

depth descriptions of their experiences in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. Analysing the transcripts deepened my understanding of their accounts, guiding my selection to ensure diverse and insightful perspectives. Recognising that this selection process is inherently subjective, I aimed to engage with participants who could provide the most valuable perspectives. I employed purposeful sampling to select participants who could provide rich, detailed information relevant to my research topic (Glesne, 2016, p. 50). The selection criteria focused on the relevance to research questions, diversity of perspectives, and how participants engaged when sharing their experiences. I also prioritised those who explored dreaming as a proposal for change and transformation. Ultimately, I centred the analysis on the segments of the data that offered nuanced, deep, and critical analyses of their experiences and dreams. Reporting on selection criteria and decision-making processes is essential to establish my positioning as a researcher and enhance the understanding of the rationale behind research choices, thereby supporting methodological rigour (Alarie & Lupien, 2021).

Qualitative research focuses on understanding the meaning and depth of a question, typically resulting in smaller sample sizes compared to quantitative research (Mason, 2010). According to Mason (2010), data saturation in qualitative research can vary based on the study's design and objectives. For instance, after analysing 506 doctoral inquiries that utilised qualitative interview methods, Mason (2010) found that the mean sample size was 31 in these theses. These findings suggest that qualitative PhD researchers employ various principles when selecting sampling methods and evaluating data saturation. Additionally, Mason's analysis showed that studies involving action,

collaborative, critical/liberatory research, and phenomenological research had average sample sizes ranging from 5 to 35 participants to achieve saturation, with a minimum of 5 participants considered a sufficient sample size.

This research focused on creating space for racialised students to voice their *testimonios* and dreams while navigating Portuguese psychology courses.

Considering that and following the means of participants for qualitative studies proposed by Mason (2010), this research involved twelve participants. The twelve participants I chose offered insights relevant to the research questions, particularly regarding the significance of being racialised as Black, Brown, immigrant, or Indigenous in Portugal. This provided a variety of perspectives on their experiences. I see these participants not just as subjects of research but as witnesses to the colonial legacies present in Portuguese universities. Their *testimonios* reflect an understanding that goes beyond mere observation. They share their dreams, desires, aspirations, and hopes for changing and transforming their experiences within a system characterised by oppressive relationships.

In addressing the power dynamics between male researchers and female participants, I recognise that complexity can significantly influence the research process, data quality, and participants' willingness to engage. Previous studies (Hanks, 2020; Mazhar Nawaz et al., 2024; Prior & Peled, 2021) have shown that gendered power relations can affect the authenticity of accounts, the willingness of participants to share openly, and the overall ethical integrity of the research. It is essential to address these dynamics to achieve valid and ethical research outcomes. I understand the situated nature of power as it shifts based on context, setting, and the individuals involved. In female-dominated or

feminised research environments, like psychology courses, male researchers may experience both advantages and limitations due to gender incongruence. In this research, adopting a reflexive approach (as discussed in section 3.4) allowed me to continuously evaluate my position as a male researcher while considering the intersectionalities of my identities as a racially marginalised, queer, and immigrant researcher. Comprehensive reflexivity is a crucial tool for mitigating power imbalances and ensuring the ethical conduct of research (Hanks, 2020; Mazhar Nawaz et al., 2024; Prior & Peled, 2021).

To achieve the purposes of this research, I encountered twelve people from diverse intersectional backgrounds. 92% of the participants recognised their racialisation through their shared experiences as immigrants, as well as being Black, Brown, or Indigenous. Most of the participants identified with multiple identities related to gender, race, ethnicity, and immigration status, with the majority primarily identifying as Black or Brown. Overall, eleven (92%) participants identified as females. A significant number of participants, 42%, have lived in Portugal for between five and ten years, followed by those who have lived there for more than two years (four participants, 33% of the group). Concerning education, ten (83%) participants reported holding a master's degree, with one having a PhD and one holding an undergraduate degree. All the *testimonios* shared relate to participants' experiences across their academic journeys at distinct psychology courses in Portugal. The experiences shared occurred in academic spaces at the University of Porto, the University Institute of Maia (ISMAI), Aveiro University, Coimbra University, the ISCTE—University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL), the ISPA—University Institute of Psychological, Social, and Life Sciences (ISPA), and the School of Social and Political

Sciences (ISCSP-Ulisboa). Most participants observed racism in their psychology courses and at the university. Out of twelve participants, two witnessed incidents of racism or xenophobia directly, while four learned about such incidents from colleagues. Notably, more than half of the participants, totalling 45.45%, recounted personal experiences as victims of racism or xenophobia in the context of psychology courses at Portuguese universities. In the following table, there is descriptive data on the demographics of the research participants:

Participant	Residence in Portugal	Witness of Racism in the Psychology Course	Witness racism in the University	Gender	Identification	Experience Racism at the University	Education	University
Amanda	Between 5 and 10 years	Yes	Yes	Female	Other	Witness	PhD	Coimbra, ISCTE
Bianca	More than 2 years	No	No	Female	Black	Listener to an experience	Masters Degree	ISPA
Camila	More than 2 years	Yes	Yes	Female	Black	Listener to an experience	Masters Degree	UMAIA
Daniel	More than 2 years	Yes	Yes	Male	Immigrant	Listener to an experience	Undergrad	Aveiro, Coimbra
Flávia	Between 5 and 10 years	Yes	Yes	Female	Brown	Victim	Masters Degree	ISCSP Lisboa
Júlia	Between 5 and 10 years	Yes	Yes	Female	Brown	Victim	Masters Degree	ISPA
Laura	Between 5 and 10 years	Yes	Yes	Female	Black	Witness	Masters Degree	ISCTE
Marcela	More than 2 years	Yes	Yes	Female	Brown	Listener to an experience	Masters Degree	UPORTO
Maria	More than 10 years	Yes	Yes	Female	Black	Victim	Masters Degree	ISPA
Manuela	Between 5 and 10 years	Yes	Yes	Female	Indigenous	Victim	Masters Degree	Coimbra
Natália	Less than 2 years	Yes	Yes	Female	Immigrant	Victim	Masters Degree	Coimbra
Vitória	Born	Yes	Yes	Female	Brown	Victim	Masters Degree	ISPA

**Table 1: Research participants' demographics.**

### 3.2.5 Research Procedures

#### 3.2.5.1 Research Questions

This research approach employed *testimonios* and social dreaming as methodologies, drawing on decolonial paradigms in the context of liberation and community psychology. This approach focused on understanding the following research question: RQ1: What *testimonios* do Black and Brown racialised/Indigenous students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology courses have to share? What are their relationships with the space of teaching and learning? What *testimonios* do they tell about their experiences in collective spaces in Portuguese Academia? RQ2: What, if any, are the dreams of racialised students in reimagining the future Portuguese Higher Education psychology courses? What does their imagination tell us if they engage in social change and the future envisioning of Higher Education psychology?

#### 3.2.5.2 Conducting Online Inquiring

I conducted the research online, which is considered Internet-Mediated Research (IMR) (British Psychological Society, 2013). It required adherence to specific ethical standards throughout its processes. According to the British Psychological Society (2013), several critical ethical considerations are necessary when designing, implementing, or evaluating an IMR study. These considerations include respect for autonomy, scientific integrity, social responsibility, and maximising benefits and minimising harms. Considering these principles, obtaining informed consent is crucial. I began the session by ensuring that participants fully understood the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits. Following that, I discussed confidentiality and data

security with each participant, which is also essential, especially considering the vulnerabilities in the online environment. This includes protecting personal information and ensuring secure data storage and transmission methods. Additionally, I thought about the difference between public and private online spaces. Thus, having their consent either on paper or in recording was essential.

Moreover, participants were informed about their rights to withdraw from the study at any time within two weeks of the research encounter without facing consequences. Then, I provided a thorough debriefing and maintained transparency regarding how I used the collected data in the thesis. I detailed this research process through the participant information sheet sent before each encounter. These considerations were fundamental to upholding ethical standards in conducting this research. Each call lasted between one hour and one and a half hours.

The approach based on *testimonios* has influenced online interview practices by emphasising relational trust and participant autonomy. The informed consent process was collaborative, enabling participants to guide how their accounts are shared while respecting their narrative goals and relationships with their context and communities. Strict confidentiality measures, including anonymisation discussions, are enforced to protect sensitive narratives. As a researcher, I maintained a dialogical and horizontal relationship, upholding ethical standards and focusing on amplifying participants' voices in line with their intentions, ensuring the study honours their experiences.

### 3.2.5.3 Inquiry Questions

I invited participants to engage in dialogue, share their *testimonios* and dreams, as I conducted semi-structured inquiry prompts during the research encounters. The questions focused on their experiences and aspirations in Portuguese Higher Education psychology courses. The data collection used open-ended questions to capture the depth and context of the participants' lived experiences and aspirations. As a researcher, my role in this dialogue was to listen to their experiences, share my own experiences, and respond to their questions throughout the encounter. In this approach, I aimed to establish a relational connection with the participants. The interview guide is in Appendix 9. Below is a table presenting the topics discussed and a sample of the questions asked in the interview guide:

Topic	Example Question
University Environment	How would you describe your university?
Classroom Experience	What was your everyday life experience when you were in psychology class?
Challenges in Portuguese Psychology Courses	What are the difficulties in being Black, Brown, immigrant, or Indigenous in the context of Portuguese psychology courses?
Treatment from Faculty and Staff	What treatment do Black, Brown, immigrant, or Indigenous students receive from faculty and staff in Psychology courses in Portugal?
Course Reflection	How would you describe your psychology course?
Identity as a Student	Can you describe what it means to be a Black, Brown, immigrant, or Indigenous psychology student at your university in Portugal?
Future Aspirations for Psychology and Academia	As a Black, Brown, immigrant, or Indigenous person, what are your dreams or desires for the future of psychology and Academia?
Personal and Community Aspirations	What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the future?
Initial Aspirations to Study Psychology	What were your dreams and hopes for studying psychology at a Portuguese university?

**Table 2: Topic and Questions Examples**

During each call, participants received information that *testimonios* and social dreaming recordings would be transcribed and translated for further analysis.

#### 3.2.5.4 Transcriptions

The dialogues in this research focused on participants' experiences and dreams. Each encounter was audio/video recorded and manually transcribed from Portuguese to English for analysis. I used British English conventions and retained some Portuguese terms for their contextual meaning. The dialogues averaged 10,000 words or 25 to 30 pages. I analysed the resulting transcripts using a relational approach to thematic analysis, as outlined in section 3.3.3. Engaging with the participants' narratives was an iterative process, beginning with our first encounter, during which I listened to their experiences and shared my own. As I read the transcripts three to four times, my familiarity with their experiences and emotions grew. I listened attentively, asked questions, and gained valuable insights into the realities of being a racialised Portuguese student in Higher Education psychology. In this process, I have focused on their spoken words, inflexions, tone of voice, facial expressions and emotional tone. These only provided nuance in informing the analysis—this analysis developed from the relational dynamics developed during these interactions.

Transcribing each interview facilitated the initial stages of analysis, including coding and identifying key themes. I linked the participants' shared experiences to the relevant literature guiding this research during this process. With the transcribed data, I established connections with existing literature and discussed these findings with my supervisory team. This verification process helped me develop the initial themes and subthemes I arrived at from the

participants' shared experiences and dreams. The following section focuses on the approach that uses thematic analysis to understand the experiences of racialised students in the context of Portuguese Psychology Academia.

### 3.3 Method of Analysis: Understanding *Testimonios*/Dreams of Black, Brown, and Immigrant Students at Portuguese Higher Education

Colonial legacies in academic settings contribute to the silencing of racialised and Indigenous individuals. Neoliberal Western universities are built on racial, patriarchal, and exploitative assumptions, creating dynamics of inferiority and superiority that uplift some voices while suppressing others (Andrews, 2018; Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Chilisa, 2019; Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Glesne, 2016; Smith, 2021; Tate & Bagguley, 2017; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Watkins and Shulman assert that coloniality "has an ideology of denial, pretending that the situation is normal and natural, silencing suffering under the guise of development and progress" (2010, p. 30). Community and liberation psychologies aim to reveal how individuals and communities often remain unheard (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 46). Thus, psychologists and researchers play a vital role in helping the silenced rediscover their capacities for historical memory, critical analysis, and utopian imagination (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 26). This section focuses on the analytical approach used in this research to understand the experiences and dreams of racialised students in Portuguese psychology Universities.

Understanding experiences shared through *testimonios* and social dreaming aimed to reveal "insights that lead to an empowering de-ideologisation of dominant discourses that have been internalised" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 292). This study adopted a relational and reciprocal ethical stance in research,

centring on the shared experiences, *testimonios*, and dreams of research participants. This approach emphasised the importance of considering the feelings and perspectives of those we represented and honouring their voices (Glesne, 2016, p. 170).

### 3.3.1 Approaching Thematic Analysis: Coding and Theming

This study used Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Glesne, 2016; Kovach, 2021) to explore the meanings shared by racialised students in Portuguese university psychology courses. Thematic Analysis is a qualitative research method that identifies recurrent themes from data, such as interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Clarke & Braun, 2017; Glesne, 2016; Kovach, 2021). It is often used in psychological research to uncover and analyse patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Glesne, 2016; Kovach, 2021). Thematic Analysis is a ‘foundational method for qualitative analysis’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Researchers commonly use it to identify themes and extract meaning alongside established analytical approaches such as grounded theory, interpretative phenomenological analysis, and conversational analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Glesne, 2016).

The purpose of using Thematic Analysis in this research was to explore the experiences of racialised students in the context of psychology education in Portugal. Thematic Analysis provides a method “to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of some social phenomenon through understanding the processes that tend to involve that phenomenon as well as the perceptions, values, and beliefs of people toward it” (Glesne, 2016, p. 184). Researchers should consider six key questions when using Thematic Analysis in qualitative

research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first question addresses coding the data, defining patterns, and determining themes. It emphasises the prevalence of data, and in this research, the theme descriptions centre around the accounts of each participant. Guided by Byrne's (2022) approach to Braun and Clark's (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Clarke & Braun, 2017) thematic analysis, the coding process in this research involved manually analysing each data item, collating relevant extracts, ensuring that the themes aligned with the original data, and establishing coherent themes on participants' experiences and dreams-related to Portuguese Psychology Academia. Initially, I organised the data by creating a map that captured the participants' diverse experiences, contextual narratives, and dreams (see Appendix 7). Through this approach, I identified narrative patterns that answered the research questions. The second question focuses on the richness of data, examining the overall dataset or specific elements within it. This process focuses on providing depth by adding nuance and details to a particular theme or group of themes. For this inquiry, I observed that shared experiences and contextual descriptions varied between narratives with negative and positive outcomes. Regarding dreams, the nuances ranged from personal dreams to collective ones.

The third question addresses conducting either an inductive or a theoretical analysis. This research aimed to centre the experiences of the research participants, allowing the study to follow the data that addresses the research questions from their accounts, while also considering the theoretical framework. By combining both approaches, the analysis in this research prioritised the participants' narratives, and later, it examined *testimonios* and dreams using existing theories. The fourth question concerns the level of theme

identification, ranging from explicit to interpretative levels. The interpretative level enables the exploration of underlying ideological aspects and the deeper meanings of the experiences. The approach taken in this research employed both levels of theme identification, utilising either semantic or interpretative approaches to uncover the meaningful details within the participants' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The fifth question examines the epistemological paradigms guiding the research design, particularly how data is described and theorised. This study is structured on decolonial principles in psychology (Cervantes et al., 2021; Chilisa, 2019; Comas-Díaz & Rivera, 2020; Kovach, 2021; Orford, 1992; Samuel & Ortiz, 2021; Smith, 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Zavala, 2016) to understand participants' experiences within their contexts. The study adopted a Thematic Analysis approach, which enabled the exploration of sociopolitical spaces, structural organisations, and the relationships between research participants and these dynamics. The final question pertains to the range of inquiries a qualitative study seeks to explore. This research focuses on the lived experiences of Black, Brown, immigrant and Indigenous students in Portuguese Higher Education. It employed thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns of meaning within the data gathered from the research participants, who shared *testimonios* and dreams concerning their experiences in academic psychology spaces (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic Analysis in research follows a structured six-step process. Braun and Clarke (2021) state that the first step involves reading, transcribing, and taking notes on the data to establish familiarity. The second step is coding patterns using inductive and deductive analysis to develop initial codes. In the third step,

the researcher organises these codes into potential themes and gathers supporting data. The fourth step involves revising the themes to ensure they align with the coded extracts and overall dataset, often using a visual map. In the fifth step, the researcher analyses and refines the themes, focusing on the data's overall narrative and clearly defining each theme. Finally, the sixth step involves producing a report, which is the final opportunity for analysis. This includes using relevant data extracts to align with existing literature and research questions.

In ensuring the quality of the Thematic Analysis, the researcher must establish a rigorous commitment to deal with the processes of transcription, coding, analysis, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Byrne, 2022; Clarke & Braun, 2017). In this process, the researcher follows the transcription criteria, in which data is reported in detail and reviewed for accuracy. For this research, I followed these steps to ensure the quality of the Thematic Analysis. First, I transcribed the data, capturing spoken words, pauses, and nuances accurately, often listening multiple times to verify their accuracy. Second, during the coding process, I labelled data segments with consistent codes that reflected the experiences and dreams of participants (see Appendix 6). Finally, in the analysis and reporting phase, I reviewed the themes and connections among the codes, carefully describing my findings and supporting them with data excerpts to ensure credibility and transparency, and exploring their connections to the existing literature concerning the experiences of racialised Students in Higher Education.

Performing coding and theming shared experiences was supportive of organising my understanding of participants' *testimonios* and dreams. It served

the purpose of establishing a narrative. With that, my analysis focused on their examination of their past experiences, realities, relationships, hopes, and dreams. A sample of the coding performed in the transcripts is in Sample Transcript with Coding (Appendix 6). Therefore, this inquiry centred on experiences, interrogations, appreciation, interpretations, and relationships. In doing so, I focused on relating through care. Through relationality, I engaged with these themes (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021). I enacted care by practising reciprocity and respecting participants' *testimonios* and dreams. I achieved care by recognising participants' lived experiences and committing to centre their *testimonios* and dreams in the analysis. The encounters with participants captured their experiences regarding the research problem. I acknowledge the diversity of identities, backgrounds, and beliefs among the accounts. This diversity reflects the multiplicity of ways of knowing in the lived experiences of research participants.

Participant *testimonios* and dreams provided an explicit and underlying understanding of the lived experiences in Portuguese academic spaces. According to Kovach (2021, p. 24) “relationships, stories, and words mark qualitative inquiry”. Through the analysis, I could relate to, identify, and interpret the participants' accounts and their relevance to addressing the research questions (Byrne, 2022), focusing on the relationships to tell multiple narratives. That is, relationships between participants and staff, peers and faculty, the academic spaces of learning, support services, the discipline of psychology, and themselves.

This analysis combined semantic and latent codes. Items that respond to the research questions could either have an explicit or interpretative meaning. As a

result, the thematic analysis centres on either meaning construction based on theoretical assumptions or lived experiences. In the semantic codes, I focused on the explicit meaning of excerpts. For example, experiences like “...*treatment among colleagues is generally positive...*” have a semantic code that is the word “*positive,*” which directly describes how the participant judges their experiences. On the other hand, the latent analysis of the same excerpt allowed me to interpret how these positive experiences lead to a sense of belonging and connection in the academic spaces of Portuguese Higher Education psychology. Therefore, the analysis focused on the underlying and implicit meaning of the shared experiences.

### 3.3.2 Indigenous Approaches to Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is compatible with various paradigms in psychology, a “flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). This method helps to identify data patterns rather than establish norms regarding relationships and practices (Glesne, 2016). Its purpose is to uncover “complexities as you seek to identify tensions and distinctions and to explain where and why people differ from a general pattern” (Glesne, 2016, p. 184). As such, Thematic Analysis is a versatile approach used in various theoretical frameworks, including research designs that focus on understanding and liberation concerning lived experiences (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Glesne, 2016). Nevertheless, Thematic Analysis is a qualitative research approach grounded in a Western tradition of meaning-making, which can align with Indigenous, relational and decolonial methodologies (Kovach, 2021). According to Kovach

(2021), Thematic Analysis, influenced by Indigenous methods, adopts a cyclical rather than linear approach to qualitative data analysis. This thematic strategy, which incorporates “Indigenous theorising, gives space, credence, and opportunity for Indigenous thinking and theory that is relevant to Indigenous communities in specific ways” (Kovach, 2021, p. 207).

Furthermore, Kovach (2021) states that thematic Analysis is effective in decolonial research that adopts Indigenous frameworks. It allows pathways to capture the voices and experiences of participants flexibly, integrating personal and collective narratives present in *testimonios* and social dreaming without imposing strict academic structures. By respecting the cultural contexts of these narratives, Thematic Analysis is a valuable tool for understanding the realities of Indigenous and marginalised communities in Portuguese psychology Higher Education. Moreover, the iterative and circular nature of Thematic Analysis aligns with the non-linear process seen in Indigenous storytelling, emphasising relationality and critical reflection. This iterative approach fosters a deeper engagement with shared narratives. Thematic Analysis provides a structured yet adaptable framework for understanding experiences through *testimonios* and social dreaming while honouring their cultural significance (Kovach, 2021).

Thematic Analysis as a strategy for Indigenous methodologies consists of six interconnected terms that form a cycle (Kovach, 2021). It begins by integrating decolonial and Indigenous ways of knowing into the analytical process. This leads to the first level of analysis, which addresses the question, “*What do the participants' experiences reveal?*”. The research then moves back and forth between data transcription, the decolonial theoretical framework, and notes to conduct a relational analysis. This follows the question, “*What are the*

*relationships among the experiences shared in the participants' stories?"*. The subsequent step involves an intentional interpretive question: *"Does this analysis consider indigenous ways of knowing?"* During this phase, the researcher seeks opportunities to reconnect with the community and the teachings of indigenous scholars. Next, the researcher identifies vital themes relevant to the research, emphasising the importance of understanding these themes within the context of the communities represented by the participants. The final step in the cycle is to recognise and incorporate outlier findings, which can provide valuable insights into the overall analysis (Kovach, 2021). Thus, Thematic Analysis rooted in Indigenous and decolonial approaches is inherently relational and cyclical. In approaching the analysis through Indigenous Thematic Analysis, my focus was on the following:

1. Treating participants' stories as holistic and relational narratives.
2. Engaging in a cyclical, reflective process of revisiting and refining themes.
3. Centring cultural and contextual nuances in understanding participants' experiences.
4. Emphasising interconnected themes that reflect relationality and shared struggles.

This approach honoured the data's relational and cultural dimensions, fostering an analysis aligned with decolonial and Indigenous methodologies.

### 3.3.3 Relational Approach to Thematic Analysis

This research took a relational approach to Thematic Analysis. Drawing on decolonial and Indigenous frameworks (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021), a relational Thematic Analysis is a qualitative research method that emphasises the interconnectedness of the researcher, participants, data, and sociopolitical context. Reflexive Thematic Analysis inspires it (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Byrne, 2022; Clarke & Braun, 2017), which focuses on identifying themes and patterns within a dataset. However, relational Thematic Analysis explores the relationships among these elements rather than treating them as separate. In this approach, the themes developed from the analysis do not derive from a detached perspective. Instead, relational Thematic Analysis incorporates subjective and relational considerations throughout the research process. It stresses that everything is interconnected: participants, researchers, and data all play a vital role in shaping the analysis. Furthermore, through relational Thematic Analysis, I was encouraged to interpret the data, identify patterns and continually reflect on their relationships with theoretical frameworks, geographical contexts, individuals, tools, and themselves during the research journey.

This relational Thematic Analysis focused on mapping experiences through coding to enhance understanding. Coding involves cataloguing ideas, experiences, feelings, and events (Kovach, 2021). I recognise that the relational aspect of this process is essential to make sense of experiences and communicate understanding effectively. With this principle in mind, I used coding as an opportunity to tell a story rather than merely a way to categorise,

divide, or fragment experiences (Kovach, 2021). This approach emphasised reciprocity, reflexivity, and storytelling, moving beyond extractive research models to foster a relational and transformative process. It mapped experiences while highlighting the importance of relationships in the processes of meaning-making, decolonisation, and liberation. With that, in this research, Thematic Analysis dialogues with Indigenous theory, decolonial approaches, and principles from community and liberation psychology (Chilisa, 2019; Comas-Díaz & Rivera, 2020; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021; Tynan, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Zavala, 2016) to analyse and understand the experiences of racialised students within the context of psychology courses in Portuguese Higher Education.

### 3.4 The Researcher – The Role of Reflexivity, Intersectionality, and Positionality

Among the decolonial and liberatory principles guiding psychology research, reflexivity is a fundamental ethical stance for this thesis. Reflexivity involves a practice where the researcher critically examines how their beliefs influence their attitudes toward others in the context of research and practice (Glesne, 2016; Pillow, 2003; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). This principle encourages a critical approach, as the researcher transparently shares their commitments and motivations, fostering space for dialogue and questions (Glesne, 2016; Pillow, 2003; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). In line with the views of Watkins and Shulman, research takes on a critical perspective:

"...when it leaves behind a naive approach to issues of power, and engages in careful self-reflection regarding the possible shadows of its research presence and processes. This reflexivity involves researchers in a critical stance toward the processes and uses of research in the history of their discipline(s), and asks them to be willing to dis-identify with aspects of their training and practice that reinforce the divides a

critical participatory action approach questions and works to heal." (2010, p. 269).

Reflexivity involves reflecting on and questioning the research interactions throughout the process, from initiating an inquiry project to sharing findings (Glesne, 2016, p. 145). Being reflexive requires researchers to analyse their focus continuously and be critically aware of how their characteristics—such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality—as well as their position and interests—impact every stage of the research process (Pillow, 2003, p. 178). In this research, reflexivity is a crucial element that facilitates the continuous examination of biases, the researcher's position regarding privilege, and the challenges of addressing oppressive structures in contexts of struggle, such as the field of psychology within Portuguese Higher Education.

The practice of reflexivity involves a critical self-examination of the researcher's role within a specific context. Reflexivity emerges from the interplay between positionality and intersectionality (Glesne, 2016; Pillow, 2003; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Recognising that "ontology informs epistemology" (Bell, 2022, p. 4) and vice versa means understanding that a researcher's experiences and overlapping identities shape their worldviews, assumptions, and actions.

Positionality entails race, gender, class, and formative experiences (Glesne, 2016, p. 298) and contrasts with the social contexts in which the researcher operates (Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Similarly, Maher and Tetreault emphasise that:

"Positionality we mean... that gender, race, class and other aspects of our identities are markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities. Knowledge is valid when it includes an acknowledgement of the knower's specific position in any context, because changing

contextual and relational factors are crucial for defining identities and our knowledge in any given situation" (1993, p. 118).

With this, identity markers such as race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, and class play a significant role in shaping events within our daily lives. Whether considered individually or collectively, these markers are essential to our experiences and influence how we understand and perceive the world (Lino, 2019).

In this approach, which emphasises reflexivity in articulating positionality, it is essential to understand how social advantages or disadvantages influence the researcher's experience. Intersectionality refers to how our identities intersect, placing us in either a position of oppression or privilege (Watkins & Shulman, 2010). The term "intersectionality" was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s to illustrate how race and gender intersect to shape the diverse experiences of Black women in the workplace (1991, p. 1244). Similarly, Patricia Hill Collins also addresses that:

"Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (2000, p. 18).

Thus, to understand the relationship between positionality and intersectionality, which unfolds historically, relationally, and contextually, it is essential to engage with the ambiguities, ambivalences, and complexities inherent in the researcher's role. These factors significantly influence how researchers think, feel, and relate to others.

Reflexivity, which involves self-examination and the integration of positionality and intersectionality, allowed me to analyse my judgments and attitudes toward racialised individuals closely. This self-reflective practice encouraged me to be critically aware of the sociopolitical struggles and contradictions that arise from our life experiences and contexts. I was born in the 1980s in *Minas Gerais* (General Mines), Brazil, a state historically known for gold and diamond extraction during the Portuguese colonial period. Before colonialism, it was home to indigenous communities, including the Guarani, Cataguá,<sup>13</sup> and *Caiapó*<sup>14</sup>. Growing up, I associated these groups with fear, as elders would warn me that the Caiapó would come for misbehaving children. My ancestry reveals European roots through my grandfather, a Brazilian-Italian man with pale skin and blue eyes. My grandmother indicated that her lineage includes descendants of enslaved Africans and indigenous people, although the specifics remain unclear. My surname reflects European lineage but hides the origins of the racialised individuals in my family. As an immigrant in Portugal for eleven years, I pursued Higher Education at ISCTE, Minho University, and Lusófona University of Humanities and Technologies. Throughout this time, I frequently felt the weight of being 'the other' in terms of language and the opportunities available to me, experiencing challenges as a racialised person and listening to the experiences of fellow racialised students. Today, I hold Portuguese

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<sup>13</sup> The Cataguá are an Indigenous people from in what is called Minas Gerais, primarily located in the southeastern region of Brazil. They have faced significant challenges due to colonisation, including displacement and the loss of their traditional lands, which has resulted in a diminished presence nowadays.

<sup>14</sup> The Caiapó, also known as Kayapó, are a group of Indigenous peoples living in the Brazilian Amazon, particularly in the states of Pará, Mato Grosso, Minas Gerais, and Goiás. They are well-known for their resistance to external threats and for their unique cultural practices such as body painting.

citizenship while retaining my Brazilian nationality, but my connection to my indigenous and African heritage remains an unanswered question.

By recognising my positions and overlapping identities as a queer, black, migrant, and neurodivergent person, I could more effectively connect with participants and their overlapping identities and lived experiences. This process incorporates empathy, ethical considerations, and a dialogic and liberatory approach to psychology research.

### 3.5 Ethics Considerations

The current research received ethical approval (application ID 1600192) in line with the established procedures of the Nottingham Trent University (NTU) School of Social Sciences (see Appendix 2). The study followed the principles in the Code of Research Conduct and Ethics published by Nottingham Trent University (2021). Furthermore, this research also follows guidelines for research with humans, referring to the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2001) and *Código Deontológico da Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses* (Code of Ethics of the Portuguese Psychologists) (2011b). Appendix 1 provides a detailed ethics statement for ethical approval and guidelines for this research.

In summary, this chapter started by examining the historical role of research as a tool of colonisation, where Western epistemologies were employed to subjugate Indigenous and racialised knowledge systems. It highlights the colonial legacy of academic hierarchies that positioned Indigenous and racialised peoples as inferior while privileging Western "objective" methodologies. Decolonisation in research challenges this legacy by promoting diverse epistemologies, reflexivity, and relational ethics.

Methodologically, this research utilises *testimonios* and social dreaming as qualitative methods to explore the lived experiences of racialised and Indigenous students in Portuguese psychology Academia. *Testimonios* are collective narratives illustrating oppression and resistance, grounded in relational paradigms. Social dreaming complements this approach by fostering shared imagination and envisioning transformative futures. Both methodologies align with liberation and community psychology principles, emphasising healing, enablement, and conscientisation.

Concerning the research design, this study involves racialised and Indigenous students in Portuguese universities, using purposive sampling to include twelve individuals with diverse, intersectional identities. The research questions focus on understanding participants' *testimonios* and dreams regarding academic spaces. I collected data using semi-structured inquiry and a relational approach to thematic analysis. The analysis incorporates decolonial and Indigenous frameworks, ensuring a relational and cyclical approach to meaning-making.

Regarding analysis and implications, this research's thematic analysis identifies recurring patterns within the participants' narratives, emphasising both semantic and latent themes. The relational approach fosters dialogue, reciprocity, and mutual understanding between the researcher and participants. The next chapter analyses themes developed from participants' *testimonios* and dreams to understand the lived experiences of Black, Brown, and immigrant students in the context of psychology within Portuguese Higher Education.

## Chapter 4: Analysis

### 4.1 I have a tale to tell – Introducing the Analysis

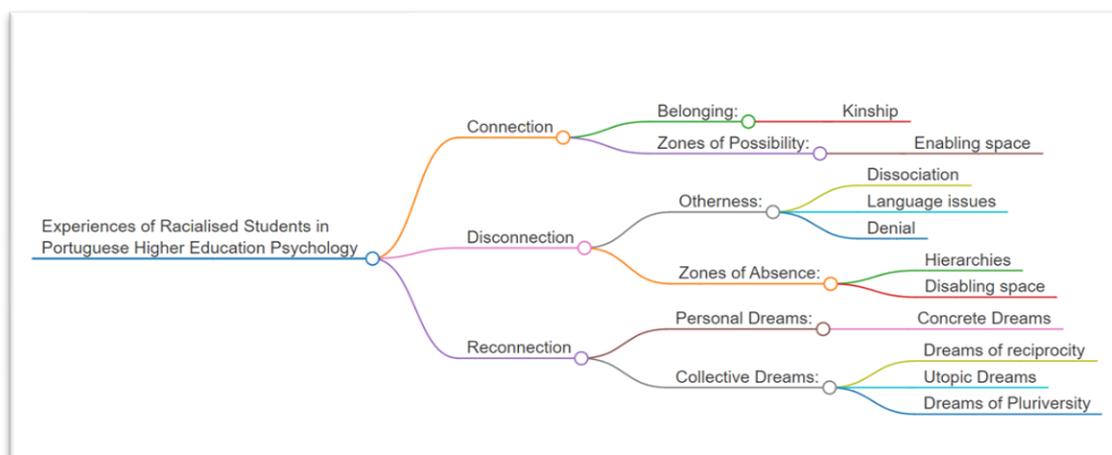
This analysis explored the experiences of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Immigrant students in psychology at Portuguese universities. As a fellow student, I related deeply to their journeys, which enriches this research with empathy. I gathered their *testimonios*, dreams highlighting diverse voices and interrelationships. Students engaged in dialogue-based encounters, sharing experiences of inclusion, support, and challenges like racism and denial. Many spent over an hour discussing their experiences, exceeding the planned 45 minutes, and expressed a desire to invite peers facing similar issues in psychology courses in Portugal. This created a learning opportunity, as participants actively shaped their narratives about everyday forms of oppression. The analysis focused on key themes from their accounts.

Research participants identified and discussed the implications of kinship, integration, and issues such as racism, xenophobia, and marginalisation in their relationships with colleagues, faculty, and staff. Acknowledging that storytelling can promote healing (Samuel & Ortiz, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010), participants used this research opportunity to share their experiences of social and racial inequalities, thereby asserting their voices and fostering healing (Brabeck, 2006). In this context, healing means addressing the historical wounds caused by colonial legacies (Smith, 2021).

Participants' accounts helped illuminate individual and socio-political dynamics in academic spaces. They shared experiences of oppression and violence against racialised students at the university. Importantly, they also emphasised

that collaborative community efforts can drive socio-political transformation. Integrating social dreaming and *testimonios* as methodological approaches shaped a research design focused on active participant involvement. Participants engaged in the dialogue, sharing their journeys while connecting with shared struggles. Through this process, they collaborated to develop insights from their experiences in psychology classrooms across Portugal. This approach demonstrated how decolonial research methods in psychology can enhance understanding of marginalised individuals' experiences.

This analysis organises itself into three main chapters based on overarching themes: Connection, Disconnection, and Reconnection. Participants' *testimonios*, dreams, and the theoretical framework of this inquiry shaped these themes. They highlight critical patterns in the participants' shared experiences, reflecting their connections and disconnections with faculty, peers, and academic spaces, as well as their perspectives on psychology as a discipline. Furthermore, participants expressed their hopes for reimagining psychology in Higher Education to reconnect with a more humanised future. Below is a chart outlining the themes and subthemes:



**Figure 2: Tree of overarching themes, themes and subthemes.**

The graphic representation of the main themes and subthemes resembles a tree, inspired by the Indigenous symbolism of the Krenak people, where forests signify the transmission of oral knowledge and ancestral ties (Krenak, 2019a, 2019b). The forest—and elements like "human, fire, bloodwood, trees, ancestors, wind, and story" (Tynan, 2021, p. 7)—represent plurality and connection. It is a place for recognising one another (Krenak, 2019a, p. 40). Relationality involves connections to all entities, including space, knowledge, and the past and future. In this research, this thematic tree encapsulates the explored themes.

This relational thematic tree illustrates the lived experiences of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Immigrant students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. I divided the trunk into three categories: Connection, Disconnection, and Reconnection. The Connection branch includes two sub-branches, Belonging and Zones of Possibility, which highlight positive experiences in academic settings. The leaves, Kinship and Enabling Space, refer to the bonding patterns between research participants and their psychology courses.

The second branch, Disconnection, includes two sub-branches, Otherness and Zones of Absence, which highlight negative experiences in psychology courses in Portugal. Under Otherness, I developed three themes. First, Dissociation refers to feelings of discrimination and alienation from colleagues and faculty. Second, Language Issues related to communicating in Portuguese. Third, Denial addresses views on race and racialisation in Academia. Zones of Absence features two themes: Hierarchies, which reflect the distinct power

structures at the university, and a Disabling Environment, describing negative experiences in psychology courses.

Reconnection's final branch includes two sub-branches: Individual Dreaming and Collective Dreaming. These themes relate to participants' dreams and aspirations in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. Individual Dreaming has one leaf: Tangible Dreams, which refers to personal aspirations and goals. Collective Dreaming has two leaves: Utopic Dreams, focused on radically changing structures for a better future, and Dreams of Pluriversity, which aims to create a more inclusive and diverse environment in Portuguese university psychology. The following section examines participants' narratives of connection, contextualising the university and its potential for humanisation.

#### 4.2 Connection

Connection links singularity to plurality. What unites individuals is cooperation, proximity, and a sense of belonging. In psychology, connectedness refers to the feeling of being related to one another and the social spaces we inhabit. It involves socialisation and relationality (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Martín-Baró, 1994; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021; Tynan & Bishop, 2022). Among themes in the Indigenous worldview, relationality stems from the notion that “all things exist in relatedness” (Tynan, 2021, p. 3) — people, Land, and ancestry. Indigenous ways of knowing are relational and presume “relationships between all life forms that exist within the natural world” (Kovach, 2021, p. 35). Building on these concepts, I analysed participants' experiences and their descriptions of relationships with the university, peers, faculty, and staff.

This first analytical chapter focuses on themes from participants' *testimonios* and draws on experiential knowledge. The analysis is based on decolonial and liberatory practices discussed in chapter three and provides nuances to the overall shared experiences (Chilisa, 2019; Fanon, 2008; Freire, 2013; Huber, 2010; Kilomba, 2012, 2016; Kovach, 2021; Krenak, 2019a; Martín-Baró, 1994; Meyer, 1998; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Accounts shared by research participants through dialogues provided *testimonios* highlighting characters, settings, actions, and emotions, reflecting unique yet interconnected relationships. I began by exploring the themes of Zones of Possibility and Belonging, which together shaped my understanding of Connection—a collection of experiences that connected participants within Portuguese psychology universities. The initial findings on Connection described relational experiences that created an enabling environment, which I referred to as a Zone of Possibility.

#### 4.2.1 Zones of Possibility

##### 4.2.1.1 “There is a...friendly place” – Enabling Spaces

A university is more than just a place for knowledge; it is a space for connection and learning through relationships. Discussing with Marcela, she described their experience as “*Look, initially, I think...There is a...friendly place*”, highlighting initially an environment that fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect. This section explores the notion of “Zones of possibility” as classrooms that enable opportunities for connection. This is a starting point for understanding the nuances of participants' socio-political realities in their Portuguese psychology Academia experiences. This section examines how these supportive conditions impact student experiences.

In this realm of possibility, students can potentially develop a sense of humanisation by connecting with their environment, each other, and knowledge: “...*despite everything I would describe, the psychology course also has a very strong aspect from the human point of view, the relationship with the student...[Amanda]*”. Through Amanda’s narrative, I observed that a psychology course is a space that offers the opportunity to be committed to, as a research point, and as an educational process fundamental to becoming human (Freire, 2013). As a result, this classroom can become a prospective place for resistance and refusal of alienation that creates dehumanisation (Fanon, 2008). At the same time, I note that by starting the sentence with “*despite everything*”, Amanda situates the challenges and difficulties of navigating these spaces, emphasising persistence in the face of adversity.

An 'enabling space' extends beyond physical surroundings; it creates a calm and welcoming context for embarking on an academic journey in psychology. This idea is best exemplified in Flávia’s account: “*Was it pleasant? Look at ISCSP. It was nice [Flávia]*”. I comprehend the pleasantness described in accounts, referring to understanding that:

*“... It was very peaceful since enrolling, doing everything like this[service-related tasks] was very peaceful, so I associated that with the fact that it's private, I'm paying for this work, so I associated this tranquillity since enrolling with that[peaceful process] [Camila]”.*

Camila noted that starting their psychology studies was easy, attributing this to a transactional relationship. They feel that support comes from the perception that public universities focus more on bureaucracy than student care. At the same time, I observe that private education offers individualised attention due to its commercial relationship with students.

Participants' experiences foster a sense of tranquillity, highlighting the relationships with faculty. Camila's accounts describe a pleasant context in psychology classrooms: "*Overall, it was very peaceful because... They [the classes] had very pleasant teachers, very nice [Camila].*" I observe that the pleasant experience with faculty shapes the relationship between the students and the classroom. That is, accounts such as: "*...the classes were not...rarely, they were boring classes, and the teachers were even flexible with some tests, work... [Camila]*".

This can relate to a pedagogy that promotes student participation and considers personal challenges. I understand that zones of possibility entail practices of horizontality and openness in the context of psychology classrooms. Through a relationship based on equal treatment, collaboration, engagement and inclusivity, the university and the classroom can be a space of reflection and action (Freire, 2013). I interpret these experiences cautiously, as the sense of tranquillity cannot be generalised to all participants' *testimonios*, given the marginalisation, exclusion, and inferiority historically experienced by racialised students (Araújo & Maeso, 2021; Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Dutta & Atallah, 2023; Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Huber, 2010; Kilomba, 2012; Reyes, 2022).

In the following narrative, Bianca provides insight into the relational effect of faculty incorporating the worldview of students demanding change: "*[the faculty] they were very conscious, and I think that, precisely because of these people who make noise [Bianca]*". I relate to this account as I view this consciousness in the faculty by the participant as perhaps a byproduct of an educational relationship centred on collaboration and critical thinking. The quote: "*...these people who make noise*" refers to students "turning up to learn bringing with

them questions” (Bell, 2022, p. 1). Bianca describes faculty as “very conscious,” possibly related to the perception that faculty actively seek to integrate students' perspectives into the learning process. Faculty awareness is vital for creating a supportive space for racialised students to share their experiences in Portuguese psychology classes. However, I approach this cautiously, given the daily challenges these students face in Portuguese universities (Ambrósio et al., 2019; Araújo, 2007; Araújo & Maeso, 2021; Doutor et al., 2018; Jardim, 2013; Nada & Araújo, 2019; Oliveira, 2013; Semedo, 2010; Vinagre, 2017).

The following account by Marcela indicates that a conscious faculty in these academic spaces is not the norm:

*“Of course, there are... teachers who try to get out of this more technical place. There are many teachers who have a practical reality and try to bring this to the classroom and make psychology something more tangible and more human, thus, more sensitive [Marcela]”.*

Marcela emphasises that some teachers enhance their lessons by sharing real-world experiences, making psychology more practical and relatable. However, collaborative work and critical thinking, guided by attentive faculty, may be lacking in psychology classrooms in Portugal. When faculty incorporate their practical knowledge into the learning environment, they can create an empowering classroom atmosphere. It becomes “tangible”, “sensitive”, and “human”. Therefore, centring on lived experiences in the classroom allows psychology teaching spaces to become zones of possibility.

This segment focused on understanding the subtheme 'Enabling Space' under the theme 'Zones of Possibility'. In summary, this section highlighted that the quality of student-faculty interactions influences the classroom environment,

where openness, support, and collaboration tend to increase student engagement in the learning process. Faculty consciousness and their effort to incorporate student perspectives can make learning spaces humanised. However, this practice is not common among all faculty members in the context of psychology education in Portugal. Additionally, the role of practical experiences and real-world examples shared by faculty helps make psychology more relatable, tangible, and sensitive to human needs. This is likely to promote the classroom as a supportive and enabling space. The next section of the analysis focuses on the participants' descriptions of a multicultural environment.

#### 4.2.1.2 “This university has people from all over the place” – Multicultural Environment

The research participants' narratives highlight the university's multicultural nature, noting the presence of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant students in the psychology courses. This section aims to understand descriptions of multicultural environments. In the multiplicity of experiences in Portuguese psychology courses, some accounts speculate on how the staff, students and faculty perceive the presence of racialised students. In exploring how Portuguese society sees the presence of racialised students in the university, on the one hand, as rivalry, Amanda also refers to another view on this presence:

*“Firstly, because there are some contingents and some quotas for the integration of immigrants in Portugal, namely, for example, immigrants from former colonies, who are often black. Um...and there's a bit of that thing where they come here with the contingents to take up the vacancies of the Portuguese and so there's this... Rivalry...also prejudiced. But there you have it, these people come here to take up positions that...that they don't deserve, deep down, so there's a bit of that prejudice. On the other hand, there is also the opposite perspective which is, I'm glad we have students from other*

*countries coming to... our universities, uh... And here maybe depending a little on the universities, I feel like... Maybe smaller universities, in the interior, huh... This is best seen, that is, we have international students coming from other countries, studying at our universities [Amanda]*".

I observe a contrasting view of racialised students in psychology courses: they are either valued or seen as a threat. While Amanda highlights the positive addition of racialised students in Portuguese programs, there are mixed feelings that these students unfairly occupy spots meant for Portuguese nationals, fostering rivalry and prejudice. This aligns with the views of Indigenous researchers (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021), who argue that merely incorporating diverse voices within a Eurocentric framework does not equate to challenging colonial structures. This account highlights how multiculturalism exists in Portuguese psychology universities, which are often overshadowed by colonial legacies of competition and racial superiority.

Daniel and Camila shared narratives referring to the multiculturalism they perceived in their universities:

*"Coimbra ends up being a more [multicultural] university... with more international students than in Aveiro. They welcome many international students. Huh...so, like that, we end up living with people of different nationalities [Daniel]*".

*"This university [Umaia] has a lot...there are people from all over the place, so I think they are much more open [Camila]*".

Perspectives on multiculturalism vary among individuals. Daniel sees it as an opportunity to engage with students from diverse backgrounds, while Camila emphasises acceptance and openness to different origins. Students shared distinct knowledge about multiculturalism, as they perceived multicultural academic spaces in Portuguese Higher Education psychology as open,

comforting and an opportunity to exchange. However, existing literature (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Araújo, 2018; Maeso & Araújo, 2010) suggests that discussions on multiculturalism in Portugal often overlook critical issues, such as unequal access to education, systemic racism, and the underrepresentation of racialised individuals.

In the following account, the university is perceived as an open, calm, easy place to navigate, as I understand in Marcela's narrative:

*“So, in terms of ease, I think, if you think about it, it's... Facilities... I think the only thing that I think makes it easier is because you... It's a matter of relating to another culture. Huh? Even European, but it's another culture and... They have a policy, for example with Erasmus<sup>15</sup>, that you can travel and spend time in another country, etc [Marcela]”.*

I observe that *“the matter of relating to another culture”* is how Marcela perceives multiculturalism as a matter of ease. That is, the opportunity to be in contact with other cultures relates to easing the experience of racialised students in these academic spaces. However, the *“but is another culture”* allows me to speculate that this ease may be available to all students or only European students. Linda Smith (2021) argues that multicultural policies often perpetuate colonial legacies in Higher Education instead of promoting liberatory and humanising practices. This means that multiculturalism in the Western knowledge system frequently positions historically racialised communities as the ‘other,’ framing cultural differences within colonial structures of knowledge creation.

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<sup>15</sup> European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) is a program that facilitates academic mobility for students and teachers worldwide.

In the following, Daniel describes a multicultural experience that they finds exciting but rare:

*“And they do...every year there is an intercultural dinner too, where they have a dinner with cultural presentations and then each country ends up representing in some way, be it dance, music, theater...they end up bringing something from their country to that country... The year I was there, there was the pandemic, anyway, but then there was a year when I couldn't go, but I found out that...they held this event and it was, well, it was interesting. But these are some specific initiatives, right? I think that, in terms of structure, curriculum, daily life, there is still a long way to go. I don't think this is integrated, integrated into training, curricular, so to speak [Daniel]”.*

Daniel's narrative suggests that the university provides a welcoming space for racialised students, but these efforts are primarily one-time events. This raises concerns about the university's ongoing commitment to supporting these students. Previous research indicates that multiculturalism in Portugal often appears performative and is shaped by a lens of exoticism about marginalised cultures (Araújo, 2018).

The problem is that exoticism renders non-Western knowledge systems unique but secondary (Chilisa, 2019). This process situates the racialised in Academia as the Exotic other, often positioned as tokens and representatives of otherness (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Kilomba, 2012; Smith, 2021). Then, through Daniel's “...*there is still a long way to go*”, I observed an opportunity and invitation to explore how the relationship between distinct cultures in the context of psychology courses can encourage dialogue, collaboration, humanisation and action to make the university a multicultural/intercultural space instead of continuous academic “trading” of the racialised other (Smith, 2021, p. 93).

In the following account, Maria refers to the exceptionality of attempts to create a multicultural space in the psychology course:

*“ISPA at the time had a...a protocol with the center of Malangatana. In Mozambique. And they... brought some students from Mozambique every year to study psychology under this agreement, with a scholarship and everything. Therefore. Despite that, there was an effort there, huh... To include African students. There is... And with this movement, some African presence was felt at ISPA. Mainly focusing on these Mozambican students [Maria].”*

Maria observed that the presence of racialised students stemmed from policies for increasing access for African students, but this view of a multicultural space invites critique:

*“But, uh... my criticism of ISPA and other academic institutions, here in Portugal, goes along the lines of... Africans or people of African descent from Portugal, those who lived here, those who grew up here, do not arrive. They still can't get there. In many higher-level institutions, at that time, it is not clear that this has improved much. At that time, it was felt, it was very obvious [Maria].”*

This analysis reveals that, despite the visible but scarce efforts to make the Portuguese university a multicultural space, it still has a long way to go. Maria's narrative relates and aligns with the conceptualisation from bell hooks regarding the university as a place where “we never ‘arrive’ or ‘cannot stay’”(hooks, 1989, p. 19). Maria suggests that the Portuguese university, while seen as a multicultural environment, excludes racialised individuals, particularly Portuguese-born Black and Brown people.

Portuguese Higher Education's narrative of multiculturalism and interculturality often perpetuates a complicit perspective in the colonial project. Previous research (Araújo, 2018; Borges & Afonso, 2021; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019;

Maeso & Araújo, 2010) highlighted that the multicultural perspective in Portuguese discourses and practices promotes the idea of a Lusophone community. In education, racialised people are expected to assimilate into the Portuguese culture in the name of integration (Araújo, 2007, 2018; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019; Maeso & Araújo, 2010). As a result, this process ends up masking the structural problem of racism in Higher Education. Thus, I understand that the multicultural perspective hides colonial legacies.

Júlia noted that multiculturalism disrupts the university's structure, viewing the presence of racialised students as a sign of openness:

*“So, just as it is a lot Brazilians, also within the university... this is shaking things up, you know? Total in the structures like that, so they are there, like, I arrive in a classroom, for example, in my classroom now, at the internship seminar, half are Brazilian, half are Portuguese. Literally, you know, so this... This shakes them [Portuguese nationals], so at the same time I think they were very closed and it happened like this, like a very large mass of students who at the beginning I think must have met that resistance and all these situations that I have been commenting on, they are also kind of moving [Júlia]”.*

I learned with Júlia that multiculturalism “*shakes the structures up*” and is the basis of encounters between cultures that create something new. In other words, this process relates to how acknowledging and creating multicultural spaces can serve as a starting point for engaging with others through collaboration, dialogue, and critical thinking. As a result, this process can potentially create spaces for a new praxis in psychology (Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Martín Baró (1994) emphasises that psychology should develop knowledge from the perspectives of marginalised and racialised groups. Psychology can drive change and liberation by fostering *conscientização* (Freire, 2013) about the realities faced by these groups. In

Portuguese Higher Education, colonial legacies often masked by multicultural discussions continue to perpetuate racial differences, complicating efforts to address race and racism in academic settings (Araújo, 2018; Maeso & Araújo, 2010).

This segment focused on understanding the subtheme of Multicultural Environment within the Zones of Possibility theme. In summary, this section focused on analysing participants' accounts of framing the psychology course as spaces that foster multicultural discourses and practices and their potential to invite a variety of worldviews and cultures to the classroom. It also focused on discussing contrasts as the presence of racialised students was perceived either positively, as enriching multicultural diversity, or negatively, as a threat to local students, indicating underlying racial tensions. Then, the analysis looked into how narratives of multiculturalism in Portuguese universities often reinforce colonial ideals, expecting assimilation into Portuguese culture, thereby masking structural racism. Finally, it focused on the potential to disrupt existing Eurocentric structures and pave the way for more practices by fostering critical engagement towards a renewal of psychological praxis—the following section of the analysis centres on the participants' descriptions of a supportive environment.

#### 4.2.1.3 “So, really open people, in the search for knowledge” – Inclusive and Supportive Environment

Half of the study participants reported having positive academic experiences in an inclusive and supportive environment. This section explores these experiences, with participants highlighting support primarily from faculty and staff practices:

*“At the undergrad, um... the experience was a little different, that is, the university at ISCTE, in this case, was less traditional than the University of Coimbra, therefore, it was clear that there was an effort to also try to be more inclusive and more concerned with the students’ perspective, in this sense [Amanda].”*

In this account, Amanda analysed their experiences retrospectively and compared them to two different academic spaces. In this examination, Amanda attributes the *“effort to also try to be more inclusive”* and *“concerned with the student’s perspective”* to the university’s less traditional nature. In this dialogue with Amanda, I learned that the participant views traditional Higher Education as having limited inclusion. In contrast, progressive universities tend to actively promote support for inclusion. A university that focuses on integrating racialised students fosters a caring environment for Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous individuals.

Historically, the concept of tradition in Academia has links to the notion of universality (Chilisa, 2019; Kilomba, 2012; Smith, 2021), often dismissing the legitimacy of diverse knowledge systems and erasing various epistemic traditions (Mignolo, 2002; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This results in Western knowledge assertion as the only valid perspective. The decolonisation of the academic tradition involves challenging existing power dynamics and Eurocentrism, aiming to create respectful spaces that uplift the knowledge systems of different communities (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bhabra et al., 2018; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016; Smith, 2021).

Similarly, other participant accounts suggest that inclusivity is a byproduct of the relationship with faculty who are open to students’ perspectives. The following

narrative by Marcela demonstrates this dynamic: “...there are teachers who are great, they are excellent, they are welcoming, they understand their context, they negotiate...[Marcela]”. This consideration illustrates the importance of inclusion and support in faculty-student relations. In the same way, the following descriptions provide further understanding of this process:

*“There are teachers who are great. There are other teachers who are completely open... And there are other professors who were professors or, I don't know, as old as her and super open like that, right? They could say something stupid, they did, but it was there, like, wanting it. Ah, 'I don't know this one, so I'm going, I'm going... I'm going to research it to find out', you know? So, really open people, the search for knowledge [Júlia]”.*

Júlia highlighted the willingness of some faculty members to embrace collective knowledge, emphasising a teaching approach that values students' insights. This perspective recognises students as whole individuals, fostering a supportive and accessible classroom environment. Integrating openness and valuing students' knowledge can transform the classroom into a space for liberatory pedagogy in psychology (Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Together, faculty and students can create knowledge that challenges colonial legacies.

Students recognise that inclusive practices enhance their academic journeys, as Vitória's account highlights the link between academic success and supportive faculty relationships:

*“[the relationship] with the teachers was good. It was good, especially because I was...I was always an interested student, right? I won't say I was a model, but I've always been an interested student, I love knowing, I love learning. And the teachers were very available too, they also noticed my potential because I was a good student. And the relationship with everyone was always very, very*

*reasonable. In fact, good, reasonable. The relationship with my teachers was good [Vitória]*”.

Vitória's narrative demonstrates that belonging and inclusion have a direct impact on academic success. Conversations with the participant reveal that when faculty recognise a student's potential, they foster a sense of value in that relationship. This is especially important for racialised students, who often encounter marginalisation and a lack of support in Portuguese Academia (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Doutor et al., 2018; Raposo et al., 2019; Vinagre, 2017).

Participants' accounts acknowledge the role of support regarding access and staff assistance. In the following account, Laura acknowledges university accessibility due to the value of tuition fees: *“[ISCTE] is a university that is, you know, one of the public universities here in Lisbon, so where the fees are more affordable and everything [Laura]*”.

Previous research (Doutor et al., 2018; Duque, 2012; Jardim, 2013; Oliveira, 2013; Pires, 2000; Semedo, 2010; Vinagre, 2017) has demonstrated that racialised students studying in Portuguese universities often face financial challenges. Thus, promoting affordable education is essential for encouraging marginalised communities to consider Higher Education, fostering representation and addressing social inequalities.

With regards to staff support, Laura also shares an account that highlights their positive experience:

*“Look, I think that in relation to this [the support provided by staff], I think that these are the points that I would not have anything to complain about. Because I never needed to resort much either...*

*And at ISCTE, right, just like any university here, any document you need will have a value assigned, so, if you pay, they do it [Laura]*”.

Laura emphasises the transactional nature of paid support services, suggesting that their assistance requires payment. This reflects a broader dynamic in capitalist society, where service quality often depends on financial exchange. In Brazil, where Laura is from, public universities frequently lack resources and organisation, resulting in insufficient support for students, especially those from low-income black and brown families.

Participants noted that the presence of racialised students is becoming normalised. Maria highlights the perceptions of African students in psychology courses at Portuguese universities:

*“With some normality if they are students who come to take the course... Higher education, isn't it? This is something that...that is already part of it. From the academic universe. People know that African students come...I'm talking more about the African reality, right...from PALOP<sup>16</sup> Africans...it is more or less expected, and even when...they see someone of a certain age, that's it, 18, 19, 20...just arrived like that. They understand that we came to do... continue our studies or take the course, therefore, it is seen with some normality [Maria]*”.

Maria highlights that Black African students, particularly those from the PALOPs, are increasingly present in Portuguese Academia. This shift reflects a move toward progress in some universities. However, other racialised students, including Indigenous individuals and immigrants, may not enjoy the same acceptance in these academic environments.

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<sup>16</sup> The African countries where Portuguese is an official language are known as PALOP (*Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa*). These countries include Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Equatorial Guinea.

This segment focused on understanding the subtheme of an Inclusive and Supportive Environment under the theme Zones of Possibility. In summary, this section highlighted participants' accounts of Portuguese psychology classrooms, revealing a mix of supportive experiences and challenges related to structural barriers and exclusion. The notion of "zones of possibility," informed by liberation psychology and decolonial frameworks, underscores this duality. While some narratives reflect supportive relationships and dialogue, others stress the tension between these ideals and the realities of marginalisation in Academia, showcasing the potential and limitations of current educational practices in fostering inclusivity. The following section of this analysis focuses on the participants' accounts of their experiences of belonging, the second theme in the Connection section.

#### 4.2.2 Belonging

##### 4.2.2.1 "It was my home, in a way, my academic home" – Kinship

This section highlights participants' experiences within the university community, focusing on fair relationships, support, integration, self-determination, and kinship. I categorised these experiences under the theme "Belonging" within "Connection." Belonging involves "establishing kinship relationships, strengthening sameness across differences" (Tynan, 2021, p. 4). Belonging is essential in psychology as it connects the self to culture, history, and knowledge (Martín-Baró, 1994). However, academic spaces shaped by privilege and Eurocentrism often hinder the sense of belonging of racialised students (Arday & Mirza, 2018; hooks, 2014; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016).

In describing experiences of belonging, Daniel refers to having positive experiences: *"Today, I evaluate it as very positive and forthcoming. I think I*

*managed, over the years, to build very good and very healthy, very close friendships with Portuguese people [Daniel]*". Daniel's accounts exemplify positive perceptions of relating to their colleagues. These experiences demonstrate how the formation of bonds promotes a sense of belonging to the university. I understand that the creation of bonds between racialised students and local students and faculty happens through practices of relatedness (Tynan, 2021), which is the desire to relate to the other in their wholeness. However, these accounts reflect distinct experiences, as not all racialised students report positive academic experiences. Daniel's statement, "*I think I managed*", demonstrates a sense of accomplishment, relief, and uncertainty about potential challenges they might encounter in their psychology course.

In the following accounts, Amanda and Manuela shared their experiences developing a sense of proximity with faculty and fellow students:

*"In Coimbra ... I felt a greater closeness between students and teachers. Huh...and greater availability too... For teachers to create relationships with students even on a day-to-day basis, for example, um... We are in the cafe and the teachers join us and talk to us...which wouldn't happen in Lisbon, for example. Huh...and therefore, the relationship here is closer, let's say, hmm...but this is a little bit my personal experience. Huh...in Coimbra I also felt a greater sympathy by chance from people, but it could have been a coincidence, so I don't know if there's anything to it or not, but... [Amanda]"*.

*"It remains, as I say, more closed, but... for now, my colleagues with me were quite integrative. Not like, like, friendship, or anything. Not until now, but as a classmate, it's...also interested in why I was in Portugal and I don't know, like, kind of interested because I'm a foreigner. One and that's it, because I have a little more practice in psychology [Manuela]"*.

Amanda and Manuela discussed their views on belonging in Higher Education psychology. They noted differences in academic settings and emphasised

concepts like closeness, kindness, and interest. These ideas reflect how faculty engagement and peer interactions contribute to their feelings of belonging in the classroom. Amanda observed that the relationship between faculty and students in Coimbra was closer and more accessible compared to Lisbon, with greater informal engagement. Manuela noted a collegial interest among peers but found the academic environment closed, making deeper connections challenging. These accounts highlight that peers and faculty influence the experience of belonging in the academic space.

The number of students in a classroom is also a condition that creates a sense of belonging. The following narrative by Amanda gives contextualisation for this assertion:

*“In the case of smaller classes, for example, in the case of my master’s degree, where there were 10 of us, I’m not mistaken. Here there was more student involvement and we also did a lot of work, therefore, in classes, presentations, etc. And therefore, it ended up being more dynamic. So I would say, I would say it’s a little bit that [Amanda]”.*

This participant's narrative illustrates how smaller class sizes foster a sense of belonging. Amanda notes that fewer students can enhance engagement and create a more interactive learning environment. These insights align with the propositions found in Freire's approaches to critical and liberation pedagogy (Freire, 2013). Smaller classrooms foster a sense of belonging among students by enhancing their interactions, which creates opportunities for meaningful dialogue. In line with Freire's educational principles (Escobar et al., 1994; Freire, 2013), dialogue and participation are essential for building community. I argue that adopting this collaborative approach to teaching psychology in smaller classrooms is likely to encourage the practice of reflective thinking,

support the development of critical consciousness, and enable students to challenge colonial legacies (Escobar et al., 1994; Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

Belonging in academic spaces means being respected and taken seriously.

Camila's narrative illustrates how this relates to being heard in the classroom:

*“There was one of my colleagues, and now she's even doing her PhD, that the professor told her that... Then I don't remember exactly what it was, I don't remember now exactly what it was, but I know that she opened a complaint later, because at the end, every end of the semester we could evaluate teachers for college. So each teacher received a notification and we evaluated how he spoke in class, right? And we evaluated it exactly this way, this teacher did this, this and this. And the coordinating teacher, when she received a complaint, she would get in touch with us, to find out and try to resolve it and make our lives easier. Anyway, and then a teacher spoke, my friend reported on this assessment and they got in touch with her, it went well. They even try to put our complaints into practice, I found that very interesting [Camila].”*

This account illustrates how faculty can help racialised students feel a sense of belonging in the classroom. Camila felt supported due to the course coordinator's proactive handling of complaints and the institution's willingness to implement feedback to improve teaching. This highlights the importance of accountability in student-faculty relationships.

However, as suggested in previous research (Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Freire, 2013), listening to students often becomes a performative gesture in neoliberal academic environments, reducing education to a mere commodification. Thus, while racialised students may feel acknowledged in Portuguese Higher Education psychology settings, this must reflect the faculty's genuine commitment to structural change.

In the second account, we have a similar experience of being heard:

*“During the presentation, my group and I had 5 members, 3 Brazilians and 2 Portuguese. Right? And we got along really well, like no problem. So we presented and presented, based on a text that the teacher gave us, written in Brazilian Portuguese. But up to that point, ok, it was a presentation about that, I presented and one of my classmates ended up, like, massaging me with a certain word that he couldn't understand and I had gotten tired of explaining the word during the presentation. And then in the middle of the presentation, he said to me ‘Ah, we can see that your group is mostly Brazilian’, as if to say, then ‘I won't understand, right’? And that same teacher looked at the boy, looked at me and said, ‘you don't have to explain anything anymore, Júlia’. He said, ‘my friend, what are you bringing the issue of being Brazilian here to the classroom?’ Then he said this to the kid, that you are bringing the issue of being Brazilian here into the classroom? He said, ‘aren't you used to the number of Brazilian women we have? Can't you hear in the hallways any difference?’. He took it and said it to the kid in the middle of the classroom. And I look, he's already redeemed himself here in some way, right? Beautiful [Júlia]”.*

In this account, the faculty addresses a xenophobic remark aimed at Júlia, highlighting three key elements: racial tension, the faculty's response, and a sense of validation. The comment, *“Ah, we can see that your group is mostly Brazilian”*, reflects bias and indicates underlying racial tension. The faculty's questioning of the student's attitude confronts the inappropriate nature of the remark. Ultimately, Júlia feels validated through the faculty's actions, contributing to a greater sense of belonging in the classroom. I understand that Júlia reacted with surprise to the faculty response. I see how Júlia can see this action as a form of redemption, especially as a racialised student navigating spaces in Academia marked by racial tension atmospheres. As noted in previous research, the racialised Other is often stereotyped as unintelligible in academic spaces (Chilisa, 2019; Kilomba, 2012; Reyes, 2022). By recognising and acting on the oppressive event, the faculty will likely reaffirm the classroom as a place of belonging for the student.

However, I also view this approach as authoritarian, potentially missing a valuable opportunity for dialogue. I argue for the importance of faculty engaging with challenging epistemic violence (Bell, 2022; Readsura Decolonial Editorial, 2022a) and positioning themselves as allies, rather than saviours, of racialised students (Arday & Mirza, 2018). That is, the call is for faculty to look critically at their own biases and work consistently with the validation of the system of knowledge of racialised communities (Bell, 2022). In this course, the invitation is not to assume paternalistic roles towards racialised students; rather, the focus should be on recognising and amplifying the voices of racialised students as they share their experiences and ways of knowing in the context of psychology classrooms (Arday & Mirza, 2018).

In conversations with Flávia and Camila, I learned their views on how a sense of belonging stems from representation:

*“At first, the first semester was wonderful, we...everyone got along well, we did work together... Along the way, I made friends with 4 Brazilian women, right? That's it, but as there were...as we were with Brazilian colleagues there, so we understood each other [Camila]”*

*“But the teachers... there was a teacher, for example, who even lived there in Ceará [Brazil] too, she was a professor at... that university there in Redenção which is a university... Do you know which one it is? It is one that...from Portuguese-speaking countries This is it, this is it. She was a teacher, she was a teacher there. One of my professors also helped create the open university in Brazil... And also with... also from this university too, he was one of those who helped in preparing the project for that university. So, these teachers, for example, also, this teacher, for example, she also wore her clothes, everything like that, and I noticed that when she was the one passing by and so on, no one was attracting attention [Flávia]”.*

Both narratives illustrate the connection between representation and belonging.

In the first account, Camila speaks of a sense of connection by establishing

relationships with fellow Brazilian students at the university. I understand that sharing cultural similarities can help foster a sense of connection and create bonds. Similarly, Flávia speaks of cultural familiarity in recognising the presence of Brazilian faculty in the university. In sharing that “*she also wore her clothes,*” I observed Flávia identifying the representation and respect of the diversity of cultures. These different narratives share how connecting with faculty and students can support racialised students in developing a sense of belonging in academic spaces.

At another level of analysis, these accounts relate to the role of representativity in the concept of belonging. Symbolic representation (Cervantes et al., 2021) facilitates engagement in problematisation, a key feature of liberatory psychology practices (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero & Sonn, 2009).

Problematisation relates to sharing *testimonios* in naming colonial legacies and enabling resistance in the face of inequalities (Cervantes et al., 2021). Thus, I argue that the perception of representation can create an opportunity to facilitate conscientisation regarding the socio-political realities in the teaching and learning of psychology (Cervantes et al., 2021; Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994).

In contrast, critiques of representation in Academia highlight that Western neoliberal approaches are often superficial. Scholars like Bell (2022), Mignolo and Walsh (2018), Smith (2021), and Watkins and Shulman (2010) assert that Western neoliberal discourses on representation are often symbolic and superficial. Institutions like universities may focus primarily on meeting quotas or achieving ranking milestones rather than genuinely including the knowledge and presence of racialised communities in academic systems. This reinforces

colonial legacies and epistemic injustices. To effectively decolonise representation, we must embrace epistemic disobedience (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) and support the self-determination of these communities in knowledge production (Smith, 2021).

A participant shared their experiences of belonging in friendships. Flávia reflect on their time studying psychology at Portuguese universities:

*“Look, no... at ICSP it's... I didn't have any problems like that, in fact, the staff were very... I also think it's like our course was about family and gender, right? Family and gender, right? So I think that as everyone was more, more open-minded, more open in the sense that they knew that they would have Brazilian colleagues too and so on, and I made great friends there, really, really good and I never, ever felt anything. And then, at ISPA, I made a great friend there... and it's because the classes were online, right? I made a great friend with one, who is now a psychologist, but she was... Oh man, what do they call it here? She's a flight attendant! But she is a wonderful person, she is Portuguese [Flávia]”.*

This narrative highlights how friendships in Academia foster a sense of belonging for students in Portuguese psychology courses. Flávia describes supportive environments at two universities and the formation of meaningful connections with peers, both in person and online. This account suggests that racialised students can enhance their learning through such friendships. Supporting these connections can improve their sense of belonging in Portuguese Higher Education psychology.

Amanda shared their experiences in a psychology course at a Portuguese academic institution. I viewed these accounts through the lens of belonging, essential for humanising racialised students in Higher Education: “...*the teachers themselves felt that they were more human and tried more to understand the student's perspective and also, for example, the patients'*

*perspective and, therefore, I felt a greater closeness in this sense [Amanda]*". In this account, Amanda shared experiences in which the faculty understood and related to the students, creating a sense of closeness. I know that the insight refers to empathy, which bridges the faculty and students, creating a deep, personal, and human connection between them.

Humanisation occurs through dialogical interactions and the growth of critical awareness (Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994). A humanised pedagogy promotes spaces for the racialised students to belong. In a space committed to belonging, humanisation is equal to liberating colonial legacies and promoting healing from racialisation for all (Fanon, 2008). Finally, I argue that to belong means having the space to acknowledge the psychosocial effects of oppression and to engage in collaborative practices that enable marginalised groups (Martín-Baró, 1994).

This section explored the theme of Belonging, specifically the subtheme of Kinship. It examined participants' experiences within the university environment, emphasising the importance of fair, humane relationships and the roles of faculty, peers, and class size in fostering a sense of belonging. Participants shared experiences of positive relationships with peers and faculty that created a supportive atmosphere, although some described mixed experiences, reflecting occasional challenges. Smaller class sizes promoted greater engagement and dialogue, aligning with Freire's concept of critical pedagogy. While faculty responded positively to student complaints, assessing whether these efforts are superficial is essential. Even though representation of racialised faculty and peers also contributed to a sense of belonging, it is necessary to highlight how, in Western neoliberal Academia, representation is often superficial, not addressing systemic issues. Ultimately, belonging was

linked to empathy, kinship, and the validation of diverse student experiences, emphasising the need for humanising practices in academic spaces. The following section of the analysis focuses on participants' experiences of integration in Portuguese Higher Education psychology.

#### 4.2.2.2 “There was an effort to also try to be more inclusive” – Integration

This section centres on participants' descriptions of their experiences of integration. The accounts shared reflect events in which racialised students feel connected to the faculty, peers, and staff. A perceived connection that happens through inclusion:

*“During...so, during the Master's degree, I would say that the relationship was quite good, but I was also on an International Master's degree, so there were many foreign people participating in the Master's degree. So I think integration was a little easier there [Amanda]”.*

In this narrative, Amanda emphasised the identification process in their classroom integration. They noted that interacting with people from diverse backgrounds in the international master's program fostered a sense of belonging. This suggests that a diverse environment promotes positive experiences and meaningful connections. I argue that sharing the classroom with fellow immigrant students helped Amanda form connections based on shared experiences and goals, enhancing their sense of relatedness and belonging (Tynan, 2021).

However, the critique surrounding the topic of integration in education in Portugal focuses on how this process can trap racialised communities.

Research on educational disparities and integration in Portugal (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2007; Araújo & Maeso,

2021; Maeso & Araújo, 2010) shows that racialised communities face pressures to conform to a Eurocentric curriculum, which overlooks their cultural and knowledge backgrounds. In this context, integration within Portuguese academic settings reflects a Luso-tropical fantasy, perpetuating a narrative that ignores the historical power imbalances between Portugal and its former colonies (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2007, 2018; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010). Consequently, discourses surrounding integration in Western neoliberal academic environments are, in fact, strategies for social control linked to the Portuguese colonial project, aimed at diverting attention from the need for structural changes and maintaining dominance over racialised individuals (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Maeso & Araújo, 2010).

In the following account, Daniel gives contextualisation on the role of the university committed to integrating racialised students:

*“In Aveiro they created a center to help immigrants, for international students. So I know that there they have people responsible for welcoming foreign students, and they promote cultural events that praise the culture of these foreign... representatives of these other cultures. And there are also some groups of international students...who end up...reducing this...maybe this exclusion isn't, who end up integrating people better [Daniel]”.*

In this narrative, the participant addresses the potential outcomes of adopting integration as a relational practice. Daniel discusses creating a support centre for racialised students, framing it as a welcoming initiative that promotes cultural events to mitigate exclusion. While these efforts indicate institutional support for cultural appreciation, it is essential to highlight the active participation of international students. Daniel notes, *“there are also some groups of international students...who end up...reducing this”*, leading me to question

whether the racialised students involved are genuinely working to enhance integration or if these actions are merely performative, lacking a genuine commitment to dismantling systemic inequalities and valuing diversity.

Integration relates to the capacity to create kinship relationships. Continuing the dialogue with Daniel allows for the understanding of integration through engagement with group formation:

*“And the way I managed to... overcome this initial moment was to leave university and do activities outside, so I started participating in groups. Yeah...queer...Queer Tropical<sup>17</sup> joined a few months later, but was also part of this process. There is... And then I managed to meet other people who had similar realities to me, other immigrants, other people who had also gone through processes like this, in previous moments and I also started to participate in groups... theater groups, photography groups, with people who were ... Um...that...they had been at university for longer, but they were Portuguese. So there it is...I had the opportunity to build these first relationships and I felt that...having these support groups outside the university, I was able to improve my relationships within. It was very difficult at the beginning, yes. But it was a construction that took time, but it was possible. So, today I have a good...a good group of friends, very close and we also have a lot...a lot of sharing [Daniel]”.*

Daniel’s narrative emphasises the importance of belonging to different groups and integrating into the academic community. They formed bonds with fellow racialised students through activism and art activities on and off campus and established meaningful friendships with local students. This narrative highlights how involvement in diverse groups enhances a sense of belonging for racialised students. I argue that these connections are crucial for their entry into the university, allowing them to practice relationality—recognising that all entities

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<sup>17</sup> Queer Tropical is an LGBTQI+ Association in Portugal that stands for feminist and anti-racist values. They affirm themselves as rejecting all forms of discrimination and aim to build a fair society. The collective work supports the Brazilian LGBTQI+ community and operates independently of partisan and religious affiliations. <https://www.queertropical.org/>

are interconnected (Tynan, 2021, p. 5)—and resist social alienation from colonial legacies (Bell, 2022).

Involvement in student groups is crucial for helping racially marginalised students integrate into Higher Education. The following account highlights the positive impact of these groups on a research participant's journey in their psychology course: “...*in groups in which I feel more at ease, more comfortable...I think I no longer feel that same impact as when I arrived [Daniel]*”. Daniel's account highlights the isolation and exclusion often faced by racialised students in Portuguese Academia (dos Santos, 2020; Doutor et al., 2018; Malet Calvo et al., 2022; Mourão, 2016; Pires, 2000; Seibert, 2013; Semedo, 2010). Their collective actions represent a “resistance to colonising ideologies of the former colonisers” (Chilisa, 2019, p. 198). This resistance counters socio-political practices of racism and xenophobia, challenging the colonial legacies in Higher Education that marginalise these students.

The integration of racialised students in academic spaces also shifts relationships in the classroom. That is, the impact of practices aiming to integrate racialised students also tends to affirm the role of local students, faculty and staff. The following account by Júlia demonstrates how this process is rooted and constructed dialogically:

*“Most of the time, it was always very good, I always had a good, good contact with them, so, there were curiosities, there was this... But like that, there has never been discrimination like this, like a targeted one, because I don't know because there is less capacity, because I'm Brazilian... Those things that come from stereotypes, stigmas and prejudice. I never had, I always had a good relationship with them [Júlia]”.*

Through Júlia's narrative, I gained insight into how integration connects to being seen and respected as a person. The cultures and knowledge of the participants became visible and played a crucial role in building relationships with their peers in the psychology course. This account taught me that faculty and other local students possibly created an open academic environment—a welcoming space for different ways of knowing. I understand this openness as the principle of knowing: “human curiosity and a desire to solve problems” (Smith, 2021, p. 203). Due to this engagement, Júlia could connect, create bonds, and integrate with the academic landscape and beyond in life.

Additionally, in the classroom, faculty have the opportunity to promote integration, including racialised students. The following experience is demonstrative of how Júlia perceived integration as a shifting movement happening in their psychology course:

*“My dissertation advisor, for example, has started to hire Brazilian student assistants to teach. So, that's been...that was really cool, her movement. So now that she has had a career of 20 years and wow, she can do this, maybe she wouldn't have been able to do this 20 years ago, right? So, what I see is this, this mix of these professors, this mix of this body, of leaders, of everything that exists within a university, for people to look at this and say OK, this, yes, is acceptable, You know, I have different people than...in my life [Júlia]”.*

The participant observed that integrating racially diverse students in key teaching roles fosters empowerment and possibility. This highlights the practical impact of inclusion in academic spaces, as diverse voices can transform the environment by enriching knowledge creation, pedagogy, and relationships.

Integration is also related to care and enunciation. In the following narrative, Maria stressed the way faculty choose to engage in conceptualising marginalised community experiences:

*“When, for example, teachers were trying to talk about other cultures and the few times they immersed themselves, they put their foot into the question of, of... that there are African cultures and everything, I felt, not in a very obvious way, but I felt there was a concern in the language. In language and tact and...how these issues were addressed by my simple presence in the room. Which I imagine would have been done differently...at that time, we're talking about that time, that was 20 years ago, right? It's not like today. Huh...I imagine that if I hadn't been there, it could have been done differently, in a more superficial way or in a more biased way, even more biased, perhaps. Huh...more stereotypical. In my presence, when these issues were talked about, from what I remember, there was always a reservation of ok, but yes, there is a culture, but then there is the individual within a culture. Huh? And...that was the main thing, that was the main factor that I felt at that time. Which, pay attention, I don't know when Delso studied, as you brought me, he also lived here for a period, uh...10 years, but there was a big change in the way these subjects were approached here in Portuguese society. In fact, the big change was that the topics started to be addressed. It is not? Because before, it wasn't even talked about [Maria].”*

The participant discusses the faculty's careful approach to introducing African cultures in this account, noting their sensitivity to cultural and individual identities. However, Maria also observes bias in educational settings, where discussions about non-Western cultures can be stereotypical or dismissed as irrelevant. The account highlights the faculty's efforts to foster dialogue about knowledge systems often marginalised in neoliberal academic environments. According to Kilomba, Academia is a white space; therefore, it “has a very problematic relationship to Blackness” (Kilomba, 2012, p. 300). Maria's experience exemplifies the sense of care that faculty members provide when exploring these themes in the context of psychology classes. I observe that care

has a crucial role in practising the integration of racialised others in the classroom.

As integration relates to being perceived with respect, it connects with the experience of freedom in the classroom. In the following account, Vitória described an experience of autonomy in the academic space:

*“The experiences were actually good. I participated...relatively. Yeah...but I'd rather stay at the back, wouldn't I? Calmer with a colleague and another with whom I was closer. But, in general, it was...I always felt free to sit and place myself wherever I wanted to place myself. Inside the classroom. And I feel that this position was respected, with each student placing themselves where they want to be, where they want to sit. I felt like this was respected. And even the invitation to participate also didn't feel like it was more focused on me or another colleague. Overall I think he was affable. It was [Vitória]”.*

In describing their experiences with classroom integration, the participants acknowledged their freedom to choose where to be. I understand that this relates to the possibility of selecting a seat and the outcome of integration: the freedom to be in the academic space as a whole and, most importantly, to be respected as human (Bell, 2022; Martín-Baró, 1994). I understand that integration practices are initial steps towards liberating academic spaces. They are steps, as I agree with Freire that the “solution is not to integrate” (Freire, 2013, p. 74) but to change the very structure of oppression so the racialised Other can find paths to their humanisation.

This section examined the theme of integration as it manifests in experiences of kinship, collectivism, autonomy, and care. Participants described their experiences of integration in university settings, focusing on the sense of belonging fostered by diverse environments. Integration was perceived as more

accessible in international programs due to shared backgrounds with other immigrant students, promoting a sense of inclusion. I view integration as potentially supporting colonial projects by upholding Eurocentric structures and masking deeper issues of exclusion and marginalisation. Instead of dismantling colonial legacies, it often reinforces power imbalances by expecting racialised students to assimilate into a Western framework rather than valuing their diverse cultural contributions. While universities have made efforts, such as establishing support centres and hosting cultural events, these initiatives may be performative without addressing the underlying inequalities. Participants also noted the importance of forming relationships and participating in groups to foster a sense of integration, which helped mitigate feelings of alienation. Faculty sensitivity in addressing cultural topics was perceived positively, suggesting a shift toward more inclusive approaches; however, a more profound systemic change remains necessary. Integration was also linked to a sense of freedom in academic spaces, contributing to the participants' autonomy and sense of respect within the university. The following section of the analysis focuses on participants' narratives within the context of psychology in Portuguese Higher Education.

#### 4.2.2.3 “There is mutual help among colleagues” – Support

This section centres on participants' descriptions of their experiences of support. In these descriptions, Manuela and Vitória shared specific but also ambiguous experiences regarding receiving support to accomplish their studies:

*“This semester was like “frozen”, because there is the paradoxical relationship with the teacher. They hurt. Ah... keep my grade because I was the poor thing, like, and they like to put people in a poor situation, like that, poor Maria, how bad... but it doesn't help*

*anything. Did they help? Yes, they kept my notes. Like, my qualifications from this semester were saved for next year. Okay, I've already achieved a lot [Manuela]”.*

*“The times I needed it...I can say that they simply responded to my request. In the sense that what was required was done, I didn't feel uh... as if there was any delay in the response, if there was, it was really due to the services themselves. I'm not saying it was for any specific reason. It was...it was OK [Vitória]”.*

The theme of receiving support ties these narratives together. On one hand, the participants—Manuela and Vitória—acknowledge receiving support from their peers, faculty, and staff in their psychology courses. On the other hand, they express ambivalence about how they perceive this support. The first account discusses support related to the diploma recognition<sup>18</sup> process, presenting a paradox. In this case, the student perceives a condescending attitude from the faculty during the diploma recognition process.

The second narrative focuses on the support received from academic services. While the participant appreciates the efficiency of the services provided, they also mention feeling a lack of interest or indifference in the treatment they received. The ambivalences and paradoxes of these accounts also point to underlying sentiments. Manuela speaks about an experience of being patronised and not being supported by the faculty. Vitória shares a sense of adequacy, but not excellence, in the aid received. Observing these ambivalences, I see the relationship dynamics in Academia as often “the result of unequal power race relations” (Kilomba, 2012, p. 301). The participants perceive the Portuguese Academia as both supportive and paradoxical, which

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<sup>18</sup> In Portugal, the law recognises a foreign Higher Education degree equivalent to a Portuguese degree by assessing the level, duration, and content in a specific field of study.

causes ambiguity. However, other accounts reinforce the potential transformative aspect of support in collaborative work:

*“And then, I studied, studied, studied, studied, studied. Afterwards, my friends helped me study. And that is, I just confused things a lot. So I took [ADHD<sup>19</sup>] medication at that time, it helped me a lot with that, because I was able to start concentrating again, understand a lot more, pay more attention and not travel around and pay attention... Anyway, it helped me a lot. Yeah, so I think that was it. I... No, I never said it, I never said it. I knew, but I never pursued it. When I realized that... I had a lot of problems with this [ADHD] in my undergraduate degree too and...but it was only in my master's degree that I went after it and I spoke to my school, I said, man, I need it, and then I went to see a psycho... a very cool psychiatrist that I found here in Porto. Which worked out really well, but... And then, during my undergraduate studies, I had a friend who did this, you know, she explained everything to me that I didn't understand, and then here in my master's degree, whether I wanted to or not, I also ended up having a friend who helped me study and...After the medication, it helped a lot. So, my friend, [she said] ‘calm down, I'll teach you’.And we spent a whole day with her teaching me at the end of the day, when I taught, I said, was that it? She said, ? Camila, that's all I've been trying to teach you all day.I said, was that it?’ That's all she said. In the other, in the next test I got a 9 [Camila]”.*

In this account, Camila emphasises the significance of peer collaboration in addressing personal challenges and underlying disabilities. The first aspect of peer collaboration involves participants finding opportunities to engage with fellow students, thereby enhancing their understanding of the curriculum and potentially leading to improved grades. The second aspect pertains to the ability to communicate personal learning challenges to the university and receive appropriate support through medical assistance. Finally, support also includes the opportunity to disclose learning disabilities and obtain help in navigating academic difficulties.

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<sup>19</sup> Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects behavior. Individuals with ADHD may seem restless, have difficulty concentrating, and often act impulsively.

In this account, I observe Camila expressing a mix of sentiments: frustration – “*I had a lot of problems with this [ADHD] in my undergraduate degree too*”, relief – “*a very cool psychiatrist that I found here in Porto. Which worked out really well*” and gratitude – “*having a friend who helped me study*”. This journey reflects a struggle to enhance academic well-being through collaborative engagement with peers and mental health professionals. Through collaboration, participants can access resources for problem-solving via dialogue. Freire states that “dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world” (Freire, 2013, p. 88). Baró views human transformation as stemming from dialogical encounters (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 40). Camila could express their reality and find support by discussing their learning challenges with a colleague. While they informed the university of their challenges, external and peer support helped them overcome academic difficulties.

The following account illustrates how the university community supported a racialised student in achieving permanence:

*“So, maybe if these... yeah... and other girls, for example, who were in our class too, who also had family problems and everything, but didn't exactly have those and who managed to come by with support, my support and that of other colleagues who are also Brazilian, yes... this girl managed, for example, to finish...she in fact, she was at...she was doing her Erasmus degree<sup>20</sup> in Brazil here, in our master's degree. And we... I managed it together with her and with other people too, other colleagues and teachers, in fact, also helped, right, from the university itself, to transfer her course here, for her to take the subjects she was missing. She paid for it by selling brigadeiro<sup>21</sup>, right? I helped her, gave her the first ingredients to make brigadeiros and such. Anyway, I gave strength,*

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<sup>20</sup> The Erasmus Mundus program aims to improve Higher Education quality through scholarships and academic cooperation between the EU and the world. Its main objectives are internationalising students, staff, curricula, and research, influencing the development of Special Education Needs and inclusive education practices, and developing international collaborative networks, projects, and research.

<sup>21</sup> Brigadeiro is a Brazilian dessert made with condensed milk, cocoa powder, butter, and chocolate sprinkles. It is often served at festive events.

*I sold it to her, they bought it too. I gained a few kilos because of it, anyway, but it's...for... Because she wasn't, she, in this case, needed to overcome these...in this sense of some issues, due to the immigration situation and everything else [Flávia]*”.

This experience highlights the possibilities that arise from collaborative action and solidarity. Flávia shares an experience in which they completed their studies with the support of their peers and faculty, specifically to help another student. From a place of empathy and community building, Flávia expresses the satisfaction of assisting a fellow racialised peer in overcoming personal and academic challenges. This reflects a relationship built on mutual support and solidarity. This account also highlights how racialised students often face financial challenges (Ambrósio et al., 2019; Doutor et al., 2018; Jardim, 2013; Malet Calvo et al., 2022; Pires, 2000; Semedo, 2010; Vinagre, 2017) throughout their academic journeys. Here, I focus on how faculty, staff and students collaborate to support another student's achievement. I understand it as likely to be a form of “unshakable solidarity” (Freire, 2013, p. 129). Support becomes solidarity when people assume the courage to establish a caring and humbling positioning in encountering others (Freire, 2013).

This section emphasises understanding support through experiences of solidarity, collaborative action, and ambiguity. Participants describe receiving support in their academic experiences as helpful and ambiguous, often marked by mixed feelings. Participants recognised support as valuable or transformative in their narratives, but it reinforces existing university structures rather than dismantling them. This support tends to be transactional or reliant on individual relationships rather than systemic. While valuable, faculty responses and peer collaboration do not challenge the university's underlying colonial and neoliberal

dynamics. Examples of adequate support included peer collaboration, provision of proper assistance for students with learning disabilities, and faculty-staff collaboration to assist financially struggling students. However, the ambivalence of the experiences suggests that the support provided often fails to challenge the power dynamics and colonial structures embedded in academic spaces.

This formed the last subtheme under the theme of Belonging, in understanding the lived experience of racialised students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. Both Belonging and Zones of Possibilities added meaning to the experiences of connection in the accounts shared by research participants. This analysis highlights positive descriptions and experiences in relationships with faculty, peers, and staff within psychology courses. The next chapter examines the disconnection experienced by research participants in Portuguese academic psychology courses, highlighting their perceptions of the university as a place of absence and their encounters with feelings of otherness in these settings.

## Chapter 5: Disconnection

Disconnection involves feelings of disengagement, isolation, and detachment from oneself, others, and the environment and is integral to dehumanisation (Haslam, 2022). Authors argue that colonial legacies contribute to this disconnection from community, land, and self (Chilisa, 2019; Fanon, 2008; Martín-Baró, 1994; Quijano, 2000; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

That is, "...colonial ideologies have contributed to dissociating the personal from the political, building a sense of private interiority that is strangely disconnected from historical and cultural context" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 64).

Consequently, disconnection stems from practices and worldviews rooted in coloniality, resulting in feelings of strangeness and separation. This chapter examines the participants' experiences of disconnection from peers, faculty, staff, and academic environments within Portuguese Higher Education psychology, with a focus on understanding how colonial legacies contribute to this sense of disconnection.

In this analysis section, I focus on two themes: Zones of Absence and Otherness. These themes represent what I identify as Disconnection, describing the experiences of research participants who feel marginalised, excluded, and disenfranchised within the university environment. The first findings section on Disconnection contextualises relational experiences that establish a hierarchy within the academic space. In the subsequent section, I explore Fanon's concept of the "Zone of Non-being", particularly about Portuguese psychology courses, which he describes as "an extraordinarily sterile and arid region" (Fanon, 2008, p. 10). This concept aligns with the idea of Zones of Absence.

## 5.1 Zones of Absence – Hierarchies

### 5.1.1 “Is the European, who knows how to do it, who taught, right, who brought the university” – Hierarchical Space

Most Western universities organise themselves to promote, cultivate, and share knowledge. These structures symbolise progress and modernity. However, modernity is intrinsically linked to coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003). In this context, Western neoliberal universities play a significant role in shaping narratives that associate knowledge with "civilisation," "prosperity," and the notion of "universal principles of humanity". Hence, the architecture of these universities embodies dual ways of knowing: colonial language versus Indigenous languages, objectivity versus subjectivity, authority versus passive learning, Eurocentric perspectives versus the racialised Other, civilisation versus primitivism, and Western superiority versus racialised inferiority. These dichotomies create separation and establish hierarchies (Fanon, 2008; Freire, 2013; Kilomba, 2012; Mignolo, 2002; Smith, 2021; Wa Thiong'o, 1998). This section centres on participants' experiences describing the university's classrooms as hierarchical. It focuses on descriptions conceptualising that in Portuguese psychology universities, *“there is... there is this place of hierarchy, of power [Marcela]”*. Such *testimonios* refer to encounters in which participants perceived the establishment of hierarchies in their experiences as students in psychology courses.

In describing the spaces of psychology courses in Portugal, Júlia discusses their challenges in navigating a space perceived as authoritative:

*“I describe that there are some obstacles. I experienced some, there are other people who live longer, but this is how I describe some obstacles. I describe this situation of authority, when you try to question them, they kind of go like a steamroller on top of you,*

*like, you can't question their authority, right? Yeah...at first, I think it's quite complicated, after a few years, things get better. It goes, because you get used to it, you already impose yourself, there are other things, but at the beginning it is quite complicated [Júlia]*".

In this experience, I gained insight from Júlia's perspective that an academic hierarchical space can act as a site of oppression. Júlia expressed frustration and powerlessness when faced with authoritative faculty, characterising the experience as "*quite complicated*". This sentiment reflects Júlia's gradual adaptation and resilience in navigating this hierarchical academic environment. A classroom where "*you can't question*" signifies a space that effectively marginalises the presence of racialised students. The term "*steamroller*" describes the oppressive dynamics in the psychology classroom, where aggression shapes control and dominates interactions. This behaviour reinforces a hierarchical structure within Higher Education and echoes the ongoing "imposition of Western authority over all aspects of Indigenous knowledge, languages, and cultures" (Smith, 2021).

In authoritative spaces, the classroom is hierarchically organised, with faculty at the top and students in a subordinate role:

*"...I think there is...there is this place of hierarchy, of power, of Portugal being...the cradle of this language. And then it's the European, who knows how to do it, who taught, you know, who brought the university that brought it, yeah...[Marcela]*".

This narrative highlights the experiences of participants as they navigate the frontiers of knowledge hierarchies in the classroom. Marcela feels a sense of superiority and control over the teaching process. This *testimonio* reflects how cultural and knowledge hierarchies position European perspectives above those of marginalised racialised individuals. Grada Kilomba suggests that the

dimension of the power structure in Academia is not a simple social organisation but a “violent hierarchy, which defines who can speak” (Kilomba, 2012, p. 301). Then, I argue that these shared experiences of research participants acknowledging stepping into a “white space” (Bell et al., 2019; Kilomba, 2012) – the university that the Europeans have brought – is an environment in which the voice of racialised people is “systematically disqualified as invalid knowledge” (Kilomba, 2012, p. 300).

A psychology classroom marked by power in knowledge creation deems the oppressed inferior in and out of Academia. According to Kilomba, the university is not impartial (Kilomba, 2012). Instead, it has been historically constructing inferiority as described in the following participant *testimonio*:

*“It’s...I think that the way, the language that is often used to work in the community is not the language that reaches, you know? Yes, I have one... at the university where I study, my professor, the course coordinator, is well known here in Portugal and, well, right? And he has some, he has a very relevant project, housing for people who live on the streets. But I don’t know the feeling I have is that the project has...it’s very good, it’s very good. I don’t have much, you know, what to say. It takes people off the street, people experiencing...mental health issues and takes them to live in a house and so on. But I think that sometimes, the language, in short, the way you talk, like, with these people, I don’t know, you know... I have the feeling that he is an authority figure, right? That person is the holder of knowledge and you need to listen. This bothers me because it’s construction and not...It should be construction, and not a hierarchical position, you know? And for me that’s what happens, the language isn’t the same, that’s how it always is, you know? Give it a tabula rasa and I’m depositing the knowledge there, then [Bianca]”.*

Bianca’s narratives illustrate how language constructs inferiority. In this *testimonio*, Bianca critiques the hierarchical approach of the faculty in the project, noting that the language used did not resonate with the community members, which indicates a disconnect between the project’s intentions and its

execution. Bianca's tone reflects uncertainty and frustration, with noticeable hesitation and discomfort in discussing the authoritative approach taken by the faculty. One approach to understanding this hesitation relates to Freire's conceptualisation of the "banking model of education" (2013). In this pedagogical approach, the faculty establishes relationships with students in the classroom where their authority is unchallenged. As a result, this process tends to undermine students' confidence in sharing their views, raising doubt, discomfort and hesitation.

Kilomba explains that in white spaces marked by authoritative ways of creating knowledge, racialised people are often "made the objects, but we have rarely been the subjects" (Kilomba, 2012, p. 300). In this *testimonio*, Bianca offered valuable insights into knowledge co-creation. This view alludes to Paulo Freire's conceptualisation of liberation pedagogy and the praxis of dialogue. Dialogue is a process of co-creation and collective action. Therefore, it is a non-hierarchical process in which the parts involved share a relational process of naming the world (Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

In addition, an academic space organised by hierarchy is a place for privilege and elitism. Bianca also shared accounts related to their psychology courses as elitist sites:

*"So, it's a very elitist university, right? So, despite the course I take, right...have a perspective of working in the community, of mutual help, in short anyone who is at the university, at the university where I study, realizes that it is a very elitist and people's university, 90% of the students are white people [Bianca]"*.

This account illustrates perceptions of an academic environment characterised by inferiorisation. This reflects the challenges of attending predominantly white

institutions (Arday & Mirza, 2018). According to Andrews, the “university's structures reinforce white privilege” (Arday & Mirza, 2018, p. 16). Thus, elitism in these experiences highlights how Academia perpetuates colonial legacies of racism and Eurocentric perspectives, along with the underrepresentation of racialised faculty and students.

In these elitist spaces, Flávia and Maria refer to the predominance of upper-class students in the universities:

*“I don't know if you know. Well, he's been part of the University of Lisbon for a few years now, right? And it was its own institute, and it is the institute...it is the institute of social and political sciences, right, that's why it is the ICSP. Institute of Social and Political Sciences and there... known for being the Betinhos college. At ISPA which is also full of Betinho.... [Flávia]”.*

*“Of course there were always clicks. Clicks towards groups, there have always been groups, right? There was the Betinho group, there was the group of I don't know what... [Maria]”.*

In Portuguese, “*betinho*” describes a young person exhibiting behaviours or appearances associated with a high social class, similar to the English term “preppy”. Flávia and Maria refer to universities as “full of *Betinhos*” to highlight the perceived elitism in Portuguese psychology courses. This suggests a stereotype of privileged individuals within Academia navigating classrooms marked by exclusivity. It also reflects the historical role of universities as spaces for the “white upper-class elite” (Arday & Mirza, 2018, p. 48).

Furthermore, I understand the hierarchies in Portuguese Higher Education psychology through the lens of intersectionality and positionality. The following account reveals how students perceive psychology classrooms as spaces that contain both privileges and disadvantages:

*“Those who grow up here and that's always where I see that there's... there's a, uh, difference. Those who grow up here, black people who grow up here, uh...mainly from a more fragile socioeconomic stratum. This is seen as a surprise. Yes. They're not, they're not used to seeing, um... these black people, right, this population. I'm talking about this population. They are not, no, they are not used to seeing this population moving up to certain spaces. And I'm not just talking about higher academic space. They are determined spaces, spaces of which, uh, the Superior Academy is also a part. Do you understand, Delso? [Maria]”.*

I do understand. I analyse this narrative in three ways. First, they reveal the perception of Portuguese Academia as a hierarchical space that favours "wealthy," "young," and "white" individuals, with privilege linked to social position and power. Second, Maria describes the unique challenges faced in these spaces, highlighting the intersection of class, race, nationality, and age, all of which contribute to ongoing oppression (Reyes, 2022). Finally, this account illustrates how hierarchies in Higher Education reinforce colonial legacies of racism, classism, ageism, and Eurocentrism.

Moreover, hierarchies in Portuguese psychology universities reflect colonial logic beyond their walls. Maria provides an insightful analysis of racial differentiation in Portuguese Academia:

*“These students and...it's like you said, yes, I already brought up this dimension, but I reinforce it again, uh...it really depends... Huh... of several, several layers, several layers of marginalisation, discrimination that are well, are well embedded in the psyche... of the White Portuguese, right? There...there are levels. Of inclusion and exclusion. Even within black and migrant communities. Who access these spaces. Even among African countries, PALOP's, for example... there is a hierarchy. There is a hierarchy...it doesn't exist, but I'm talking about it from the point of view of the white Portuguese psyche. There is a hierarchy. Huh...until a certain point, even though they didn't...and this doesn't mean they liked it, but they started to accept it in a more... Diplomacy. They began to accept...better Angolan students with, uh...a certain socioeconomic stratum. Higher. And I would say they were at the top in terms of...acceptance. For example, Cape Verdean students*

*were...although not all of them had this, they came with these very, very...high socioeconomic capabilities, but they were very well regarded, for example, by teachers, as model students. And then... then that, that system of... the model minority appeared a little. In which they were supposedly the model minority. It is not? That everyone else, whose example everyone else should follow. Huh...Mozambicans too, in a way. The São Toméans almost didn't have much expression, at a certain point. Huh...and because of that, people are, were, I imagine it's a little more common now, but because of that, people were treated in different ways. There were nuances here in the treatment. Whether from...either from the teachers, or from...the entire institutional apparatus [Maria]”.*

In this analysis, Maria highlights that the marginalisation seen in academic hierarchies mirrors the subjective feelings of white individuals. This aligns with the concept of "epidermisation of inferiority," which is the belief that Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous people internalise inferiority due to their skin colour (Fanon, 2008). This racial hierarchy is seen as a form of diplomacy, reflecting the strategic acceptance of racialised students by Portuguese Academic institutions. This process illustrates the colonial legacy of Luso-tropicalism and acts as a means of social control (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010) within the academic context. While the presence of racialised individuals is acknowledged, their representation is limited. Thus, the underrepresentation of racialised students and faculty contributes to the maintenance of white hegemony in universities (Arday & Mirza, 2018).

In academic environments characterised by absence, racialised students often find themselves navigating what Frantz Fanon refers to as “zones of non-being”(Fanon, 2008). This concept signifies a disconnection and alienation that strips individuals of their humanity. I argue that authoritative and hierarchical academic structures perpetuate this absence by placing racialised students in

subordinate positions, effectively diminishing their agency and voice. These environments enforce a hierarchy in which faculty hold unquestioned authority, expecting racialised students to accept the “passive roles imposed on them”(Freire, 2013, p. 73).

This section examined the theme of "zones of absence," focusing on disconnection experienced in Portuguese psychology courses characterised by hierarchical structures. Participants described these universities as influenced by colonial legacies, where faculty held unchallenged authority and enforced a rigid, top-down approach to knowledge. This environment discouraged questioning and perpetuated feelings of powerlessness among students, reinforcing racial, class, and nationality divisions. Racialised students often faced exclusion and marginalisation, with any acceptance typically framed in a "diplomatic" context of limited presence. The following section will explore participants' experiences of psychology courses as predominantly Eurocentric.

#### 5.1.2 “Because it is a European teaching method” – Eurocentric Space

This section examines participants' experiences with knowledge hierarchies in Portuguese Higher Education psychology, viewed through Eurocentric lenses. Eurocentrism relies on preconceived notions about racialised individuals, creating hierarchies that label non-Europeans as inferior (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000; Smith, 2021). Maria vividly describes the adverse effects of Eurocentrism in their psychology course at the Portuguese university:

*“Everything from a very Eurocentric perspective, right? Which is always the case...but also, like, we are in Portugal, we are in Europe. Huh...there are other cultures. African cultures, Asian cultures, American cultures, etc. But always with this, with this, with this point of reference, hm...how different from European culture, right? And yes, that's what I felt at the time. So there was this... this*

*blind spot, this little exploration of this dimension. And from the side, as I already mentioned a while ago, uh... from the Afro-descendant community [Maria]*".

This narrative by Maria highlights Eurocentrism in a psychology course, identifying it as a 'blind spot' that limits broader understanding. Maria critiques the dominance of Eurocentric perspectives in Portuguese Academia and emphasises the importance of alternative ways of knowing. This *testimonio* reveals how Eurocentrism centres European viewpoints while marginalising the knowledge of Indigenous and racialised communities. Mignolo and Walsh state that "Eurocentrism is not a geographical issue, but an epistemic and aesthetic one" (2018, p. 125), meaning it involves control over knowledge and thought. Consequently, prioritising Western European approaches marginalises "African cultures, Asian cultures, and American cultures," as Maria points out.

In another account, a participant refers to the experience of perceiving the psychology models and methods mainly by considering positivist approaches to knowing:

*"[The] psychology here in Portugal still has a tradition... It seems that it is much more, it is much more linked to North American thought, so it is a positivist psychology... I said, 'guys, for God's sake man, we're in Europe, you're going to France, you have Deleuze, you have Dejours talking about work, right?' It's super important, it's super current that you talk about the psychodynamics of work, about how we review the suffering that work causes, what the strain is, what it will cause... Dude, nothing, nothing is positivist psychology and take, take, take... Because here in Portugal too, psychology is science, science has to be just quantitative data, understand? Let's make a variable and so on... [Laura]*".

Laura critiques the traditional, positivist approach to psychology in Portuguese Academia, highlighting the importance of French thinkers. Laura expresses frustration with the current state of psychology, shaped by colonial legacies and

a Eurocentric focus. While seeking a more diverse understanding, Eurocentric knowledge supports colonial influences and the systems decolonisation aims to dismantle (Fanon, 2008; Kilomba, 2012; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Creating and incorporating alternative ways of knowing is essential for challenging these oppressive systems, thereby facilitating the development of renewed knowledge systems in psychology (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

In addition, positivism excludes subjective perspectives in meaning-making, focusing on knowledge gained through measurement and emphasising neutrality and objectivity (Smith, 2021). This philosophical movement played a crucial role in shaping modern science in the Western world (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). However, it also reflects Coloniality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000). Laura's account illustrates the influence of Eurocentrism and positivism on teaching psychology at Portuguese universities, positioning positivism as a superior form of knowledge.

Laura's narrative of the "*psychology here in Portugal still has tradition*" of a "*positivistic psychology*" relates to a traditional period in research:

"In the traditional period of the twentieth century, qualitative research was largely influenced by positivism. Most prominently, ethnographical research design was employed as qualitative 'objective' studies of the 'other'. Ethnographies of the 'other' in the Americas frequently meant depictions of "exotic" Indigenous cultures" (Kovach, 2021, p. 27).

Laura highlights the colonial legacies of a Eurocentric hierarchy that labels racialised individuals as inferior in psychology education and research. This approach prioritises a "dominant statistical language," claiming rationality and

objectivity as absolute truths (Chilisa, 2019, p. 76). As a result, alternative ways of knowing are mainly missing from Portuguese psychology courses.

Similarly, in describing the psychology course, Marcela brings their experience with positivist and Eurocentric approaches into the classroom:

*“So, of course, they are classes, it’s...that you... Well, for me what it most describes, I don’t know, is my perspective on psychology, but for me, what it most describes is... it’s the course, the disciplines of social psychology... main courses at my university, they are quantitative. So you take it from there. So you already understand what this psychology is. Huh? We don’t give these beings a voice, right? These individuals who are social. We...the voice is just...we are numbers. We are, we are not, it’s a, it’s a very different language like that. [They are] worried about numbers... worried about publications ... worried about rankings [Marcela]”.*

Marcela critiques the positivist approach to psychology education, particularly how social psychology relies on quantitative methods that overlook individual voices and experiences. This reflects disillusionment with academic systems that prioritise metrics over meaningful engagement and advocate for more human-centred psychological approaches. Chilisa (2019, p. 9) notes that Eurocentric research often categorises racialised and marginalised groups as the "Other", assuming a neutral and universal stance in measuring reality. As a result, these models favour data and statistics that validate specific human experiences while marginalising non-European knowledge as subjective and deficient (Kilomba, 2012).

Furthermore, Eurocentrism separates and sanctions what is considered dominant, valid knowledge (Quijano, 2000). Bianca shares an account that illustrates this separation:

*“...at the same time, with its addenda, right, because we only study from a European perspective of community psychology. And I feel*

*that there is an invisibility to understanding other sections of the community, right? And then we had to keep bringing it. We study white, male and American authors, of course. Some Englishmen, some Englishwomen too [Bianca]*".

Bianca's narrative highlights the "invisibility" of diverse knowledge in community psychology education, emphasising the dominance of Eurocentric perspectives and Anglo-Saxon authors. Bianca critiques this lack of diversity and expresses frustration with a curriculum prioritising European viewpoints. Quijano explains that Eurocentrism creates a radical separation between the human "who holds reason" and the human "that is the body" (Quijano, 2000, p. 555), while Fanon claims that colonialism created a hierarchy that depicts racialised individuals as savages (Fanon, 2008, p. 199). Bianca's comment about studying "white, male, and American authors" reflects a colonial legacy in which knowledge is seen mainly as a Euro-American domain.

Additionally, Eurocentrism is a culture of absence (Smith, 2021). The separation of valid and invalid knowledge refers to the establishment of monocultures. This process has a devastating effect, resulting in a lack of alternative ways of knowing beyond European perspectives (Smith, 2021, p. 223). Vitória describes a psychology course marked by monocultures and absence:

*"The psychology course itself has already been mentioned by you too, you have already highlighted this aspect that... our learning is based on those models of the white, elitist psychologist and that person who has a status and this image that is very... very wrong in our training. Look... for some professionals, it continues to be the profile that...even physiognomically. The profile chosen to present that super professional psychologist continues to be that profile... and that makes me, it saddens me a little that psychology, the psychology course, is not associated with a variety... Of...of ideologies. And... in our imagination, we think that the psychologist is not just Freud. That profile with the glasses, the gray hair, the tie This saddens me a bit because it continues to be... for me the idea*

*that I have, this continues to be the profile of 'this is the psychologist'[Vitória]*".

Vitória critiques the psychology models in the course, noting the persistence of a narrow profile as the ideal professional psychologist. Their tone reflects frustration and sadness over the exclusionary nature of current psychological models in Portuguese Academia. Vitória highlights the stereotypical images of psychologists linked to Eurocentric representations in the field.

The "*models of the white*" in this narrative refer to a Eurocentric psychology.

Vitória shares the experience of sensing the absence of other models of knowing in Portuguese psychology courses. This account provides insights into how Eurocentrism shapes monocultures, a construction of humanity as one-dimensional (Chilisa, 2019, p. 99), and the dominance of a single culture or way of thinking (Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Through this *testimonio*, I learned with Vitória that the "*models of the white*" create a profile for who is considered a psychologist. Then, the racialised Other, absent in the culture of white, is separated and disconnected, therefore, not having a profile that matches the culture of those who can be a psychologist. Watkins and Schulman hold the view that the academic curriculum in psychology is biased, which suggests that psychological theory requires reorientation "so that universalism, Eurocentrism, sexism, and racism can be challenged and disrupted to realign psychology's work in this century with pressing needs for individual, community, ecological, and cultural liberation" (2010, p. 7).

In summary, this section explored the theme of "Zones of Absence," focusing on the disconnection experienced by students in Portuguese psychology courses, which are often viewed as hierarchical environments. Participants

described these universities as characterised by authoritative structures that reflected colonial legacies, where faculty held unchallenged power and imposed a top-down approach to knowledge, discouraging questioning and fostering a sense of powerlessness. This hierarchy reinforced divisions based on race, class, and nationality, marginalising racialised students and limiting their representation and agency.

The analysis also examined the Eurocentric nature of the psychology curriculum, which often excluded African, Asian, and Indigenous knowledge systems in favour of a positivist, quantitative framework. This focus creates a “blind spot” that overlooks diverse cultural experiences. Participants criticised the curriculum for emphasising outdated Western male theorists, which they believed fostered a monocultural understanding of psychology. Consequently, this exclusion led to frustration and alienation among racialised students, with the ideal psychologist often depicted as white and elitist. The following section addresses the subtheme "Disabling Space," which highlights negative experiences in university psychology courses.

## 5.2 Zones of Absence – Disabling Spaces

### 5.2.2 “Everyone, everyone said, ‘Oh, universities in Portugal are very Xenophobic’” – Racist and Xenophobic Academia

A disabling academic space silences the experiences, presence, and knowledge of racially marginalised individuals. It is an environment that "leaves no room for students to bring themselves" (Bell, 2022, p. 4). In such a space, the university fails to acknowledge the lasting effects of colonial legacies on people's experiences, which marginalises diverse ways of knowing. We disable knowledge when we exclude these experiences (Bell, 2022). This section of the

analysis focused on participants' descriptions of perceiving the psychology courses in Portuguese academic spaces as racist and xenophobic.

In dialoguing with Manuela about their experiences at the university, they expressed, *"I think it's a very conflictive university on immigration issues. Yeah...while I, Immigrant [Manuela]"*. This narrative relates to previous observations on Academia, which has a historical problem with the racialised Other (Kilomba, 2012). I understand this account as a perception of Academia as a continuous site of racial violence against Black, Brown, Immigrant, and Indigenous people (Bell, 2022; Kilomba, 2012; Reyes, 2022).

In another account, Flávia recalls an event to describe the troubled relationship between the racialised Other and academic spaces in Portugal:

*"Like that thing about the boys at the law school at the University of Lisbon, right? What kind of Zukas are taking over Portuguese spaces...The vacancies of the Portuguese, which is full of ignorance... But that's okay [Flávia]"*.

Zuka is a derogatory term used against Brazilian immigrants in Portugal. It also means "who or who is stupid or crazy" and "that or who drank too much". In this incident, students placed a box full of stones in the Lisbon University hall, accompanied by a sign encouraging people to throw the rocks at Brazilian students, as they were perceived as taking the places of Portuguese nationals in Higher Education (Guimarães, 2019). This *testimonio* illustrates the racial and xenophobic violence towards that racialised Other in the context of Portuguese Higher Education.

Continuing the dialogue with Flávia, they share a narrative about their experience with racialisation at the university: *“Now, at ISPA... That was it, it was unpleasant, you know? This thing, this weight. It was unpleasant, because exactly like that I couldn't... I couldn't be Flávia. I was always the Brazilian girl. Did you understand? [Flávia]”*. Yes, Flávia. I understand the discomfort of being defined by skin colour, ethnicity, and nationality (Fanon, 2008). Flávia’s account refers to *“this thing, this weight”* as a symbol of racism, which heavily burdens racialised individuals in Academia. This aligns with Fanon’s idea of the “fixed concept of the Negro” (Fanon, 2008, p. 35), highlighting how racialised individuals struggle to express their true identities due to colonial legacies. Flávia’s perspective illustrates that being called *“always the Brazilian girl”* reflects the limitation of social markers and the reduction to an object, a fantasy (Fanon, 2008; Kilomba, 2012).

Dialoguing with Laura about their experiences at ISCTE, they relate the experience of being seen as a threat by European students:

*“They feel completely threatened. They don't...that's it, right, the... And that's what I started saying. It is impressive how the university, the academic space, it reproduces...Aggression just like society. They are a series of violence that society is practising and that academia is reproducing because here in Portugal, it's that veiled thing, right? Like, people might not call you black to your face. in a very direct way [Laura]”*.

Laura shared feelings of being threatened in the university context, noting how academic spaces often reflect broader societal dynamics of violence, particularly racism in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. This perspective aligns with Reyes's observation that oppression in Academia mirrors the experiences of racialised individuals in society (Reyes, 2022).

Rooted in colonial legacies, academic institutions perpetuate hierarchies that marginalise racialised scholars and students, reinforcing systemic exclusion and alienation (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Fanon, 2008; Reyes, 2022). Laura also highlighted their experiences with racism and xenophobia, pointing out the fear that the racialised Other threatens national identity, a form of exclusion prevalent in academic environments (Reyes, 2022).

However, the participants do not generally view the psychology classrooms as racist and xenophobic. In dialogue about these topics, Natália expresses their understanding of this problem:

*“At university...I think explicitly, no. I think there's always a shock when we're talking to other students, they ask about the master's degree and I say oh there's more Brazilian than Portuguese. So what... that on the course we, as I told you, only have one Portuguese woman, so... It is something that always generates astonishment, shock and everything else. We had some moments of this linguistic issue that I already explained to you, but... Answering your question, I don't think so, I think they, perhaps for the students, are already more “used” to seeing this issue of migration and everything else. And they...are not that explicit. I see more...outside of university than inside the classroom [Natália]”.*

In this account, Natália notes that the psychology course does not seem explicitly racist or xenophobic. Natália's account highlights a critical intersection between identity and the systemic structures she encounters. Her position as an immigrant in a multilingual academic space underscores how racism and xenophobia manifest differently depending on context. While the classroom may not explicitly perpetuate these dynamics, her experiences outside the university and her encounters with linguistic biases point to a more profound, structural denial of racial and cultural hierarchies. However, Natália observes that students are more familiar with immigrant peers, making instances of racial and

xenophobic violence more apparent outside the university. While the academic environment appears open, Natália highlights a tension where racism manifests through linguistic violence. This may stem from denial (Kilomba, 2021), as individuals refuse to acknowledge their role in perpetuating racial hierarchies. This narrative connects to previous observations that view the university as a site of societal violence (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Reyes, 2022). In this context, both overt and subtle expressions of racism, xenophobia, and dehumanisation are fundamental to the structure of the Western neoliberal university (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Kilomba, 2012; Reyes, 2022).

Recognising that racism and xenophobia are intrinsic parts of Western neoliberal Academia clarifies how these forms of violence influence experiences of otherness in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. This account illustrates this process:

*“Like, they’re constantly evaluating you... As if you were...it's like one another. I think it turns into another one. However, another, an otherness. And it looks like this one is right. And the otherness is...let's evaluate whether it's good or bad. It is always under evaluation. For us. I've never seen a boy who's Portuguese, who doesn't do anything, doesn't even move... It doesn't matter, he was Portuguese. No problem. [Manuela].”*

In this *testimonio*, Manuela expresses a sense of constant evaluation, highlighting feelings of being an outsider. The concept of "otherness" captures the ongoing scrutiny and different treatment experienced compared to peers, revealing a stark sense of alienation and double standards in how racialised students are treated compared to white European students. This constant evaluation reflects the historical surveillance faced by Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous students in Western universities (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell,

2022; Bell et al., 2019; Collins, 1998; Gabriel & Tate, 2017). Scholars view such surveillance as a control strategy to manage the presence of racialised individuals in Academia (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Gabriel & Tate, 2017).

More significant is how Manuela's narrative highlights how surveillance creates otherness, particularly in academic spaces where constant evaluation intensifies historical differences. Otherness, stemming from colonial legacies of dehumanisation, marginalises racialised individuals from social and political life (Tynan, 2021). This concept positions Europeans at the centre and non-Europeans navigating at the frontiers. Thus, Manuela's account of "good" and "bad" illustrates a binary world shaped by Otherness, underscoring Portuguese Higher Education in psychology as a zone of absence.

This section examined Portuguese Academia as spaces marked by racism and xenophobia. The subtheme of Disabling Spaces highlighted participants' experiences in psychology programs where racial issues were prevalent. Academic environments often perpetuated violence against Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous students, who frequently felt like outsiders. The violence imprisons these students in their racial or national identity, such as being labelled "the Brazilian girl". Students experienced constant surveillance, reflected deep-seated racial hierarchies, and faced overt xenophobia, especially towards Brazilian students. While explicit racism seemed less visible in classrooms, subtler forms of discrimination, like linguistic violence, persisted. Overall, academic institutions, influenced by colonial legacies, reproduced societal violence, leading to the alienation of racialised students. The following section focuses on participants' feelings of otherness regarding their relationships with faculty, peers, and staff.

### 5.3 Otherness – Dissociation

#### 5.3.1 “There is greater prejudice towards black people and people of other ethnicities” – Otherness Academia

Otherness signifies the condition of being defined by difference (Ashcroft et al., 2013) and is used in research and theory to analyse how the "Other" is constructed (Chilisa, 2019; Fanon, 2008; Freire, 2013; Kilomba, 2012; Smith, 2021; Spivak, 2023; Tynan, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). In decoloniality, terms like "othering" and "otherisation" describe how colonised peoples have been labelled as the "Other" by colonisers (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021). This colonial legacy leads to ongoing marginalisation and exclusion, where the racialised Other is often viewed as "not regarded as human"(Smith, 2021). This section analyses participants' experiences of otherness in academic environments, highlighting instances of marginalisation, feelings of difference, and *testimonios* of racism, xenophobia, and oppression. I categorised these experiences under the subsection "Otherness," part of the second theme, "Disconnection".

In this initial account, Laura recalls an incident that happened at Lisbon University:

*“As happened here, I think it was at the University of Lisbon, they put bananas in a basket and said that it was an offer for Brazilian students. Or, you know, graffiti something, with reference to black people and oh, it's just a joke, like that, imagine, right?[Laura]”.*

This narrative relates to a series of acts of violence taking place in 2020 in which individuals vandalised schools and university walls across Lisbon, writing racist and xenophobic graffiti (Antunes, 2020; Pinto, 2020). Graffiti with the following messages: 'Death to blacks – for a white university'; 'out with the

blacks'; 'long live the white race'; Europe to the Europeans – long live White Europe' (Antunes, 2020). In the investigation of these racist/xenophobic events, the University of Lisbon attributed the act to a collective of Portuguese law students who explained these incidents as satire. Laura questions how this event is banalised and diminished as a joke. As observed by Kilomba (2021), this combination of violence and pleasure is the result of racial sadism. Racial jokes have the intent of generating pleasure from the suffering of the racialised Other. It reasserts the colonial legacy of a duality of superiority and inferiority (Kilomba, 2021, p. 147). This occurs in the context of Academia and reasserts the dominance regarding who is entitled to know.

In the following *testimonio*, Maria recalls about experiences of racism at the university:

*“To say that... I, I suffered racism at ISPA on 2 well-identified occasions. No, well, I usually say that my experience there was not unscathed. I didn't defend it, there it is. Because although I realized it was racist, I couldn't defend it. And this is something that has stuck with me. And when I look back, and remember what happened...it still hurts me today, because I didn't have the opportunity to defend myself, right? And this place of non-defense I think is something that really... There must be some focus when carrying out these studies, it's not, it's impossible... they are structures of power where sometimes we don't have much ease in defending ourselves within this structure [Maria].”*

This account reveals how Maria perceives vulnerability in the face of racism. I argue that a lack of a self-defensive position forces individuals to confront their vulnerability in university (Arday & Mirza, 2018). Experiencing racism in Academia is linked to disablement, echoing Fanon's view of racism as a bankruptcy of the human experience (2008, p. 86). Through Maria's

perspective, I see how racism causes lasting pain and leaves a scar, reminding us of the historical struggles that affect everyday life in academic spaces.

In addition, the following narrative explores the specific nature of racism encountered by racialised students in Portuguese psychology academic settings:

*“That's why for a long time it was said that here in Portugal... and there are still many people who believe that, it's not my case, but that component is there. That...Portuguese racism is very much covered in tones of class...socio-economic. Therefore, they...from the moment they realize that, in addition to you being black... Huh...that's right, it's the first thing that appears, right? Which is our phenotype. But uh...they add layers of discrimination and marginalisation depending on their socio-economic status [Maria]”.*

The phrase *“Portuguese racism is very much covered in tones of class”* in Maria's accounts highlights the intersectionality of racial discrimination in psychology classrooms. Intersectionality, defined by Crenshaw (1991), examines how society treats individuals based on their social and political identities, revealing interconnected forms of discrimination. Maria notes that *“in addition to being black”*, students face layers of discrimination where race intersects with class and other identities, leading to marginalisation in universities. Racialised students in Portuguese universities often experience a combination of racism, classism, and xenophobia.

In the next shared experience, Camila describes the fears and anxieties in enrolling and studying psychology at a Portuguese University:

*“Look, I was very afraid of going to university here because of the xenophobia. Yes, I don't have any racist situation that I have witnessed, there was just this xenophobic context, but racist in itself, that I remember, none within the college, but xenophobia was... there was always some little thing or other. It's these, this xenophobia in the sense of our language, it's...Sometimes you*

*would hear a line, 'no, but the girl, the Brazilian one', like, sometimes my name wasn't mentioned [Camila]”.*

Camila's narrative highlights the anxiety stemming from uncertainty in Portuguese academic spaces. Kilomba (2021) note that the racialised Other often experiences insecurity in predominantly white environments due to the lack of non-white individuals. This sense of exclusion can intensify feelings of unwelcome and anxiety, particularly in the face of xenophobia (Kilomba, 2021; Reyes, 2022; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Camila's narrative examines how racism and xenophobia intertwine with dehumanisation, resulting in “mutilations of the self” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 68). In the phrase ‘no, but the girl, the Brazilian one,’ Camila highlights an experience of dehumanisation. Instead of being recognised as a person, she feels constrained by her nationality, which causes fixation and rejection, as noted by Fanon (2008). This fixation not only rejects her humanity but also infantilises her, preventing her recognition as a fully grown adult.

The following account shared by Daniel and Amanda provides further illustration of how they experienced racism and xenophobia at the university:

*“But a bit of this marginalisation of these students, for example, um... if I... I've had an identical situation happen to me, with me white and another black immigrant, that is, I go to the Secretariat, the Secretariat is closing and you say, that's it, I, I assist her and the same situation with a black immigrant hmm... and the lady said oh no, we're already closed, I'll be back after lunch. And so these are the little things that...that are not little, they are clear... But deep down, there it is, it's marginalising... Huh...black immigrant people [Amanda]”.*

*“This has happened more than once, when someone said something like this, it happened once when a library employee said to me like ‘Ah, are you Brazilian? I didn't even know, you're not like the others’. So, yeah...this kind of comment makes me think that my experience is one that doesn't reflect the entirety of the international*

*student experience. Because there are very particular sections of...ethnic, mainly, and I think it goes a lot to... Yes, it goes a lot to racial issues at a time when immigrants themselves are separated into more and less accepted groups. So, I believe that for a person who, in addition to being an immigrant, is a black person or an Indigenous person or an Asian person as well, as happens a lot with colleagues of mine who came from China or Japan. It's...I think it's much more difficult for these people who have this profile, a racial profile...which is seen as...with that stereotype [Daniel]”.*

With Daniel and Amanda, I observed a critical analysis of the experiences of racism and xenophobia in Portuguese Academia that we cannot simply homogenise. In the description, “*Ah, are you Brazilian? I didn’t even know, you’re not like the others*”, Daniel refers to an experience of not being perceived as black, brown or indigenous at first but cast as an immigrant. In this way, I learned that the analysis has to consider the combination of intersectionality and positionality when Daniel shares the view that “*immigrants themselves are separated into more and less accepted groups*” (Crenshaw, 1991; Maher & Tetreault, 1993; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). According to several authors (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021; Spivak, 2023; Watkins & Shulman, 2010), colonial legacies persist through a human classification system that influences individual positions based on the intersection of social identities. This shapes our relationships with one another (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Maher & Tetreault, 1993). Thus, the phrase “*these are the little things*” in Amanda’s account highlights how everyday practices of racism and xenophobia dictate the acceptance or separation of the racialised Other in academic spaces.

In line with the idea of “racial profile” and “stereotypes” described by Daniel, Flávia shared accounts that illustrate these experiences:

*“Oh, your clothes are so different...yeah, Brazilians[s]... are always like that, aren’t they, very flashy, aren’t they? [Flávia]”.*

*“This is a Brazilian thing inventing words that don't exist and such [Flávia]”.*

*“And that's also... the question of questioning is like this, but it's so white... I don't know what... Yes, there's this color thing, right? I think so. Ah, but your ancestors are Portuguese, right? [Flávia].”*

*“I should like it... here they also told me: oh, today I saw a song that you must really like! And the person played some funk, right, a colleague from my master's degree, right? So, today I heard a song that you must really like, Flávia. I just remembered you. Then he put on some funk, one of those really heavy ones, where you don't understand anything and so on, I don't know what. Which I don't like, I even like funk, but one type, you know, I don't necessarily like that. And then... I didn't even know that song. I said: “oh okay, the next time I listen to it, if I ever listen to it, I'll remember you because I don't listen to that song myself”. It is not? Yes, it's not because I'm Brazilian, right, that I'm going to have this thing, right? So I think that's it for me. The person doesn't even... seem like they're not willing to get to know you, they are, they already have, they already... For them, they already have the image in their head. You, oh, you are Brazilian. You are for... you are the one... I already know, I already know everything about you, don't I? So is. Yes, that's violent, that's violent, isn't it? [Flávia]”.*

Flávia addresses stereotypes related to nationality in their psychology course, describing these stereotypes as a violent process. Through their *testimonios*, Flávia highlights the emotional harm these assumptions cause in the classroom. Various authors have noted that stereotypes and myths about racialised individuals are remnants of colonialism that create otherness (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Ashcroft et al., 2013; Kilomba, 2021; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Flávia described feeling trapped in racial fantasies that mark them as different. Stereotypes distort perceptions of Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous students, pushing them outside of Portuguese Higher Education. Therefore, the violence in Flávia's account relates to what Júlia described as “a lack of conscience that attacks people who have it, you know?”.

In summary, this section examined narratives of otherness in Portuguese psychology academic spaces, adding depth to the subtheme of dissociation. Participants shared experiences of racism, xenophobia, and various forms of exclusion. Their accounts highlight environments where racialised students face microaggressions, overt racism—such as graffiti aimed at Black and Brazilian students—and institutional structures that marginalise them. These experiences reveal the ongoing influence of colonial legacies in Academia, where racialised individuals often feel inferior and alienated, leading to a disconnect from the academic community. The following section will focus on the participants' feelings of marginalisation and inferiority in Portuguese Higher Education psychology.

### 5.3.2 “An internalisation of insecurity and inferiority. Huh... but, in fact, I felt that way during my degree” – Marginalisation and Inferiority

Marginalisation in Higher Education involves exclusionary practices that affect racially marginalised individuals in knowledge production (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Collins, 1998; hooks, 1989; Kilomba, 2012; Reyes, 2022). Inferiority refers to portraying one's knowledge as worthless (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2022; Collins, 1998; hooks, 1989; Kilomba, 2012). This section explores participants' experiences of marginalisation and feelings of inferiority in Portuguese psychology courses, particularly in their interactions with faculty, peers, and staff.

In dialoguing with Amanda, they share their views on experiencing marginalisation in Portuguese academic spaces:

*“Huh... I would define it as a marginal. It's that thing of... there it is, I'm not a priority and, therefore, I'm at the end of the queue, so it's a bit like that both from the perspective of teachers and from the*

*perspective of academic services, perhaps more in academic services [Amanda]”.*

Amanda defines marginalisation as the feeling of being irrelevant within Higher Education. This perception relates to the practices of faculty and staff. Amanda highlights how academic services contribute to the marginalisation experienced by students from racialised backgrounds. Additionally, this perspective suggests that marginalisation represents a structural dynamic expressed through interpersonal interactions in academic settings.

In the next *testimonio* shared by Camila, the experience of marginalisation is described in the relationship between students:

*“And then she [the faculty] said this, ‘oh you need to interact with your colleagues, you need to form groups and split up and each go to a colleague’, but no one wanted us, that’s what she didn’t understand. Nobody wanted us. How much we were excluded, I think there were some tasks from groups that we were excluded too. For example, ‘oh, do you know that there will be a course or class x?’ ‘Ah, how do you know?’ ‘ah, you’re in the group’ WhatsApp group? And then, only later did we find out that there was a Facebook group there... and then they included us, but things like that... exclusion, because they are there. What else? I think there were many, many small exclusions that we only found out about later. There was also a day when the class had been cancelled, we didn’t find out and there were only 5 Brazilian girls in that class. And then I didn’t...I think someone came into the class, someone came in, one of the girls went into some group, I don’t know, and they said no guys, there’s no class today, it was cancelled, something like that...And the 5 of them were pretty there in class. For us, right? We laughed, we joked, we stayed there, making... small talk in the classroom, but it was something we didn’t know. Then I don’t remember if we didn’t look at the email, I don’t remember what happened... But coincidentally, only we were there, there was no Portuguese in the classroom [Camila]”.*

Camila described feeling marginalised by other Portuguese students, leading to social isolation and a sense of being an outsider. Frustrated by systemic rejection, Camila stated, “*Nobody wanted us*”, highlighting peers' lack of interest

in engagement and knowledge sharing. This experience aligns with previous findings that show how marginalisation creates disparities in access to knowledge and learning opportunities in the classroom (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Collins, 1998; hooks, 1989; Kilomba, 2012; Reyes, 2022). In this context, marginalisation resulted in the exclusion of Camila and other racialised students, depriving them of opportunities to contribute to knowledge creation and occupy space in the classroom (Bell, 2022).

Similar to Camila's account, Daniel shared his experiences in the classroom:

*“There was always a working group...it was always foreign students working with foreign students. So, at the beginning, my feeling was...yeah...being put aside, right? So this ends up creating this exclusion, this separation, because it's very... I saw this a lot in the courses I took. Which is the group of immigrants, the group of international students, which is the group of people who have always worked together, who are always together and who don't... and who don't integrate with others, It's not a rule, but...[Daniel]”.*

In this account, Daniel describes feeling “put aside” and invisible in the classroom due to exclusion from teaching and learning. Several authors have highlighted that Academia's exclusionary culture diminishes the contributions of historically marginalised individuals (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Collins, 1998; hooks, 2014; Reyes, 2022). Daniel illustrated that this invisibility hinders the integration of racialised students in Portuguese psychology courses, leading them to feel alienated and devalued, which fosters feelings of isolation and inferiority (Fanon, 2008; Freire, 2013; Kilomba, 2012).

In the same line as Daniel and Camila's accounts, Marcela describes an experience of marginalisation in the psychology classroom:

*“And the boys were very cruel to me, because I came, I broke... I was a teacher, I broke, I left my whole life... to start again. And I*

*think maybe I wasn't...ready for that. When I came, I arrived in a cold place, not at all welcoming, right? As I said from the beginning. And my colleagues who could be partners in this process, none of them spoke to me. No Brazilian spoke to me. And the day I asked to join the WhatsApp group, I stayed, I was talking to myself, they turned their backs and left. So then, like that, I was excluded of this process. So, this place for me, what the psychology course is for me...I don't know, I don't know how to say it like that... It's a violent place. The course is a cold place. It's an impersonal place [Marcela]”.*

These accounts highlight experiences consistent with earlier research (Doutor et al., 2018; Duque, 2012; Jardim, 2013; Mourão, 2016; Oliveira, 2013; Pires, 2000; Seibert, 2013; Semedo, 2010; Vinagre, 2017), indicating that racialised students often face rejection from Portuguese peers due to racial stereotypes and discrimination. Marcela's *testimonio* emphasises this rejection from both Portuguese and Brazilian students. Upon entering the psychology course, Marcela described the classroom as “*a violent place. The course is a cold place. It's an impersonal place*”, reflecting feelings of isolation and emotional distress. This narrative suggests an unwelcoming and alienating academic environment marked by dehumanisation and marginalisation.

In other accounts, narratives of marginalisation share the experience of exclusion in the Portuguese psychology classrooms, which relates to their backgrounds:

*“It means being excluded. Pointed. AND... It means always questioning. Where are you coming from? Who are you? It means always being on the lookout...trying to mark your territory. And always be on defense. And that's what I feel... and I don't just feel it with myself, but with colleagues who have these characteristics. How you always have to be... on the defensive [Manuela]”.*

*“Theirs is better, theirs is the “original”, isn't it, they started “using the language”, so, if it's not their way, it's not correct. And that...it also gets the message across... I think it also sends the message that... We, in a way, are not as welcome as we thought we would*

*be, you know? I think this question is like: oh, it's a multicultural master's degree. You will meet several people, nanana, the objective is exchange. And when I get here I realise that it's not like that. I think they give us the message: look...multicultural, but...not so much. So I get the feeling... [Natália]*

The phrases “*where are you from?*” and “*multicultural, but...not so much,*” used by Natália and Manuela, reflect experiences of marginalisation as a result of racial dynamics. This highlights a tension between the rhetoric of multiculturalism and the reality of exclusion, as non-Western students often find that their cultures and perspectives are not genuinely welcome or valued, which undermines equal participation in Academia (Araújo, 2018; Maeso & Araújo, 2010; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Smith, 2021). Research shows that marginalisation in Academia labels racialised individuals as different, leading to their exclusion from the classroom (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Collins, 1998; hooks, 2014; Reyes, 2022). This marginalisation is a legacy of colonial alienation (Fanon, 2008), which prevents individuals from being fully recognised as human.

In experiencing marginalisation in the context of Portuguese psychology classrooms, some participants described questioning themselves:

*“I think it's, well, it's a very testing game, you're tested all the time. Sometimes I feel like they underestimate me, right?[Bianca]*”.

*And one...and one....and almost...almost not, literally questioning my ability to also do and perform a good job, a good task [Daniel]*”.

*“So you don't have the ability, what you bring, your experience is not valid here, is it? [Flávia]*”.

*“I can also be an internalisation of my own prejudice, right? Or an internalisation of insecurity and inferiority. Huh...but, but I actually felt it, I felt that so much during my degree... [Amanda]*”.

In these accounts, Daniel, Bianca, Amanda, and Flávia illustrate the experience of being perceived as the "inferior Other" (Kilomba, 2012, p. 300) within academic settings. Bianca raises the issue of being underestimated. Daniel doubts their capacity to perform, while Flávia questions the validity of their experiences. I interpret these inquiries, as Amanda defined them, as an internalisation of inferiority. Scholars have highlighted the complex of inferiority resulting from coloniality and racism (Fanon, 2008; Kilomba, 2012, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Fanon argues that colonialism dehumanises the colonised, leading to internalised inferiority (Fanon, 2008). Kilomba expands on this, discussing how racism perpetuates denial and silencing in white spaces, reinforcing feelings of inferiority among racialised individuals (Kilomba, 2012, 2021). Watkins and Shulman similarly note that experiences of otherness and oppressive relationships internalise negative beliefs in marginalised groups (Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Thus, the complex of inferiority signifies a profound sense of powerlessness, often linked to one's skin colour (Fanon, 2008; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). In this context, Bianca, Daniel, Flávia, and Amanda's questioning likely symbolises feelings of inferiority in Portuguese psychology courses.

In another narrative, Camila described experiencing marginalisation and inferiority in the context of Portuguese psychology courses:

*"I think we're always seen as what we are... people... I don't know if they're stupid, but they kind of make us out to be dumb, stupid, deficient... Yeah, so I really notice that...even the other students have that look and like, what do you mean? And if we...and it's funny, because if we knew something, they would be surprised, like wow, but how do you know that? It was like...no It's as if it's absurd for them that we know something they don't know. And then I realized, here there are, there are, there are a lot...they...there is a specific word, they are... They greatly underestimate our*

*intelligence. They underestimate our intelligence with absurd frequency [Camila]”.*

In this *testimonio*, Camila shared their challenging experiences navigating university spaces, where they often felt they did not belong (Bell et al., 2019). Camila shared a perception of being backwards and lacking cognitive abilities. I understand the experiences of inferiority and dehumanisation that they faced. Kilomba noted that colonial classifications—such as intelligent/unintelligent and sufficient/deficient—highlight how colonial hierarchies of inferiority and superiority influence relationships and individual identities (Kilomba, 2021). These binaries reveal a continuous process of asserting the racialised Other as a subaltern within the Higher Education system.

Dialoguing with Vitória and Natália, they shared experiences of inferiority in the context of academic Portuguese spaces:

*“What I felt...as I was saying a moment ago, is that expectation that our performance will always be...huh, a little lower. Of our skills being devalued. For that realisation that...um...I don't know. Not having the capacity, there it is from the outset, skills are devalued because... It can only be prejudice, obviously. But that expectation that this student will be average or will be here for these grades. [Vitória]”.*

*“But so, I think that firstly it could be a lot of the issue of them already assuming that we will have a worse education than them. So, they start saying: look, it's going to be very difficult, get ready and so on. Because they already assume that perhaps Brazil, compared to Portugal, will have a much worse education. So we will suffer much more in relation to Portuguese classes... anyway, Europeans in general. And I imagine, in my head, that they do the same things to people from other countries that are not European or at least not “developed” countries [Natália]”.*

These accounts highlight epistemic inferiority in Higher Education (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2022; Dutta et al., 2022; Kilomba, 2012). Descriptions such

as *"skills being devalued"* and the belief that *"we will receive a worse education"* illustrate constructions of the racialised other as lacking knowledge (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This epistemic inferiority leads to underestimation and devaluation in the classroom based on race, ethnicity, and nationality, ultimately rendering the racialised Other as less than fully human (Bell, 2022, p. 3).

In summary, this section examined the experiences of marginalisation and feelings of inferiority among racialised students in Portuguese psychology academic spaces. Participants highlighted how marginalisation manifested through exclusion from academic opportunities and social interactions, leading to a perception of racialised students as irrelevant. Feelings of inferiority arose from the consistent underestimation of the capabilities of non-European students. As a result, racialised students often felt invisible and alienated, facing prejudice that devalued their contributions and qualifications compared to European peers. This systemic bias fostered self-doubt and reinforced a sense of inferiority, deepening feelings of disconnection within the academic environment. The following section analyses the experiences of Otherness as expressed through language in Portuguese Higher Education psychology.

#### 5.4 Otherness – Language and Oppression

##### 5.4.1 “But there was one thing, a catch, and that was the teachers, always correcting our Portuguese” – Everyday Language Oppression

Humans can convey meaning through a structured communication system known as language, which employs spoken, written, or signed symbols. The relationship between language and culture reflects and influences human thoughts, behaviours, and emotions (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). Through language, individuals can transmit knowledge, express their social and

cultural identities, imagine and create abstract concepts, and articulate feelings and emotions. Consequently, language has a significant impact on shaping human thought and identity (Chilisa, 2019).

In colonisation, language played a crucial role in asserting power. It served as a colonial instrument (Wa Thiong'o, 1998), used to impose the coloniser's worldview and erase the cultures of colonised people (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). Additionally, language carries cultural significance and shapes the relationship between people and the land (Tynan, 2021). For instance, during the colonial project, the imposition of European languages such as English, Portuguese, French, and Spanish was a means to dominate the minds of colonised individuals (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wa Thiong'o, 1998).

Furthermore, this process led to systematically erasing colonised peoples' languages, cultures, and histories. Everyday language oppression is the result of a colonial legacy of knowledge hierarchisation and racialisation (Chilisa, 2019; Duarte, 2023; Gopal, 2021; Grosfoguel, 2016; Kovach, 2021; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Smith, 2021; Wa Thiong'o, 1998). This section examines the language experiences of participants in Portuguese psychology universities, highlighting instances of the imposition of the European variant of Portuguese and the inferiority of their languages. These accounts are categorised under "Otherness" within the theme of "Disconnection".

In dialoguing with Bianca, they shared their experience regarding language in the context of psychology academic spaces in Portugal:

*“Because I have other colleagues who go through the university here, who have a lot of this barrier of... that cultural prejudice, right?”*

*Mainly with the language and, what's that like... It's quite common, like, it didn't happen that much to me, at university, but, uh... I have colleagues who were writing their dissertation and who put it in, wrote it... We were literate in Brazilian Portuguese, right? So it doesn't make sense after 30 years to almost come and start writing in [European] Portuguese here. And then people started...teachers sometimes corrected 'that doesn't exist, no, it's not correct'. And so, and then, sometimes people ended up like, okay, so okay, what is the correction that needs to be made here? "I don't understand what you're trying to say... what do you want to say here, can you tell me?" To see if it makes sense, if it fits? And in fact, I heard reports from a colleague who said that the teacher always corrected her, that no, no, no, that doesn't exist, no...it's incorrect, you know? [Bianca]"*

This account demonstrates an experience in which language enforces difference. Bianca shared their experiences speaking and writing Portuguese at universities, often feeling unaccepted. This *testimonio* addressed cultural prejudice and language barriers. These experiences reflect recurring feelings of inadequacy, rejection, and confusion in psychology classrooms. It is important to note that Portuguese is the official language of Portugal and the former Portuguese colonies, which include Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, East Timor, Guinea-Bissau, Macau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe (Duarte, 2023). In 1990, the signature of the "Portuguese Language Orthographic Agreement" (*Acordo Ortográfico da Língua Portuguesa*) established a standard orthography for the Portuguese language across all countries where Portuguese is the official language. Representatives from all Portuguese-speaking countries signed the agreement, except East Timor, which joined in 2004. Portugal, Brazil, and Cape Verde have ratified and implemented the agreement, while Angola and Mozambique have not fully adopted the reform (Carvalho & Cabecinhas, 2011).

I understand that the narratives surrounding language barriers go beyond simple corrections related to the Brazilian variant of Portuguese. Research has shown that the Portuguese educational system views students perceived as racialised Others as culturally and linguistically deficient (Ambrósio et al., 2019; Araújo, 2007, 2018; Nada & Araújo, 2019; Oliveira, 2013; Pires, 2000). I argue that the complaints from faculty about students' language and the ongoing corrections they face highlight a reinforcement of colonial differences, a continuous erasure of the languages of colonised peoples, and an assertion of epistemic superiority (Chilisa, 2019; Gopal, 2021; Kovach, 2021; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Nada & Araújo, 2019).

Flávia and Natália shared *testimonios* of witnessing experiences in which language reestablishes colonial differences in the psychology classroom:

*“It happened a few times, with a teacher specifically who really liked to correct our Portuguese, right? And then the most annoying situation was, because I and I... there were only psychologists in this class, there was only me and another colleague, Lari, and we were talking, she was talking about behavioral therapy, you know, the issue of positive, negative reinforcement and so on, and we took and used the words reinforcement, right? And then she took it and said: ‘there is no word reinforcement’. Look teacher, I think there is... right? So, that's how we learned, right? We were psychologists, she was a sociologist, right? And she says, “this is a Brazilian thing, inventing words that don't exist” and so on, I said... And we stayed... like that, these things, to the point that, for example, there was a teacher who complained a lot about my use... of Brazilian words [Flávia]”.*

*“This Pakistani girl, as she doesn't speak Portuguese, she only speaks English, during classes...uh, she uses Google Translate, when the teachers are speaking. Some teachers sent her materials in English, but some teachers did not. She has the original material and then she has to translate it. And then, um... when we handed in the work and I had already done work with her, she was handing in the work with her part in English. During the presentations, she presents English and everything else, that she needs to participate. However, when the work is delivered to the teacher directly, the English part has to be translated into Portuguese. So I think*

*it's...maybe this type of aggression is more obvious in her case, you know? [Natália]”.*

Flávia discusses feeling devalued due to what they perceive as the incorrect use of the Portuguese language. Natália highlights a peer's exclusion due to language-based discrimination. These experiences collectively illustrate feelings of exclusion, alienation, and being perceived as inadequate in psychology classrooms because of linguistic abilities. These accounts from different psychology universities in Portugal highlight how language becomes a form of aggression by Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous students. Previous studies (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Reyes, 2022) have shown that racial microaggressions in Academia reflect systemic and everyday racism. Kilomba explains that the racialised "Other" is often reduced to a projection of white fears and fantasies rooted in violence (Kilomba, 2021, p. 80). These experiences are likely to relate to a colonial legacy of cultural erasure in Portuguese academic spaces through linguistic and racial microaggressions targeting historically marginalised groups (Kovach, 2021).

Marcela and Manuela shared first-person accounts of perceived aggression related to language in the context of psychology classrooms:

*“That made it really difficult for me, you know? My learning... There are things I don't understand that they say. There are things I don't understand that they write. Sometimes. But it was also very bad... You, for example, I suffered, for example, with this. I suffered violence in a group, I did work with a group with only Portuguese people and everything I wrote was wrong. And I was corrected all the time. And then, for example, I also write...I've heard from teachers in class that we spoke very well. The Brazilians, we developed a lot, it was really very easy, we...but we wrote very badly [Marcela]”.*

*“If not, what is being evaluated my errors while my Portuguese. And still. If that were the case then, the university should create a statute*

*so that people who are immigrants have access to a Portuguese course, in this case, perhaps. But what happened to me, Delso, is that they don't even care about my Portuguese. It's with my accent. So, like...it's my accent, it's the difference that makes her not notice it. And that's it, there would be a time, I would have to do it, and I was role-playing in Portuguese. All my classmates, oh, no, I understand perfectly. And then the teacher, she forced me to translate my speech [Manuela]”.*

In these *testimonios*, Marcela and Manuela recount their experiences with linguistic and racial microaggressions in Higher Education. Marcela faced constant corrections from Portuguese peers. Manuela was required to translate her speech in class. These experiences highlight academic alienation and discrimination based on language and accent, leading to feelings of marginalisation. The enforcement of the European variation of Portuguese among racialised students reflects a colonial legacy (Chilisa, 2019; Wa Thiong'o, 1998), resulting in a form of colonial violence that alienates these students from their cultures and ways of knowing (Bell, 2022; Chilisa, 2019; Fanon, 2008; Wa Thiong'o, 1998).

In dialoguing with Laura, they shared *testimonios* in which language and expression restrain the experience in the psychology classroom:

*“I remember that I was very embarrassed and thought it was very wrong, because we had to present a group project. And these 3 girls, because they knew each other, did the work together. And they had to, you know, present the work, you do a reading, you, anyway. And then they...They had some difficulty pronouncing the word authors, with their accent it seemed like they were talking about actors. But like, man, everyone understood, go through it, go over it. And the teacher insisted a lot and told them, no, they are not actors, they are authors. And she repeated this about 2 or 3 times. And then, what happens, imagine, at 22 years old I was already one of the oldest people in the class, because the people who go to college, right, just like in Brazil at 17, 18 years old, I was already there, right, already I had studied, I was already studying. And that's it, it's not, I ended up falling into a freshman class, but I remember that then people start to kind of laugh and the girls get*

*embarrassed... And the teacher insisting on that pronunciation, I know...that really upset me, I never forgot that episode, you know? Like, it was horrible, horrible, horrible, horrible, horrible. In a discipline of, I don't know, methods... anyway, that's it, in the psychology course, you know? With people who didn't have any difficulty, right? But it wasn't, it's not because they didn't know. It was a question of accent, like when I don't know, Brazilians have an accent when they speak English, like, my pronunciation won't be perfect, but there will always be one, there's always a non-native speaker who wants to embarrass you like that, oh, but you're pronouncing it wrong as a native, man, they just want, they just want...they'll understand you, you know? And this situation happened, kind of bizarre [Laura]”.*

Laura described feeling embarrassed when a faculty member critiqued students' pronunciation, even though they had grasped the content. These experiences highlight linguistic exclusion and perceived unfair treatment. This *testimonio* reveals how racialised students often feel deprived of their voices, embarrassed, and unable to speak (Spivak, 2023) and experience oppression in the classroom (Freire, 2013, p. 50). Research shows that Academia systematically silences marginalised groups (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Dutta & Atallah, 2023; Kilomba, 2012; Reyes, 2022). I agree with Kilomba's (2021) argument that the mouth, as an organ of speech, symbolises the need for surveillance and censorship in oppressive contexts, such as Portuguese academic spaces.

Discussing experiences related to language in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology, Júlia named these experiences as linguistic prejudice:

*“I got linguistic prejudice...I felt it a few times when they said “oh I can't understand what you're saying” I said but people? Like, what then, when someone spoke to me, and those who spoke to me weren't random people like that, they were very close people, right? So, I had situations where, for example, we wrote work together, group work, with people who are super friends of mine and we... we still hang out with, like, very close people and confidants and so on. And then she said, I can't understand what*

*you're talking about here. So I don't know. Here there is a mental structure also within the Portuguese standard, which it seems they can't get out of, you know? Like, it's formatted this way, and if you're talking in any other way, it seems like they can't understand what you're saying. So, several times I wrote, rewrote, we are working together, right? Each one has a part to stay... oh ok, I got it, I don't know what. Because I said, look, if they are my friends, who are here, we are talking really well, they don't really understand. Imagine getting into the hands of the teacher from here, forget it. So, what happened? There were several times at work, it was okay not to have a patchwork quilt to create something uniform. We said, so let's go, one person will reread and write everything, but not taking the context of what the other person said, however, that the work was only delivered later, with everyone's validation, even when the person, the person rewrote it and everyone validated it or said, oh, that's not what I meant. What I meant was this, this and that, so we did this. But, for example, our work, we had... every time I did work, there were always Portuguese people or the majority were Portuguese, there were only one or 2 Brazilians or not, sometimes the minority, but what do we do? did? We let them write, we wrote the work, but the work was delivered in [European] Portuguese, because it was... Okay, let's not get into that debate now, you are also part of our group, delivery in Portuguese from Portugal. But don't change what I... what I wrote then, several times, then I wrote something, I said, no, that's not what I meant to say. I wanted to say this, this, this. It's OK [Júlia]”.*

In this account, I learned from Júlia about the linguistic prejudice that racialised students face in Portuguese Higher Education. Linguistic prejudice involves discrimination based on language diversity and accents (Rosa & Flores, 2021; Roth-Gordon, 2023). Key aspects include language profiling, where individuals are evaluated based on their language use, which impacts their social interactions and access to opportunities. Additionally, there is a belief that specific languages are superior due to their association with dominant groups, alongside the historical stigmatisation of Indigenous languages, creole languages, and dialects (Roth-Gordon, 2023). Lélia Gonzalez (1988) argues that linguistic prejudice ties the experience of being racialised to a lack of education and civility, reinforcing racist stereotypes and excluding the racialised

Other from social, economic, and cultural power. She views this as epistemic violence, erasing the legitimacy of historically marginalised communities' contributions to knowledge. Participants describe linguistic prejudice as an ongoing form of oppression experienced by racialised individuals in Portuguese psychology courses.

When interacting with participants, I found that linguistic prejudice hindered their experiences in Higher Education by favouring the European Portuguese variant and deeming others inferior. This also led to the knowledge produced in these other variants being deemed inferior:

*“Yeah...and then they always criticised our Portuguese. It's like...”You're using a lot of Brazilian articles, you're... Ah, this is written in Brazilian” Yeah...so, what happens, when we did group work, many colleagues had to correct our part later. That. They kind of had it... they corrected it, reviewed our work, and that, whether we liked it or not, was a second job for them [Camila]”.*

Camila shared their experiences of linguistic criticism and pressure to conform to European Portuguese standards, highlighting feelings of exclusion in Academia. I understand that the phrase *“using many Brazilian articles”* pertains to linguistic and racial violence rooted in colonial legacies in Academia. As highlighted by various scholars, the suppression and surveillance of knowledge deemed inferior within the power dynamics of Academia correlates to epistemic violence (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Dutta & Atallah, 2023; Kilomba, 2012; Readsura Decolonial Editorial, 2022a). These observations point to a persistent perspective that views non-European languages and alternative ways of knowing as subversive and, therefore, inferior. Indigenous scholars assert that dialects and Indigenous languages, along with their variations, continuously find

themselves positioned as non-conforming to the standard language, justifying the colonial legacy of linguistic erasure (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021).

Through epistemic violence, I understand that the enforcement of European Portuguese as a superior established a monoculture of power, as suggested by Marcela:

*“And then they arrive with their monoculture and say: that's it, right? This is the way to write, this is the way to love, what you do is wrong. What do you do...right? A colonial process that still exists here [Marcela]”.*

Mbembe (2016, p. 36) observed that “Colonialism rhymes with monolingualism”. Thus, I understand that the monoculture of enforcing the European Portuguese variation in the context of Portuguese psychology courses is a process of reasserting the colonial legacy of difference and separation. This process leads to the disconnection of racialised students from their cultures, identities and ways of knowing.

In summary, this section examines the language-related experiences of Black, Brown, Immigrant, and Indigenous students in psychology courses at Portuguese universities. Participants reported linguistic prejudice that reflects a colonial legacy of marginalisation. The European variant of Portuguese is often viewed as superior, while Brazilian Portuguese and other dialects are considered inferior. Faculty and peers frequently corrected Brazilian students, dismissing their linguistic variations and sometimes requiring them to rewrite work in European Portuguese. This suppression of cultural identity leads to feelings of disconnection and depersonalisation. Such linguistic prejudice represents a continuation of colonialism, marginalising non-European

languages. Enforcing European Portuguese in Academia exemplifies epistemic violence, robbing students of their linguistic and cultural identities. These experiences foster alienation and create monocultural academic environments, further excluding racialised individuals. The following section will analyse the denial of racism in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology.

## 5.5 Otherness – Denial

### 5.5.1 “Portugal did not even leave the denial phase” - Racism Denial in Portuguese Higher Education Psychology

Racism denial refers to the refusal to acknowledge racism and its effects on individuals' lives (Van Dijk, 1992). According to decolonial and Indigenous scholars, this denial reflects a colonial legacy that ignores the lasting impacts of colonisation, slavery, and the destruction of Indigenous cultures and knowledge. (Chilisa, 2019; Fanon, 2008; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000; Smith, 2021). In Higher Education, racism denial manifests as a refusal to recognise ongoing discriminatory practices affecting Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous communities (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Kilomba, 2012). Consequently, this denial upholds unequal power dynamics and dehumanises racialised individuals (Kilomba, 2012).

Racism denial in Portugal's educational settings manifests in various ways. Scholars (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2007, 2018; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010) highlight that this denial often involves downplaying systemic racism, neglecting its impact, and maintaining colourblind ideologies. This contributes to the suffering caused by racism and complicates discussions about oppression. This section examines participants' perceptions of racism denial in academic psychology spaces, with a focus on their narratives

regarding Higher Education courses. These accounts are categorised under the subsection "Otherness" within the theme of "Disconnection".

In this initial account, Laura shared their views on the question of racism denial:

*“Portugal did not even leave the denial phase. Then that's it. They don't want to put their finger on the wound, they don't want to go through the whole process, because they haven't even left the denial phase. For them, it's like, they continue to teach children here that the Portuguese are an example of colonisers, they are good colonisers. Look, we were so good, we even slept with black girls, we even got mixed up. Look how we brought...civility to the continent. So, the university is not ready or does not want to. I think it's much more of a lack of desire than a lack of preparation [Laura]”.*

Laura shared a perception regarding the denial of racism in Portugal, viewing this denial as both a historical and commonplace issue. Throughout these accounts, a recurring theme related to the colonial past often presents a myth: the benevolence of the Portuguese coloniser. This perspective is essential for understanding the ongoing state of denial at both individual and structural levels, including within Portuguese academic settings.

The myth of benevolent Portuguese colonialism conveys a narrative of exceptionalism and conviviality (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010). Participant accounts support previous studies, suggesting this myth is grounded in a belief in Portugal's unique inclusiveness compared to other colonial empires (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010; Vala et al., 2008). This narrative claims that Portuguese colonisers adapted well to various cultures and fostered positive relationships with the colonised. However, research has shown that this perspective often downplays the brutality of colonial rule and the

ongoing legacy of oppression (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010).

In examining the myths of benevolence and exceptionalism in Portugal's colonial past, I learned that Laura highlights an ideology rooted in racism denial: Luso-tropicalism. This concept, proposed by Gilberto Freyre, depicts the Portuguese coloniser as humane and adaptable (Freyre, 1933). Previous research (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2018; Castelo, 2011; De Almeida, 2007; Maeso & Araújo, 2010) shows that the Portuguese dictatorship used Luso-tropicalism to justify colonial control over African territories. Thus, Luso-tropicalism serves as an aspirational ideology regarding racial relationships that continues to influence Portuguese Higher Education today (Araújo, 2018).

Amanda and Maria expressed their views while discussing how people enact racism denial:

*“The Portuguese have a lot of difficulty, but a lot of difficulty in recognising... their own racism, in recognising systemic racism, because they personalise everything in this matter. Because, it's not, the classic I'm not racist because I have a classic black friend. I'm not racist because my maid is black and I really like her... I mean there is a blindness... Hm... very stubborn in not seeing, in not recognising, you know, almost a narcissistic thing about... ‘we, we are, we were good colonisers’. And this narrative is... I would say, it is a pillar of Portuguese culture and they do not give up on this narrative [Maria]”.*

*“And, there is the famous phrase that I'm not racist, I even have a black friend. So, um...this exists, this is said multiple times, so it's not just a meme. Huh...unfortunately it is, so it does exist in everyday life. And I don't think so, this denial of racism is not conscious, that is, it is already very naturalised [Amanda]”.*

The experiences shared by participants reveal perceptions of racism denial in their everyday lives. These accounts offer insight into racism denial as a form of

naturalised and structured colourblindness ideology. As previously analysed (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2018; Maeso & Araújo, 2010), the myth of colourblindness encompasses narratives of tolerance and perpetuates colonial practices and discourses. Additionally, as noted by Araújo (2018), racism denial in Portugal stems from Luso-tropicalism ideologies and bears similarities to concepts such as “racial democracy” in Brazil, “colourblindness” in the U.S., and “fairness” in the U.K.

In the following *testimonios*, Marcela and Natália shared experiences that illustrate the enactment of racism denial in Portuguese psychology courses:

*“You can’t, for example, I went through an ethics committee that I had to explain that she came back because she came to question me. I wasn’t approved at first because she came to question me, ‘what is racialisation?’, because you give us Sociodemographic surveys, you cannot ask ethnic-racial identity here. Because it constitutes racism. I don’t know if it’s like that there, but here it’s like that, here it’s like that. So, it constitutes racism. So I already think that... because she says it’s a country that seeks equality, therefore, we don’t have racism. For me, this is already very strong, like, very...significant. So I had to explain what was racialised; you know, I research obstetric violence with Brazilian and racialised women here. And yeah...I had to explain [Marcela]”.*

*“100% right. I don’t think so. not just from... from Portuguese society, but in general, right? Yeah...they swear they don’t have it [racism]. So, it’s very peaceful and such. If I go to the university now and point out these problems, for example, they will not be treated as problems, they will say ‘no, this is not a linguistic prejudice, this is because we have a norm, and the work has to be delivered in uniformity’, blah, blah, blah. So I think they perhaps rely on these nuances, these little things, these microaggressions to justify behaviors that... are prejudiced [Natália]”.*

I understand that these narratives bring further insights into experiences of racism denial. Marcela described their ethics as not approved, as *“it’s a country that seeks equality, therefore, we don’t have racism”*. Natália speculates that if they complain to the university about facing racial and linguistic discrimination

and microaggressions, they will not listen: *“No, this is not a linguistic prejudice; this is because we have a norm, and the work has to be delivered in uniformity”*.

Thus, I understand from these accounts that racism denial in Portuguese academic spaces serves two purposes: interdiction and perpetuation. I argue that racism denial acts as an obstacle, preventing racialised individuals from addressing the oppression caused by racism. This denial creates barriers to expressing experiences. For instance, Marcela highlights its impact on naming racialisation in research. Natália illustrates that racism denial leads to the dismissal of racism experiences in classrooms. Although these individuals recognise racism as a problem (Kilomba, 2021), denial of racism serves the purpose of protecting Portuguese identity and social structures linked to past conflicts. Thus, racism denial trivialises racial oppression in Portuguese Academia.

Furthermore, racism denial perpetuates power imbalances in racial relations. Denying the existence of racism fosters the belief that it is not an issue in Portuguese society, eliminating the need for institutional and political action (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021). Marcela's experience shows that racism denial diverts resources from understanding racism. Marcela argues that it situates racism outside Portuguese society, and Natália depicts the university as immune to racial issues. I view racism denial as a means of sustaining power dynamics at the university. This denial upholds the status quo in relationships with marginalised racial groups by legitimising knowledge based on scientific perspectives and Luso-tropical ideologies (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021). It establishes who can speak in academic spaces (Kilomba, 2012; Reyes, 2022). Moreover, it influences what can be studied and taught.

Consequently, racism denial reinforces the colonial legacy of racial differences and power imbalances at the university.

Other accounts provided illustrations regarding the social and psychological impact of racism denial in the participants' experiences:

*“One of the biggest...one of the biggest consequences [of racism denial] is...not being able to identify situations of racism and be able to defend themselves against them. If it doesn't exist... It is not? Which also turns out to be a good strategy for maintaining the racist structure in the system. Then there is also this dimension, isn't there? There is a more cynical faction... Huh... who knows that racism exists. From white Portuguese society, which knows that racism exists, recognises that it is there, recognises it from itself to itself, right? But he never admits it, because he knows that from the moment he does it, he accepts it as a problem. It becomes, uh...so, when a problem appears, solutions are found, right? And you don't want to find solutions for that [racism], do you? Because that involves losing a position of power and privilege that people are not open to [Maria]”.*

With this account, Maria provided a portrayal of the impact of racism denial on psychological and social levels. Maria described how racism denial renders racialised students as *“not being able to identify situations of racism and be able to defend themselves against”* racism. According to Kilomba (2021), denying the existence of racism inflicts psychological harm, as it causes marginalised individuals to question their own experiences, rendering them defenceless and voiceless against the injustices they endure. I argue that these accounts refer to the psychological impact of racism denial, in which racialised students experience feeling inadequate and powerless in academic spaces.

At the social level, I comprehend Maria's *testimonio* illustrated that racism denial impact refers to the preservation of legitimacy and privilege. I understand that the description *“you don't want to find solutions for that [racism], do you?”*

*Because that involves losing a position of power and privilege that people are not open to”* speaks to how racism denial socially preserves the historically legitimised access to knowledge and social privileges of dominant groups in Higher Education. As previously observed (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2018; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019), the ideology of Luso-tropicalism holds discourses that deny racism (e.g., multiculturalism and colour-blindness), which protects the status of a system of privileges of hegemonies in Portuguese Academia.

In discussing racism denial, I gained insights from research participants who described ongoing, systematic challenges in Higher Education. Daniel and Vitória shared their perceptions on the implications of racism denial in Academia:

*“But this denial in quotation marks that this person has their own characteristics, and that I must respect them...as they are also respecting them. It is in this sense that I think that in Portugal, uh...not only in Portugal, but in other countries as well. There is that... I don't like talking about institutionalized colonialism, but it seems that there still exists...in quotation marks, that differentiation that these people came here [at the university] to occupy a space that is not theirs...when the space is ours too. In Portugal, which makes even less sense, I grew up with ‘black, go to your land’ and we even thought that was funny, but our land was exactly that [Vitória]”.*

*“It's almost as if it doesn't validate the current period, as a reflection of what was in the past, so I think this connection between past and present is missing. And this [racism denial] makes it difficult to have a vision of the future that is less unequal, that is less...separatist in this sense of segregation of social exclusion. I think there is... there is, in a generalised way and reflected in Higher Education, yes, a denial of this entire past. I...so, honestly...I think... Because like that, I end up being... I enter this place of the Immigrant that ends up not passing through because I don't suffer issues that racialised immigrants, such as black or Indigenous people, go through, so it's like me too... [Daniel]”.*

In these accounts, I recognise the challenges posed by the myth of Luso-tropicalism and the discourse of racism denial in academic settings. The challenge lies in how racism denial in Portugal operates as a narrative of neutrality, objectivity, and universalism, thus reflecting a Eurocentric perspective. As Agra Figueiredo et al. noted, this perspective emphasises understanding the world through a European lens, further reinforced by modern Academia (2021, p. 181). Consequently, racism denial in Portuguese Higher Education creates a double oppression by naturalising racial hierarchies and establishing colonial knowledge structures.

I comprehend Vitória's narrative regarding *“differentiation that these people came here [at the university] to occupy a space that is not theirs...when the space is ours too”*, as racism denial as discourses and practices that make the university an inhospitable place. As discussed by Bell (2022), Academia, which is occupied by pale ideologies, disconnected from reality and subjective, is complicit in the ongoing project of knowledge extractivism and the absence of dialogue. Daniel notes that *“this [racism denial] makes it difficult to have a vision of the future that is less unequal or separatist in terms of social exclusion.”* This indicates that racism denial serves as a divisive ideology. Research (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Araújo, 2007, 2018) shows that the politics of non-decision-making in education related to racialised individuals reflect this denial in Portugal. As a result, marginalised groups face challenges in academic achievement and ongoing segregation in educational spaces. Thus, I argue that racism denial discourses, rooted in Luso-tropical ideologies, are colonial legacies of dehumanisation in Portuguese Higher Education psychology.

In summary, this section examined the denial of racism and the experiences of racialised students in Portuguese psychology academic spaces. It highlighted how a widespread denial of racism, tied to Portugal's colonial history and the myth of the benevolent coloniser, undermined recognition of systemic racism. This denial led to colourblind ideologies and dismissals of racial issues, making discussions about racism and its impact challenging. Participants noted that the refusal to acknowledge racism perpetuated power imbalances and increased feelings of exclusion and dehumanisation for racialised students. The following chapter focuses on participants' experiences of reconnection in these courses, exploring how individual and shared dreaming, alternative understandings, and dialogue could help reimagine futures in Portuguese psychology academic spaces.

## Chapter 6: Reconnection

Reconnection refers to the process of reestablishing humanness (Smith, 2021). Through the lens of relationality, reconnection is about restoring humanity and its relationships, the land, ancestral ties, and the future (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Krawec, 2022; Krenak, 2019b; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021). Through Indigenous ways of knowing, reconnection encompasses collective practices that celebrate life and relationships with the land, each other, ancestral knowledge, memory and future envisioning (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Krawec, 2022; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Smith, 2021). Moreover, in liberation psychology, engagement in dreaming and future envisioning practices creates potential spaces for reconnection (Bell, 2018a; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Therefore, dreaming as a shared practice stems from Indigenous cosmology (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Chilisa, 2019; Krenak, 2019b; Laenui, 2000; Smith, 2021) and a decolonial approach to rehumanise relationships in spaces such as Academia (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2018a; Bell et al., 2019; Dutta & Atallah, 2023; Huber, 2010; King et al., 2011).

In decolonisation, reconnection is about reclamation, storytelling, and healing (Zavala, 2016). Decolonial theory and praxis are focused on challenging the colonial legacies that create disconnection, such as racism, Eurocentrism, and the dehumanisation of historically marginalised groups (Dutta et al., 2022; Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 2020; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Quijano, 2000). Reconnection seeks to re-centre marginalised voices and knowledge, addressing the imbalances of colonial hierarchies (Bell et al., 2019; Dutta & Atallah, 2023; Dutta et al., 2022; Krawec, 2022; Nirmal & Dey, 2022).

This process includes recovering suppressed knowledge and amplifying the

experiences of the racialised Other, ultimately reshaping relationships and meanings in spaces like Academia (Bell, 2018a; Bell et al., 2019; Bhabra et al., 2018; Dutta & Atallah, 2023; Dutta et al., 2022; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Zavala, 2016).

Dreaming is a possibility for reconnection as it goes beyond nighttime images and fantasies (King et al., 2011) and is about connecting the past, present and future through collaborative practices (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Krawec, 2022; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). For Indigenous communities – like the Māori in New Zealand (Smith, 2021) and the Xavante in Brazil (Krenak, 2019b) – dreaming is a place to reconnect with ancestral ways of knowing (Nirmal & Dey, 2022, p. 146) and a source for future making (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Krenak, 2019b; Smith, 2021). Dreaming is about resistance and re-imagination of relationships as it defies colonial legacies and promotes envisioning of possible futures (Bell et al., 2019; Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Krenak, 2019b; Montero & Sonn, 2009; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

For instance, Krenak (2019b) explains that the *Xavante*<sup>22</sup> tribe, Indigenous people of territories of central-west Brazil, engage with dreaming as a way of collective envisioning. When seeking insights about the future, they consult a 'dreamer,' an individual in the community skilled in interpreting dreams. These dreamers devote their lives to understanding dreams, much like Higher Education in Western societies (Krenak, 2019b, p. 22). Thus, I know the praxis

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<sup>22</sup> The Xavante are Indigenous people in the territory of the state of Mato Grosso, centre-west of Brazil. They share the experience of being dominated by Portuguese colonisers; therefore, they avoided contact with Western cultures and society due to their struggles with hunger, land conflicts, and disease that decimated the Indigenous.

of dreaming in academic settings as a reclamation of the ancestral possibility to allow pluriversal experiences in meaning-making.

Furthermore, dreaming reestablishes humanness as it allows for the reimagination of alternative ways of being and knowing, beyond oppressive, dehumanising, and exclusionary colonial legacies (Freire, 2013, 2016; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Decolonial Psychology Editorial, 2021). Additionally, dreaming is fundamental to the human experience. Freire teaches that with no “dreams there is no life, without dreams there are no human beings, without dreams, there is no human existence”(Freire, 2016, p. 63). This chapter examines participants' dreams and aspirations in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology. Their shared accounts reflect hopes for a university characterised by dialogue, humanisation, belonging, and transformation. I organise these narratives into two subsections, Personal and Collective Dreams, under the final overarching theme of Reconnection. The first theme explores students' specific aspirations within their psychology courses, while the second theme highlights dreams of pluriversality and utopian dreams. The following subsection of the analysis focuses on experiences of personal dreams.

## 6.1 Personal Dreams

### 6.1.1 “The dream of having an education that was of very good quality and very different” - Tangible Dreams

Research participants shared their hopes and dreams while discussing their experiences in Portuguese psychology courses. Their narratives included various dreams, mainly focusing on tangible ones perceived as realistically

achievable. Dialoguing with Bianca and Manuela, they shared their dreams of accomplishing the psychology course:

*“This is a difficult question, but... For the near future, I just want to be able to finish my master's degree, because it has been very difficult for me. I didn't imagine it, but it has been very difficult, and sometimes I think I won't be able to finish it, but I need to finish it. ...Oh, now that's [the dream], but at the time it was, well, to be able to finish it, to be able to do it calmly and to work here in the Portuguese context to make a difference here, right?[Bianca]”.*

*“Yeah...I tried to continue in the same area of intervention, a little bit of what I was doing in Chile, which has to do with systemic-relational [psychology]. Yeah...I haven't gone back to school in a long time. So, like, it was like, oh, great, cool...okay, to make it legal I'm going to study, which I did. My dream was, okay, to get it as soon as possible so I could work here, in my area [Manuela]”.*

Bianca and Manuela share the goal of completing their studies, reflecting the challenges of being a racialised student in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. Bianca shares doubts but remains determined, and Manuela emphasises the need to complete studies to work as a psychologist in Portugal. Their accounts underscore the importance of achieving academic goals, often regarded as dreams that bring joy and pride (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Huber, 2010). However, as pointed out by Arday and Mirza (2018), the notion of achievement and success in the context of neoliberal Western universities can be challenging for racialised students. That is, achieving relates to having success; therefore, it requires understanding “how to write, speak and read in ways that are recognised as legitimate forms of practice within Higher Education” (Arday & Mirza, 2018, p. 370). As previously argued (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Kilomba, 2012), racialised individuals, particularly Black students and scholars, often face a dual challenge: pursuing success and recognition within Academia while complying with Eurocentric standards of knowledge. Therefore,

I argue that achievement as a dream may come with the challenge of conforming and performing knowledge following what the university legitimises as such (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Kilomba, 2012, 2016).

Another similarity is that the dream of accomplishing their studies is critical for these students transitioning into professionals. In their narratives, Bianca and Manuela expressed a desire to work after completing their studies. I argue that the desire to work is more than entering the job market. For racialised students, finding a job is vital in providing continuous support in their households, paying for student loans and so on (Huber, 2010). These descriptions shed light on the intersectionality of identities shaped by race and class. I argue that the dream to accomplish and become a professional relates to aspirations in overcoming financial struggles, which have been previously observed as a barrier in the experiences of racialised students (Ambrósio et al., 2019; Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Doutor et al., 2018; Huber, 2010; Malet Calvo et al., 2022; Vinagre, 2017).

Related to dreams of course and professional accomplishments, students shared aspirations for recognition. Dialoguing with Flávia regarding dreams, they shared:

*“My dream is this, isn't it that, not that we don't recognise, but that we recognise and we... it's... it's that the word recognise is really the same, you know? Yes, it's like, it's not... There's no, it's not the so-called idealism, because that... I know that this speech may seem like the speech of people who actually deny, right, it's not denying, you know? It's recognising. It's looking and seeing and knowing, knowing... knowing this, but recognising the importance, the capacity, the characteristics, right? [Flávia]”.*

Flávia expresses a desire for recognition beyond simply acknowledging the presence of racialised students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. For Flávia, recognition means appreciating these students' unique qualities and contributions, rather than accepting them superficially. This perspective highlights the importance of a more profound acknowledgement of racialised students in psychology classrooms in Portugal. Thus, dreaming of recognition in Portuguese Higher Education psychology means being visible and fully human in academic spaces. Dutta et al. (2022) observed that dreaming of decolonial futures beyond colonial legacies is related to sharing *testimonios* against dominant narratives. In this course, dreams of recognition refer to a praxis that intends to undo the invisibility that dehumanises marginalised people in Academia (Dutta et al., 2022, p. 68). Therefore, I argue that Flávia's dream is a concrete hope for achieving social justice towards a more egalitarian Academia through representation, recognition and redistribution (Arday & Mirza, 2018, p. 366).

In the set of personal dreams, Manuela and Natália described their dreams of achieving professional recognition in completing their psychology studies:

*"I think the dream is, like, to be... ready, to start... To be able to have a career of... so much self-knowledge, or of or of... like, to be able to... do, like, what they want with that career. My dream was... yeah, well, besides legalising my profession here, it was also to be able to acquire other knowledge, which... which maybe I'm a little lacking [Manuela]"*.

*"Okay. Well, first, it's... the dream of having an education that was of very good quality and very different. To have a name on the resume that was important. And to be able, perhaps, to trace a professional path that was international and that I could use the knowledge I acquired during my undergraduate degree [Natália]"*.

These narratives highlight the intersection of the desire for recognition and the pursuit of academic credentials. Manuela seeks legal acknowledgement to practice as a psychologist. Natália aims to pursue an international career, utilising the knowledge gained in Portugal. Collectively, these narratives reflect aspirations for recognition, career readiness, and opportunities linked to expertise and professional validation.

Higher Education, as a historical bastion, not only bestows academic titles but also equips individuals with qualifications and certificates, enabling them to excel in their chosen fields (Arday & Mirza, 2018). Consequently, students turn to Academia, hoping to receive the formal designation that allows them to work, teach, research, and so on. Previous research (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Collins, 1998) highlight that many racialised students face acceptance challenges within the academic community. The experiences of Natália and Manuela illustrate how academic credentials can provide visibility, knowledge, and distinction.

Dreaming of recognition serves as decolonial praxis, addressing the invisibility of racialised students in Academia. Validating their identities and knowledge systems challenges colonial legacies, epistemic violence, and institutional racism (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Kilomba, 2012). Freire emphasises that recognition involves viewing students as co-creators of knowledge and fostering dialogue and respect (Freire, 2013). Recognition can then be understood as a process in the unfinished project and shift (Maldonado-Torres, 2020) to decolonise Academia, disrupting power dynamics and legitimising diverse knowledge systems alongside Western approaches (Smith, 2021).

Through conversations with Júlia, Amanda, Vitória, and Bianca, I gained insight into their aspirations for recognition and respect:

*“Uh... I was born in Mozambique, but I grew up there as a white woman, and then I came here as a Mozambican, uh... white woman. But then, that... depending on the realities, they are seen in a completely different way. Uh... depending on the context, what I would like is for my, my color to not matter at all. Therefore, I am a person and I am who I am and I would like to be respected in that sense [Amanda]”.*

*“And that I could be in a Portugal where I don't have to worry, because that still happens, right? I worry that every time I open my mouth, someone, before anything else, will put prejudice before talking to me, you know? And that continues to be one of my concerns to this day. I opened my mouth and said, is this prejudice coming or is it just rude Portuguese, you know? So that's it [Júlia]”.*

*“For me, Delso, the important thing is respect. Being able to respect each other. And when we are categorising people by their skin, by the characteristics they have, I think that is an infinite pit, because we are all different and if we start to highlight the characteristic of color, characteristic, uh... disability or not disability, sexual group, this and that, what we are doing is categorizing people and simply treating them by the category they fit into [Vitória]”.*

*“And in this context that we are talking about, I think it is because, in some way, of respect, because that is what I feel is often lacking. You have to be respected... we have to be respected, you know? We... any person, but I think that in this context [Higher Education], people have to respect, like, and that is very lacking, so I think it is a bit of that, like that [Bianca]”.*

Amanda wished for a university where “colour does not matter at all”, seeking humanisation beyond racial constructs. Júlia hoped that not only Academia but also a country where racialised people “don't have to worry” every time they open their mouths and speak Portuguese. Vitória wished for Academia that does not categorise “people by their skin”, emphasising the importance of mutual respect. Bianca hoped for an academic context in psychology courses not to be a place where “people feel is often lacking”, calling for practices based on respect.

These *testimonios* are aspirations for an ethical framework rooted in mutual respect. Scholars recognise mutual respect as a harmonious connection

despite differences (Chilisa, 2019; Dutta et al., 2022; Krawec, 2022; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). These narratives reflect ongoing struggles for egalitarian treatment and racial justice in Portuguese Higher Education psychology, emphasising that racialised students “deserve to be treated with humanity and respect” (Huber, 2010, p. 2). I understand that these research participants not only share narratives about their “lived experiences into ongoing conversations about the academy but also strive to decolonially dream and reimagine the university-as-public-good”(Dutta & Atallah, 2023, p. 7). Dreams refer to multiple experiences of studying abroad in another land, culture and ways of knowing.

Dialoguing with Daniel, I learned about the meaning of achieving the dream of studying abroad, as Daniel shared:

*“It didn't cross my mind... it didn't cross my mind to study, to do some training... to start training abroad. I believed that I would only be able to do it, that I would only have this possibility in a postgraduate degree... Anyway, that it would be many years later. So it was almost a surprise, because I didn't... at the time I was taking the ENEM<sup>23</sup>, I was taking the entrance exams in Brazil... It's my... At the time I was doing therapy with a psychologist there and she came to do a specialisation in Porto and she told me, 'look, take a look here', because some notices are coming out and so on. And I remember that this was at the beginning of January 2019, I had already taken all the entrance exams and in one night I did a lot of research and it was at that moment that I... I thought, I'm going to try. But I didn't believe it would be possible to do it. I didn't believe that I would... pass, I even thought I would make it with the grade I had. But coming here, studying, I... it seemed very impossible. So, at first it was a question, but... I really wanted to, I really wanted to pursue an academic career and I thought, gosh, outside of Brazil, I think I'll have more opportunities, more possibilities than in Brazil to develop this... this path and from the moment I... did I go? Oh, ok, I*

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<sup>23</sup> The National High School Exam (ENEM) is a test for Higher Education admissions in Brazil. It was created in 1998 to assess secondary education quality and later became a requirement for access to Brazilian public universities after the University for All Program (ProUni) was established in 2004. The exam is equivalent to the A Levels in the UK and is accepted in Portuguese universities as part of the admission process for Brazilian students in Higher Education.

*thought I had turned it off here, but no. From the moment it became a reality, it was a... It was like I was climbing steps like that, and I only believed it when I got on the plane and the plane took off. Because until that moment... during the preparation of those last months, it was... it was... it seemed like there was always a doubt, is it really real? Is it going to happen? Will I be able to go through this bureaucratic process and everything else that was, it's very... Very heavy, right, in bureaucracy at the beginning. But things went like this... they gradually took shape, and became reality, so I had a lot of expectations and I had a lot of frustrated expectations... Not because things didn't work out, but because sometimes the path was much more... full of ups and downs than I thought. We always have a tendency, you know, to imagine more linear paths. But it worked out, and the way it was, it was. But yeah, that's it. I think that as a teenager I had a lot... a lot of this desire to study abroad and being able to do that was... it was very powerful, so it was very... very special. For me and for my family [Daniel]”.*

In this experience, Daniel shares the impact of studying abroad and their dream of achieving the seemingly impossible, supported by encouragement. Despite facing bureaucratic and adaptation challenges, Daniel describes a transformative experience that profoundly affects their family's life. This narrative highlights the journey of an immigrant student navigating uncertainties in pursuit of a better future (Dutra & Ojha, 2016). As previously noted by several scholars (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Laenui, 2000; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010), engaging in dreaming is related to commitment, envisioning, and acting toward possibilities for the future. With that, I understand Daniel's dream to study abroad as a possibility for transformation (King et al., 2011), achieved through concrete actions such as navigating bureaucracy and overcoming the expectations of migrating to another country. That is, the transformation of the present circumstances of reality, as the dream allows, defies the present and fosters connection with a possible liberated future (Bell, 2018a; Huber, 2010; King et al., 2011).

In conversation with Manuela about dreams, they shared the following narrative:

*“The aspiration for the future is that people have freedom in their choices, in their relationships, in how they want to approach what they are studying. Yeah... I don't think so... And that it should be a scene, at least in the clinical area, which is my responsibility, a little more practical. Because I think it's super necessary... To get out of the bubble a little. Yeah...and go a little more towards reality...physical and verbal contact. Which is something that I think is a little lacking. It's in this whole country [Portugal], it's not just... But our area deals with that. Like...we are communication, so, like, I think that body, verbal... And physical communication...is still very much lacking here. And that's it [Manuela]”.*

The account reflects a dream of self-determination, emphasising the desire for racialised students to choose their study topics. Manuela envisions a future where individuals can pursue their educational interests, advocating for a more open academic environment and a broader understanding of knowledge.

Indigenous scholars describe self-determination as the struggle for historically marginalised people's recognition of their ways of knowing, experiences, histories and cosmologies (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). *“To get out of the bubble a little”* relates to Arday and Mirza's (2018, p. 326) argument that self-determination, agency, and collaborative actions are critical in decolonising knowledge production. This challenges the neoliberal Western Eurocentric curriculum for a diverse and plural academic landscape. Freire's teachings reinforce that dreaming of autonomy means rejecting the fear of freedom, an “indispensable condition for the quest for human completion” (2013, p. 47).

Bianca and Amanda shared dreams of equality in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology:

*“And understand how we are going to give the same opportunities to white people and black people so that they can get there. One day, they will become teachers, because I think that is the problem, the barriers that prevent people from reaching that...that*

*level. Uh...but I think it is...in this case, it is really about equal opportunities. Uh...having the opportunity to...from there, to be on the same level as the white Portuguese student, without having to make an additional effort to get there. So, basically, it would be equal treatment, equality...it is equal treatment in essence [Amanda]”.*

*“As soon as they have had the opportunity to study in a better school, anyway, then I think the aspirations are very positive, because they will have a reference of what kind of people can achieve, we can, right? Being anywhere, accessing any space and...being in Brazil I think that even with all the difficulties, the barriers, I think this is still more possible, because I think the movement is a little stronger there than here [Bianca]”.*

These narratives highlight the aspirations for a more equitable university. They reveal that Amanda and Bianca perceive their academic environment and psychology course as unequal, suggesting that a more egalitarian context is achievable. Amanda advocates for equal opportunities for all students and calls for removing barriers that hinder racialised communities from succeeding in Higher Education. Meanwhile, Bianca emphasises the importance of providing a high-quality education to help overcome these barriers, comparing the educational movements in Brazil, a former Portuguese colony. Previous research has highlighted the role of commitment and action towards change through human rights, social justice and equality policies (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Chilisa, 2019; Huber, 2010). Additionally, Watkins and Schulman (2010) point out that equality is fundamental to the collective struggles for liberation.

Therefore, these dreams relate to an invitation to renew academic practices that “recasts psychology as a productive and liberatory force” (Bell, 2018a, p. 19).

However, it is essential to highlight that Portugal has published a National Plan to Combat Racism and Discrimination (2021-2025) (Ordem dos Psicólogos, 2021). With the release of this national anti-racism strategy, the Portuguese

Psychologists' Order (OPP) has published a report offering scientific insights and recommendations to enhance the plan's effectiveness. This plan clarifies psychology's role in combating racism by promoting diversity and acknowledging the historical roots of racism, from institutional to internalised. While it outlines commitments to action and preventive measures for equality in Portugal, it does not fully address the deep-seated practices stemming from colonial legacies. Bianca and Amanda's vision for a more egalitarian psychology university in Portugal invites us to confront historical inequalities and strive for a collective movement towards a fairer society and institutions.

Dialoguing with Laura and Daniel, they shared similar accounts in aspiring for an academic career:

*“Um, I want to pursue an academic career. It's something I want, I want to do a doctorate too, and pursue a line of research, within psychology. I think it also involves finding my... finding my place in the world, because I think that when we leave a place in search of goals, well, I have this... I have a goal that keeps me in this place today [Daniel]”.*

*“Okay, I think that in the beginning, maybe, the dream was to follow a more academic path... really academic, right. To do, to get a doctorate... But anyway, Portugal, besides everything, right, besides what you said, the investment is very little, very little. And so, you know? And that's it, the dream gave way to... Ah, what do we have to do to be able to live, right, in a minimally dignified way, pay the bills and so on, along those lines [Laura]”.*

Daniel emphasises academic ambitions, linking the pursuit of a doctorate to personal growth. In discussing academic opportunities with Laura, they initially shared similar aspirations but also acknowledged having to adjust their dreams due to practical living concerns. Both narratives highlight academic aspirations, challenges, adaptation, and connections between educational goals and personal identity. I understand that this dream of an

individual career is also an aspiration to change the environment of Portuguese Higher Education. Researchers have demonstrated in previous studies a lack of presence, voice, and scholarship from marginalised and Indigenous communities in neoliberal Western Academia (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Chilisa, 2019; Kilomba, 2012, 2016). Then, I argue that the dreams of racialised students in pursuing an academic career are a response to the historical absence of other ways of knowing in these spaces, occupying Academia with their questions, and belonging to the landscape of Higher Education (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2022; Kilomba, 2012).

In summary, this section focused on understanding narratives related to students' concrete dreams in the context of the Portuguese Psychology University. This analysis added a first dimension to the subtheme, Tangible Dreams, under the theme of Personal Dreams. Participants in Portuguese psychology programs shared dreams that reflect a blend of tangible academic goals and broader aspirations for recognition and equality. Many focused on completing their studies and gaining professional qualifications, expressing determination despite challenges. Their aspirations often went beyond personal achievement, envisioning professional success and recognition within and outside Academia.

The pursuit of recognition was a common theme, with participants desiring acknowledgement of their skills and capacities, mainly as racialised individuals navigating an often exclusionary academic space. Participants aspired for recognition and dreamed of equality, hoping for equal opportunities and a more inclusive educational environment that did not

demand extra effort from marginalised students. For some, the dream of studying abroad represented personal transformation and overcoming bureaucratic barriers. These aspirations also involved a desire for self-determination, with students hoping for the freedom to choose their academic paths and make meaningful contributions to their fields. Collectively, their dreams highlight a quest for a more humanised and respectful educational experience. I understand these features relate to participants' perspectives on reconnection through tangible dreams. The following section focuses on the subtheme of collective dreams, starting with participants' accounts regarding dreams of pluriversality.

## 6.2 Collective Dreams

### 6.2.1 “A university, a multiple faculty, should start there...”- Dreams of Pluriversality.

Pluriversity offers an alternative to the ways of knowing, existing, and relating within the framework of modernity and Eurocentrism (Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016; Decolonial Psychology Editorial, 2021). Pluriversal approaches encourage engaging with a world where multiple ways of relating, existing, and knowing coexist (Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016). As pluriversality allows for the recognition of various knowledge systems, it is related to dreaming as a means to envision new, liberated ways of knowing and being (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

In addition, according to King et al. (2011, p. 208), dreams are “vivid experiences and vital statements about our aesthetic and spiritual realities, our internal psychological integration, intimate relations with others, and the social

worlds in which we live”. Furthermore, dreaming relates to pluriversality as a decolonial framework for undoing coloniality (Chilisa, 2019; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Watkins & Shulman, 2010; Decolonial Psychology Editorial, 2021). In other words, individuals and communities can challenge and dismantle colonial power structures by embracing diverse epistemologies and envisioning decolonised futures. Then, understanding the potential of pluriversality and dreaming in the classroom context relates to incorporating life-affirming and ancestral human practices in rethinking Academia (Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Dutra & Ojha, 2016; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; King et al., 2011).

Moreover, dreaming of pluriversality in the context of Higher Education regards the process of decolonisation as a call and promotion of the envisioning of a university in which learning and teaching encompass the incorporation of epistemic diversity and produce spaces for horizontal dialogues (Chilisa, 2019; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016).

Dreaming of a more plural, diverse and horizontal academic space is to envision the shift of a university to a pluriversity (Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016; Decolonial Psychology Editorial, 2021). This section focuses on narratives about research participants' dreams for a pluriversal university, a subtheme under the theme of collective dreaming.

In this first dialogue, Marcela shared scepticism about the idea of dreaming. However, Marcela engaged in dialogue and shared how they would envision a plural Portuguese psychology university:

*“Wow. I wish, I wish the university... I don't think it would be just for Portugal. But I believe...no, okay. Let's talk about Portugal. I wish... I don't know, I think it would have, I wish it was a... I wish it was a more...more human, more empathetic [psychology] course. I didn't want...I don't think anything. No, no, I'm not...interested in*

*equality. But I think it could be a more diverse space. It understood these diversities, you know? That it thought about...and that from there, it could reflect on its, its contents, its practices. It could adapt. I think that's not the beginning. Or it could be that way, but it's not the only thing, you know? I think that if you have a...university, a multidisciplinary college, it should start there, like... What are their needs? What are these kids discussing? [Marcela]”.*

For Marcela, dreaming of the future reveals a desire for educational reform that prioritises and centres the students. In this experience, Marcela shares the desire for humanised and empathetic psychology courses, suggesting a shift in the current approaches. Marcela desires that the universe acknowledge and incorporate other ways of knowing and emphasises the importance of including and addressing the students' demands and discussions. I respect and consider Marcela's wishes for the university: humanisation, empathy, and diversity. As observed by Mbembe (2016, p. 37), embracing the pluriversal ways of knowing does not equate to abandoning the universal idea of human knowledge; instead, it fosters an honest dialogue between distinct approaches to understanding. Empathy is a crucial tool to transform Higher Education into a humanised space, as it fosters dialogue and solidarity (Freire, 2013) in the process of validating historically marginalised ways of knowing (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021) and addressing alienation (Fanon, 2008; Kilomba, 2012; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Therefore, wishing for pluriversality is a call for compassion and epistemic justice in the face of ongoing dehumanisation created by racism, xenophobia, marginalisation, and other colonial legacies (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016) in the context of Portuguese Higher Education and psychology.

On the same topic of aspiring for a pluriversal psychology course, Daniel and Bianca shared their narratives:

*“And so, I come from a different background, because I studied in Brazil, and it was much more mixed, even though there were still few people. But here it's much more distant, so I feel that there are things that if you don't have that encouragement at home, it will be very difficult to achieve, you'll have to have a lot of desire that you don't see yourself in many places. And I think it's important that we have this opportunity to diversify psychology and its professionals, whether in academia or in healthcare settings, in healthcare centers, hospitals, schools [Bianca]”.*

*“I think it's a lot... From the moment we value diversity, I think we win, we only have to gain. I think we don't lose considering the diversity of thought, the diversity of culture, the diversity of... interpretation of facts. I think that when we have people who have different life stories, I think it's much more interesting, even from an academic point of view. And I don't see this as a disadvantage, I think it's a plus. It's... So, ideally, I would say, that a future... a more promising future, a more... A better future, so to speak, for psychology in Portugal, inevitably involves valuing diversity [Daniel]”.*

These accounts demonstrate similar dreams of pluriversality from the research participants who called for epistemic diversity in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. As conceptualised previously (Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016), epistemic diversity involves incorporating various perspectives to enhance knowledge and understanding. Epistemic diversity promotes a decolonial shift (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) as it includes multiple “anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial, and anti-imperialist proposals that offer different ways of confronting and resolving the problems produced by the sexual, racial, spiritual, linguistic, gender, and class power relations” (Ramón & Ernesto, 2016, p. 37) rooted in modernity/coloniality. With that, I understand that Bianca and Daniel's dream of “valuing” and “diversifying the psychology and its professionals” and “for a more promising

*future*” relates to a collective envisioning of psychology (Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010) in the context of Portuguese Academia and beyond. This shared aspiration for psychology to reconnect with a more accessible world, shared by Daniel and Bianca, is a dream for praxis in future psychology (Freire, 2013; Tynan, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

Dialoguing with Júlia, they shared their dreams for a psychology course in which integration becomes fundamental to teaching and learning:

*“So I feel this lack of integration, between classes, of one thing doing something for another class, you know, I don't know what. Which is something I saw inside my university, of the 2 I attended, the first one there, when I was 20 years old and now, which was like, man, you were here in the second year, but you knew that you were the guy in the fifth, you know? And exchanging ideas, so I think there is a lack of this promotion of integration between students, even to circulate ideas. There is a lack of validation that students can do a lot of things there, like, give them this space to elaborate, you know? [Júlia]”.*

In this narrative, Júlia illustrates aspirations for more integrative practices in the context of psychology courses. As previously noted in the literature (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016; Reyes, 2022) and discussed in chapter four, integration in Higher Education is crucial for racialised groups' attainment and professional progression. Freire, in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2013), affirms that integration can be an instrument of conformity with an ongoing oppressive system or the practice of liberation, inviting students to dream and participate in changing historically oppressive relationships and structures. Júlia's aspirations for integration emphasise the inclusion of historically marginalised students and their knowledge systems in Academia (Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016). This engagement represents a decolonial shift addressing colonial legacies (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo

& Walsh, 2018). Their dreams advocate for a commitment to incorporating Indigenous epistemologies into psychology without requiring assimilation to Eurocentric norms. This approach emphasises the significance of relationality, knowledge exchange, and the connection between humans and nature in shaping meaning and envisioning the future (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021).

In the dreams of a shift in psychology in Portuguese universities, the aspirations for diversity also relate to the presence of racially diverse faculty. Camila shared their aspirations on the inclusion of racialised people in the landscape of Portuguese Higher Education psychology:

*“Ah... more black people, right, in the classroom and more people, more black teachers in the classroom. I think that... and more autonomous teachers, because there's no point in having a black teacher and having him follow those guidelines without being able to... do anything. It's really about seeing yourself, seeing yourself from the other side. I think it's very important... this applies to all sectors of our lives, to have some... seeing black people there, on the other side is to show that it's accessible, that you can get there too. They'll try to tell you that it's not, but you can, right? It's not that it's going to be easy, but seeing others who have gotten there is very important. So I think having black teachers helps a lot [Camila]”.*

In dreaming of pluriversity in Portuguese Academia, Camila questions the absence of racialised people in Portuguese psychology courses. This account refers to a perception that seeing the university occupied by racialised people raises a sense of possibility. I understand that this aspiration for accessibility refers to a desire for equal access to opportunities. Previous research (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016; Reyes, 2022) indicates that equality policies in Higher Education are insufficient to overcome generations of oppression, including racial and epistemic superiority, as well as

the marginalisation of racialised individuals and their knowledge. Namely, making the university more accessible for historically marginalised groups does not create equity in the outcomes (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Reyes, 2022). In chapter four, I also analysed how representation discourses reinforce the status quo of colonial legacies and epistemic injustices. Camila's aspirations for a more racially diverse faculty in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology stress the importance of being able to teach with autonomy. In the tradition of Paulo Freire, autonomy is a condition for liberation (Freire, 1996, 2013). I understand that a dream of having autonomous, historically marginalised faculty in Portuguese psychology courses relates to reclaiming self-determination in revindicating the knowledge, languages, identities, and connection with the land that have been continuously erased by colonial legacies (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Therefore, this dream allows us to look back on past losses, but it also aims to reconnect the threads towards a future of rehumanisation in Higher Education settings.

I learned with Flávia and Maria that their dreams for a renovation of Portuguese psychology relate to embracing other ways of knowing:

*“Yeah...the dream, which I think is shared by all of us, is that...we can be recognised, uh...we black psychologists, as mental health professionals who bring a very specific perspective on this subject to psychology, uh... [amongst] European, Eurocentric, right? [Maria]”.*

*“Dream. Ah, I think that it's really about psychology that goes, that recognises, right? He recognises that there are other ways of living, of doing things, for example, in the clinic, right? That there is another way of communicating, right? And he recognises that this other way... is no less than the European one. Do you understand? It is no less than the European model. Neither less important, nor less effective, right? Nor less scientific, yes. It is no*

*less than anything. It is really different, it is of a different order and it is not useful, there is more. And then I will be more... [Flávia]*”.

Recognition and Openness. The shared aspiration among Maria and Flávia for a Portuguese psychology university is to recognise diverse ways of knowing alongside the Eurocentric canon. Maria advocates for acknowledging racialised perspectives in Europe, and Flávia calls for validating alternative psychological approaches as equally effective as current models. Maria and Flávia shared collective dreams “towards a decolonised practice that embraces ‘other ways of knowing’ and being for all ”(Arday & Mirza, 2018, p. 176). Indigenous scholars (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021) note that knowing otherwise ties to decolonisation by recovering cultural losses from colonial legacies. This perspective opens opportunities to reimagine Portuguese Higher Education in psychology, fostering new ideas and supporting diverse voices for a renewed future (Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

In this envisioned future of psychology, I learned with Daniel and Júlia that dialogues become fundamental to psychology teaching and learning:

*“I think it [dialogue] was an important component and I certainly think that maybe this is my big question, that maybe it should be more about the students, I don't know, but there should be more space for conversation, more space for discussion, more space for listening, sharing and hearing stories, experiences [Daniel]*”.

*“And to the point that, for example, in the curriculum you find things, information about... So these things that are much clearer about the issue of racism, prejudices and, etc., and xenophobia and... Colonisation itself could be discussed within psychology, you know? There could be a subject, there could be, I don't know, an optional one, since they don't want to put it in the curriculum, but something that is already included and doesn't exist, right? That doesn't exist, so... [Júlia]*”.

Conversation and debate. Daniel's experience stressed a need for a more dialogical and student-centred approach in psychology education, recognising the role of shared experiences and discussion in the learning process. On the other hand, Júlia's narrative highlights that the current psychology curriculum overlooks relevant topics such as racism, xenophobia, and colonialism, advocating for reform towards a comprehensive and humanised psychology curriculum. Daniel and Júlia emphasised their pluriversal aspirations for a psychology course where dialogue would be central to knowledge production in both narratives. If dialogue is a fundamental aspect of rehumanisation and conscientisation (Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010), dreaming of dialogue means a praxis of envisioning liberation in the face of continuous oppression (Chilisa, 2019; Fanon, 2004; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021).

Ultimately, a psychology classroom guided by the practice of dreaming is an academic space in which one can engage in dialogue about the colonial past of Portugal and its colonial legacies of denial, marginalisation and racialisation; one can engage in critical and liberating dialogue (Freire, 2013). Engagement in critical dialogue relates to the process in which the historically oppressed are deeply involved in liberatory action (Freire, 1996, 2013, 2016). Once critical dialogue occurs, collective dreams for reconnection—a world that accommodates many worlds — become possible (Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

In summary, this section aimed to understand narratives related to students' collective dreams within the context of the Portuguese Psychology University. This analysis added a first dimension to the subtheme, Dreams of Pluriversality,

under the theme of Collective Dreams. Participants' narratives in Portuguese psychology courses reveal aspirations for a pluriversal academic environment that embraces epistemic diversity, dialogical teaching, and recognition of other ways of knowing. They dream of humanised, empathetic spaces where diverse ways of knowing are recognised as equally valid, challenging Eurocentric norms. The desire for increased racialised faculty presence and adoption of student-centred, culturally relevant dialogue highlights a collective call for the decolonisation of knowledge. These aspirations reflect a yearning for a plural and humanised education that respects the experiences and contributions of racialised students. The following section focuses on the last subtheme of analysis, Utopic Dreams.

#### 6.2.2 “Communion...deep down, it's a desire we bring from our ancestors” – Utopic Dreams.

Utopic dreams refer to envisioning the dismantling of systems of oppression while creating collective commitment and action towards liberation (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Bell et al., 2019; Krawec, 2022; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). For Indigenous scholars, utopian dreams serve as a means to reconnect with ancestral knowledge in a project of reimagining futures, reasserting knowledge systems, and re-examining the experiences of historically oppressed communities (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Krawec, 2022; Smith, 2021). Additionally, Watkins and Shulman (2010) conceptualised utopic dreams as envisioning futures tied to psychological liberation practices of collective imagination in which oppressive systems like colonialism, racism, and classism no longer exist. Consequently, utopia is a guiding principle for the fight for freedom and justice, especially for oppressed

and marginalised people (Ramón & Ernesto, 2016; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). In Higher Education, utopian dreams involve reimagining a new university that breaks with a dominant Eurocentric framework to become a fertile ground for life guided by decolonial dreams of liberation (Bell et al., 2019). This final analytic section focuses on utopic dreams shared by the research participants, the last subtheme under the theme of collective dreaming.

Dialoguing about hopes for the future of Portuguese Higher Education psychology, Natália and Manuela shared their perspectives:

*“It’s... like... that... all together, as a society, we can have like... or share certain things in common. It’s...It’s... we can, understanding each one with particularity, but in a community, contribute communally among ourselves to achieve certain things that are of personal and collective benefit together. I see that... collective dreaming, I worked for a long time in... community in Chile and I think that... it’s a... collective dreaming is something that, well, society doesn’t allow. But we ourselves have to allow it. And... dreaming, collective dreaming, I think you can achieve, but instead of... Here I really missed it [Manuela]”.*

*“I think it’s when people have a common purpose. So, they have a common goal. Yeah...within this group. So, for example, when we say... Uh...when we talk about immigrants who are coming here, I think that in a way, it’s a collective dream. Everyone who comes here has a common goal, which is what? In a way, to improve their lives in some way, whether because you’re coming to look for a job or study, something like that. Everyone has this common goal, so everyone has a collective dream, even if they’re not people who interacted directly, they have this common goal, which is this purpose, right, to improve their lives, anyway. So I think I would define it that way [Natália]”.*

In these initial meetings, I learned from Manuela and Natália about their dreams for the future of Portuguese Academia and beyond, through the creation of a community. Communities are constructed based on commonalities, purposes, values and dreams (Watkins & Shulman, 2010). In the decolonial and Indigenous worldview, the community is a site of collectiveness in which ways of

knowing, lived experience and possibilities of historically marginalised groups are the centre (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Krawec, 2022; Martín-Baró, 1994; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Then, through Manuela and Natália's accounts, I comprehended that dreaming of a community relates to envisioning reconnecting with systems of knowledge that colonial legacies have suppressed. Establishing communities of utopic dreams is possible through engagement in critical dialogue (Watkins & Shulman, 2010). In this perspective, communities' utopic dreams became spaces for recentring the voices of historically marginalised people and recovering knowledge and collective accountability (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

In dialogue with Laura, Flávia and Marcela, they provided insights on envisioning collectiveness:

*“Dreaming collectively... First of all, it's understanding that no man is an island, right? That ultimate premise that no one... we don't, we don't make it alone, right? We need the collective, we need others. Well, I think that this is perhaps one of the biggest differences between us and other species, right. Of course, there are also others that live in groups and everything, in collectives, but a man has this great need for this exchange. Well, the subject really needs this exchange. And living in a collective, doing things in a collective, is thinking that I can share with other people [Laura]”.*

*“Well, things become much more powerful in a collective than individually. It has more strength. We can actually show the phenomenon, we can prove that... it makes it more tangible. This phenomenon. Yeah. I think that... I think that, in fact, I think that's the solution. I think that this issue of no one... remember that phrase... no one, how is it? No one walks alone, no one lives alone, no one... I even joke sometimes, oh but no one lives alone, no, but I was born alone. No, I wasn't born alone. No, I'm not, I'm the fruit of a... of a collective, I'm someone else too, right? I came... I'm only here because of someone else. And so I think that's the potential of, of this perception. That I am the other. I'm not alone. And then we come together, in this circle, right? In the circle we come together. We come together, we join hands and*

*we... I think it becomes much stronger, much more meaningful [Marcela]”.*

*“This thing about collective dreaming, spread out... not only in Latin America, but... but I think it comes a lot from the African context, right, from this community thing, right? Of how... that you live, you don't live... you can't live in isolation, that you always... You live in a community, right? That notion that children, they are not raised by their father, mother, they... They are raised by the entire village, right? They are everyone's responsibility, right? [Flávia]”.*

From these narratives, I understand that Laura, Marcela and Flavia's concepts of a collective dream share commonalities and allude to the ancestral practice of Ubuntu conviviality (Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Ubuntu is an African philosophy that emphasises the interconnectedness of all people and the importance of community, compassion, and mutual respect (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). In the dialogues with Laura, Marcela, and Flávia, I understood that *“no man is an island,” “we need the collective, we need others,” “that I am the other”, and “that notion that children are not raised by their father, mother, they... They are raised by the entire village”*. These ideas illustrated the envisioning of the ancestral relational practice of Ubuntu for the future of Portuguese Higher Education.

Ubuntu relationality is the core of humanisation (Chilisa, 2019; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). The worldview of Ubuntu centralises the notion *“I am because we are”*(Chilisa, 2019, p. 35; Kovach, 2021, p. 273) and *“We are who we are today because of you who came before us”* (Chilisa, 2019, p. 193). Engagement with Ubuntu practices can foster collaborative work, a sense of belonging, community, and consensus-building (Chilisa, 2019). Moreover, Ubuntu disrupts the Cartesian cut's colonial legacy, marking the racialised as irrational (Bell, 2022). In educational settings, Ubuntu relationality proposes a reconnection

with ancestral knowledge, in which the community prioritises harmony, relatedness, and responsibility towards others and the land (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Centring Ubuntu in the classroom relates to being guided by practices that resist marginalisation and hierarchising of experience and knowledge, which can create space for inclusiveness, integration, diversity, and respect (Chilisa, 2019), where humans can be human (Arday & Mirza, 2018). Therefore, I understand that utopic dreams inspired by Ubuntu are calls for reconnection through humanisation in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology.

In line with dreams of community creation and Ubuntu, Vitória shared how they envision collective dreams for the future of the Portuguese Psychology University:

*“Dreaming collectively... Maybe having a common goal. A space where people can meet. And...once again a metaphor came to mind. Where people can find their crowd. Their tribe. May that be...feeling respected. Feeling included. And valued. I think that people feeling valued and welcomed without that finger pointing...is very important [Vitória]”.*

Vitória's narrative suggests an approach to practising liberation in Portuguese Higher Education psychology spaces. A fundamental aspect of communities collectively working to resist legacies of oppression is the capacity to engage in communal dreaming (Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Communal dreaming contributes to the creation of alternative spaces for people's socialisation through “witness, dialogue, mourning, and the re-working of subjectivity, they can reimagine the diminishing and destructive limits they encounter in order to build a different social reality”(Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 207). Then, in Higher Education, communal dreaming creates inclusive, decolonised futures

that honour diverse knowledge and enable communities (Bell, 2018a; Bell et al., 2019; King et al., 2011; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Vitória's dream illustrates and echoes what other research participants shared about imagining a classroom as a privileged space to “dream new scripts and alternative ways of being in the world”(Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 47). In this new alternative, Academia has the potential to become a space of acceptance guided by relationality and community values. With that, I understand that these utopic dreams relate to envisioning a university that recognises the historical reality of dehumanisation and welcomes the continuous “struggle for humanisation, for the emancipation of labour, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons”(Freire, 2013, p. 44).

In sharing dreams for the future, Camila and Marcela brought their aspirations centred on valuing the historically marginalised communities:

*“So... I studied psychology because I am a pamphleteer. [laughs] And my, my wish for the future, I hope, on a personal level, that I can... yeah, I am still nothing. No, I don't understand anything. I am here studying, trying to be something. But I hope that I can, in fact, if I can be a clinical psychologist, that I can... yeah... bring, I can fulfill the role of bringing this social psychology into the clinic. I hope that I can collaborate in some way, contribute to... my patients, immigrants, especially my focus, my interest in immigrant women. And that I can, that we can... yeah... fulfill our political role as well, be a political space as well [Marcela]”.*

*“I wanted to have a project, open it, set it up... be financially secure enough to be able to set up projects in which I and other colleagues provide therapy to young people, young people in vulnerable situations, because if I had had therapy when I was... when I was 15 to 20, I would have done a lot of things differently. So I think that taking this to these young people helps a lot. Both in terms of birth control, crime, and other things, because we don't, no... In the favela<sup>24</sup> we live what we... we live what we live with, that is, we live with crime all the time, with young people fighting over... in relationships... Teenage pregnancy, yeah... we live with,*

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<sup>24</sup> Favela is a term for working-class neighborhoods in Brazil with high population density and inadequate government infrastructure and resources.

*we live with all this, so we think it's all very normal. When we get out of that context and start to see that wow, there are other options... it's a different life [Camila]”.*

Through these narratives, I learned about dreams that share the similarity of being infused with hopes for reciprocity. In envisioning a future where I work towards the community, collaborate, and contribute to a new horizon of possibilities, I learn from Camila and Marcela's dreams of giving back.

Reciprocity is a keystone in Indigenous and decolonial approaches (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Krawec, 2022; Martín-Baró, 1994; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Reciprocity, alongside mutuality, is the core of the Indigenous relational ethic framework (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). In other words, equal treatment and giving back are fundamental in relationships oriented by ancestral ways of knowing and being. Then, in dreaming of reciprocity, I understand that these accounts relate to hope as a practice of sharing knowledge with the community that has the potential to support the process of healing continuous colonial wounds and reconnecting with each other, nature, and the self.

Furthermore, Marcela and Camila's accounts envision reciprocity with historically marginalised communities: vulnerable people, immigrants, women, racialised people, and people experiencing poverty. This process relates to a central feature of searching for reciprocity: an intentional engagement of undoing the harm of coloniality towards the rehumanisation of historically marginalised communities (Chilisa, 2019). Through reciprocity with the community, mutual respect and responsibility guide the creation of atmospheres of connectedness (Chilisa, 2019). Reciprocity is concerned with creating and maintaining balance in relationships. Therefore, giving back is an “epistemic

touchstone of Indigenous methodologies” (Tynan, 2021, p. 2), a visible presence in the dreams for the future of the research participants.

In the following accounts, Laura and Bianca envisioned the liberation of Academia and psychology:

*“My wishes, I think... both personal and, as a person, as a psychology professional and, in general, I think it is... that the channels, right, of access to mental health, they are more popularised like this and that the people who really need them have easier access so that, through more projects like some that already exist here in Portugal, they can reach these people, you know? And that it becomes something that everyone has access to, because I think that half of the problems that people have are related to mental health issues and lack of resources for this [Bianca]”.*

*“Oh, I really, really wanted one, I think the word that sums it up... I really wanted academia, the university, psychology to be something more democratic. But not democratic in the liberal sense of the word, you know? It's not democracy... it's not democracy that we, right, it's not liberal political democracy, where the Game continues to be guided by the same people, we're just going to try to see who's the least bad. It's democratic in a literal way, you know? It should be a space where anyone can access it and anyone can feel represented and welcomed, and anyone can feel that their questions can be asked, right, where debates can be held. And that more people can access... Psychology services, because that's also a flaw, right, of ours, as a class. That, well, I understand that, right, no one is living off kisses and hugs, so obviously there is a commercialisation, right? There has to be, right, this issue of making psychology a business too, but that we have space for more than that. To make our profession even more respected, seen as more relevant and that people can reach and understand the power of doing beautiful, cool, serious, committed work in any aspect of psychology [Laura]”.*

In these accounts, Laura and Bianca shared their dreams for democratising the university and psychology. Laura envisioned Portuguese Academia as a “space where anyone can access it, and anyone can feel represented and welcomed, and anyone can feel that their questions can be asked, right, where debates can be held”. Bianca dreamed of psychology and mental health as “something

*that everyone has access to*". Previous works discussed the role of democratic psychology centring on the voices and experiences of marginalised, racialised and historically oppressed communities (Comas-Díaz & Rivera, 2020; Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero & Sonn, 2009; Todd, 2011; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). According to Watkins and Schulman, democratic psychology promotes "participation in public dialogue and the opening of spaces for hearing into difference and disagreement"(Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 131). In this context, Laura and Bianca envisioned a democratic Academia and psychology, sharing a utopian vision of psychology in Portugal that promotes egalitarian expression, mutual respect, dialogue, and the creation of community harmony (Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

Moreover, democratic psychology, both within and outside academia, upholds the disruption of systems of continuous oppression (Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Psychology practices guided by principles of democracy support faculty, students, and psychologists' engagement in participatory practices, critical dialogue, collaborative action and deep listening (Comas-Díaz & Rivera, 2020; Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero & Sonn, 2009; Todd, 2011; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Consequently, psychology has an increased potential to contribute to the understanding and promoting change at the individual, social, political, economic and educational levels (Watkins & Shulman, 2010). With Laura and Bianca, I learned that dreaming of the democratisation of psychology in the context of Portuguese Higher Education is to aspire to freedom. As Watkins and Shulman observe, engagement with liberatory practices "are rehearsals for democratic processes that, in many cases, are still utopian dreams" (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 264). I understand that envisioning the

democratisation of psychology involves teaching and practising in Portuguese Higher Education, which refers to a liberated praxis for psychology (Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). In this vision for the future, psychology practice in Portugal has the potential to support a diversity of perspectives, shifting power dynamics, and the enablement of historically marginalised communities. Then, psychology can become an instrument of transformation and reducing inequalities, committing to act towards the creation of “a working democratic space, hearing all of the voices present in order to allow a complexity of analysis to evolve that can birth a common vision” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 216).

In the set of utopic dreams, I learned that the dialogues with research participants propose liberation through critical consciousness. Amanda and Júlia's accounts illustrate dreams of freedom in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology:

*“And for a commitment to change in terms of making universities more inclusive, there needs to be an acknowledgement that racism exists. So, if it doesn't exist, it's because it's not a problem, so we don't have to... we don't have to solve it. And so, I think the biggest challenge is to figure out how we can raise people's awareness. Um... and so... now I don't know, I don't know how, I don't know what the solution is, but... but I think there it is, it involves being aware of these prejudices from the start [Amanda]”.*

*“I wish the university would change, maybe study again? But it won't... at another time. But, I would like to see new people coming in. I think there are some movements that are being made... Which is interesting. So, effectively, this awareness of racism, for example, awareness of the history of the colony, in the sense of, OK, it was a great feat to navigate, but man, there was something really bad along the way, you know? So it's this awareness and being open to studying this [Júlia]”.*

Amanda and Júlia shared aspirations for awareness to achieve transformation in these accounts. These dreams illustrate how change links with the rise of critical consciousness. In Freire's liberation pedagogy, *conscientização* refers to the process of recognising and challenging oppressive dynamics, thereby increasing critical consciousness concerning reality (Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Then, conscientisation is intertwined with liberation and fundamental to education as "conscientisation helps the learner to move toward a new awareness of relations of power, myths, and oppression"(Chilisa, 2019, p. 275). Through critical dialogue, people can see and acknowledge underlying and blatant marginalisation, oppression, and dehumanisation and engage in collective action (Freire, 2013).

In addition, conscientisation is essential for comprehending the psychological and socio-political wounds created by oppression and for enabling spaces for critical reflection on lived experiences in the face of marginalisation (Cervantes et al., 2021; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). As described by Watkins and Schulman, conscientisation enables critical dialogue, which supports marginalised groups in finding their voices, opening their eyes, and committing to action in changing the social structures of continuous disenfranchisement, exclusion, and separatism (Watkins & Sc. For Baró:

*"..conscientisation supposes that persons change in the process of changing their relations with the surrounding environment and, above all, with other people. No knowledge can be true if it has not attached itself to the task of transforming reality, but the transformative process requires an involvement in the process of transforming human relationships (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 41)".*

Therefore, envisioning conscientisation calls for critical dialogue and reflection on the engagement in practices of collective liberation, supporting people committed to transforming oppressive realities.

Ultimately, utopian dreams of conscientisation align with the unfinished project (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) of decolonising the university (Bell et al., 2019; Bhabra et al., 2018; Gopal, 2021; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016). Decolonising the university involves engaging in a project that aims to foster critical consciousness and recognise the echoes of coloniality, from the individual to the social and political levels of human experience (Fanon, 2008; Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994). Additionally, the enablement of conscientisation is crucial in recognising, resisting and undoing colonial legacies (Chilisa, 2019; Laenui, 2000; Smith, 2021). With that, conscientisation can be a bridge towards liberation as it supports historically marginalised communities in reconnecting with ancestral ways of knowing, being, and relating, continuously eradicated by colonial ways of thinking (Chilisa, 2019; Fanon, 2008; Freire, 2013; Kovach, 2021; Martín-Baró, 1994; Smith, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Therefore, by witnessing the utopian dreams of the research participants, I learned about their visions of liberation and yearning for alternative ways of knowing, being, and relating, within the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology and beyond.

In summary, this section focused on narratives related to students' collective dreams in the context of the Portuguese Psychology University. This analysis added the last dimension, Utopic Dreams, under the theme of Collective Dreams. Participants' narratives about utopic dreams in Portuguese psychology courses reflect aspirations for dismantling oppressive systems and fostering

liberation through collective action. These dreams focus on creating communities centred on shared values and knowledge inspired by the ancestral philosophy of Ubuntu. They envision a university guided by empathy, reciprocity, and respect for diverse ways of knowing and learning.

Participants also dream of democratising education and advocating for accessible mental health services and psychological practices that challenge current Eurocentric structures. Central to these utopian dreams is the pursuit of critical consciousness and collective liberation, emphasising the need for educational environments that prioritise the rise of conscientisation, rehumanisation, and mutual respect. The next chapter summarises findings relating to the *testimonios* and dreams of research participants. Then, it further discusses the research's (in)conclusions and suggests continuous work.

## Chapter 7: Discussion & Conclusion

### 7.1 So, is there racism in Portuguese Higher Education after all?

In July 2022, I presented my research at an international conference in Lisbon, Portugal. Titled "Denial, Lived Experiences, and Dreaming: Understanding Narratives on Coloniality, Racism, and Liberation in Portuguese Higher Education Psychology," my work examined colonial legacies and the experiences of racialised students. This was a significant moment in my first year of doctoral studies, and I felt a mix of apprehension and excitement when I presented my findings.

Upon arriving at the conference hotel, I felt out of place. Presenting in front of an audience with such diverse backgrounds and varying relationships with Academia can be anxiety-inducing. Although I generally have confidence in giving academic presentations, I have not felt welcomed in this space since the beginning. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, academics presented their work in a hybrid format—online or face-to-face. Like everyone else, I had fifteen minutes to present my work, and I managed to do so without any challenges. Other speakers received numerous questions from members of both the in-person and online audiences throughout their presentations. However, in my case, I had just one question: *"Why did I choose this theme?"*

At that moment, I sensed a shift in the atmosphere. The event had two main organisers: a professor from India and a professor from Portugal. The first professor looked at me, approving of my presentation. The second professor inquired about my motivations for exploring the lived experiences of racialised students in Portuguese psychology courses. He wanted to understand why I

was focusing on the issue of racism. Both reactions highlight the significance of this study. On the one hand, it shows that we are actively discussing this important matter. The other is *why* we are talking about it.

I shared my perspective on the importance of discussing race and racism in Portuguese Higher Education based on my experiences and existing literature. I noticed that the Portuguese professor seemed unconvinced. In the end, both professors announced the best oral communication prize, which went to a researcher for a method to clean psychotropic substances from urban rivers. Surprisingly, they also awarded me the same recognition for my work, leaving me with a sense of accomplishment and curiosity: *Was it sincere recognition of the research problem?*

After the presentations, the Portuguese professor approached me to congratulate me on my work and emphasise its recognition. For a moment, I felt reassured. Although I appreciated his compliments, it quickly turned into an unsolicited lecture. He insisted that racism in Portuguese Academia was in the past and confidently claimed that the results of my interviews would support his view that only isolated incidents existed in Portuguese universities. After collecting data, he expected me to contact him, believing I would confirm his perspective that racism is not a problem in Portuguese Academia. This personal account supports the discussion and conclusions section of this inquiry. I view it as a narrative that highlights the ongoing efforts of racialised individuals to understand and articulate their lived experiences in Higher Education while also navigating the power dynamics and surveillance present in Academia (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Kilomba, 2012).

This doctoral inquiry aimed to understand the lived experiences of Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous students within the context of psychology programs in Portuguese Higher Education. Using decolonial methodologies, *Testimonios* and social dreaming, I engaged in dialogues with 12 research participants who shared their experiences concerning relationships with academic spaces, faculty, peers and staff psychology courses in Portugal. In the analytical chapters titled "Connection," "Disconnection," and "Reconnection," I applied a relational approach to thematic analysis to identify themes and interpret patterns in the participants' accounts. This approach aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences, feelings, and thoughts of racialised students within the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology.

This chapter consists of six sections. In section 7.1.1, I summarise the introduction, literature review, and methodology. In section 7.2, I discuss the relevant findings and the research's contributions. Following that, in section 7.3, I focus on recommendations. In section 7.4, I address the study's strengths and limitations. In section 7.5, I present conclusions and insights on the data. Finally, in section 7.6, I share my final thoughts on conducting this research.

#### 7.1.1 Thesis Summary

In the introduction, I outlined how the colonial legacies of racism and oppression intersect with Academia and precisely how the denial of racism perpetuates these legacies. Using the anecdote of a “mosquito falling into milk” recounted by my grandmother, Cidinha Aparecida, I introduced the historical context of Portuguese Academia. I presented the problem statement and discussed Luso-

tropicalism and its relationship with education, denial, and identity in Portugal. This provided historical context, defined the aims, articulated the research problem, and established the research questions, as well as the decolonial framework of this research. This study aimed to explore the *testimonios and* dreams of racialised students in Portuguese psychology Higher Education. It is research shaped by decolonial research paradigms, emphasising relational practices and dialogue. The research focused on the following questions: What are the experiences of racialised students in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology? What hopes, dreams, and aspirations do they have for the university's future?

In the literature review, I engaged with the decolonial and Indigenous approaches, as they emphasise relationality—the interconnectedness of people, land, and knowledge. This perspective challenges the hierarchical knowledge systems prevalent in Western universities. It advocates for reconnection, addresses dehumanisation, and highlights the importance of emotions such as anger, gratitude, and joy in decolonising academic spaces.

In the methodology section, I explored the impact of colonialism on knowledge production, highlighting how marginalisation systematically affects Indigenous and racialised groups. I delved into the details of *testimonios* and social dreaming as counter-narratives to Eurocentric knowledge. This approach invites participants to share personal stories and envision decolonised futures within Portuguese psychology. Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant Psychology students participated in individual online interviews to share their experiences. Reflexivity, which combines intersectionality and positionality, guided the ethical approach to engaging with these experiences. The following section will discuss

the relationship between the findings in the analytical chapters, the research questions, and the broader theoretical framework.

## 7.2 Discussion

To understand the lived experiences of racialised students in Portuguese Higher Education, I analysed the participants' *testimonios* and aspirations using thematic coding. Initially, I organised the data by creating a map based on the experiences, contextual descriptions, and dreams shared by the participants (see Appendix 7). Subsequently, I categorised the codes into three overarching themes: Connection, Disconnection, and Reconnection. These themes guided my analysis of the participants' narratives, providing insight into their experiences within Portuguese Higher Education, particularly in psychology. Through these categories, I explored how students navigated academic spaces, faced marginalisation, and envisioned opportunities for rehumanising and transforming these environments.

In this research, the *testimonios* and dreams of racialised students were not just personal narratives; they provided a broader understanding of relationships within Portuguese university psychology courses. Through the accounts, I analysed themes concerning connections between students and various institutional actors—such as faculty, peers, and staff—and the ongoing disconnections caused by systemic marginalisation and oppression. By exploring the participants' dreams, the study also uncovered their hopes and aspirations for reconnection, envisioning academic spaces that are more pluriversal and rehumanising, not only for themselves but also for their wider communities.

The *testimonios* and dreams shared by research participants helped illuminate six main themes: Belonging, Zones of Possibility, Otherness, Zones of Absence, Tangible Dreams, and Collective Dream Spaces in Portugal. This study focused on the participants' lived experiences, prioritising the exploration of nuances in “subjective meaning and essences” (Glesne, 2016, p. 20) found in a multiplicity of experiences. Participants shared their struggles and resilience, exploring their dreams to uncover common challenges and opportunities for change. The research aimed to foster a decolonial understanding of these experiences by integrating these approaches.

The findings emphasise how colonial legacies—such as epistemic hierarchies, racialisation, and Eurocentrism—create disconnection within Portuguese Higher Education psychology. Participants' *testimonios* reveal experiences of alienation, exclusion, and marginalisation stemming from systemic racism, xenophobia, and linguistic oppression. Institutional, relational, linguistic, and pedagogical practices uphold Eurocentric standards in knowledge production, actively perpetuating these forms of disenfranchisement and continuing to exclude racialised students from academic spaces. The findings reveal that students with multiple intersectional identities—such as Black, Brown, Immigrant, and Indigenous—feel more disconnected from the dominant Portuguese academic culture. This supports the argument made by scholars such as Kilomba (2012), Gopal (2021), Collins (1998), Grosfoguel (2016), Tate (2017), Bhabra (2018), Mbembe (2016), and Bell et al. (2019) who argue that colonial legacies continue to influence academic structures, social relations and knowledge production.

This study's results suggest that the dynamics of connection and disconnection within Portuguese academic spaces are reflections of a colonial power structure that marginalises the bodies, languages, and knowledge systems of Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous students. For instance, participants shared experiences that highlight the imposition of European Portuguese, perceptions of epistemic superiority, and the denial of racism, all of which suggest a deliberate reinforcement of colonial hierarchies. This aligns with previous research (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Collins, 1998; Kilomba, 2012; Reyes, 2022), arguing for the silencing of marginalised voices within dominant academic structures. The colonial influence on connections is not merely a result of systemic exclusion; it acts as an active force perpetuating Eurocentrism in Portuguese Academia. These findings contribute to the growing body of work that challenges the notion of neutrality in academic spaces and underscores the urgent need for decolonial interventions, as highlighted by scholars such as Bell (2022), Kilomba (2012), Gopal (2021), Grosfoguel (2016), Bhabra (2018), and Mbembe (2016).

This study describes reconnection as a deliberate and active process through which psychology students in Portuguese Higher Education re-engage with their identities and collective histories. This re-engagement follows experiences of disconnection rooted in colonial legacies. Reconnection encompasses more than just a sense of belonging; it focuses on reclaiming voices, embracing alternative ways of knowing and envisioning new academic spaces. The chapter on "Reconnection" illustrates how students shared personal narratives (*testimonios*) and dreams to build reimagined, collective, and pluriversal academic spaces. This approach challenges dominant Eurocentric frameworks

and promotes the development of alternative forms of knowledge within Portuguese Psychology Higher Education. In this context, reconnection is a decolonial practice where students seek to reclaim knowledge and identity marginalised by colonial educational structures. This process involves building solidarity among marginalised students, humanising academic spaces, and advocating epistemic justice. These findings contribute to decolonisation by highlighting how colonial legacies create disconnections in Academia and how reconnection practices foster relational, knowledge-based, and transformative academic spaces.

In contrast, addressing the counterarguments related to conducting decolonial research within neoliberal Western universities is essential. Scholars such as Maldonado-Torres (2020), Mignolo (2018), and Smith (2021) have discussed the issues of epistemic exclusion and institutional resistance, highlighting the significant challenges of applying decolonial methodologies in Western academic contexts. These challenges arise from the deeply rooted Eurocentric norms that historically dominate Western Academia, prioritising Western rationality and scientific methods over alternative, non-Western epistemologies. Consequently, the research approaches used in this study—centred on social dreaming and *testimonios*—may be critiqued as irrational and unscientific ways of understanding students' experiences in Portuguese psychology Academia.

In addition, scholars such as Grada Kilomba (2012) and Mignolo (2018) assert that resistance to decolonial approaches in Western academic institutions is passive and an active defence. There is scepticism about the role of decolonial methodologies in supposedly "neutral" academic spaces. These methodologies are often perceived as political and activist, which can conflict with the

presumed objectivity of Western research standards. Mignolo (2018) proposes the concept of "epistemic disobedience" to challenge oppressive structures and foster new forms of knowledge production outside of Eurocentric models.

Furthermore, in the case of psychology, Baró (1994) and Watkins and Shulman (2010) argue that the field is inherently political. They emphasise the importance of engaging with issues of oppression and striving for both individual and social liberation. This approach, which focuses on community-based research and engagement with Indigenous and marginalised communities through practices like *testimonios* and social dreaming, offers a vital pathway toward the unfinished work of decolonisation, despite the critiques these methods face in Western academic circles. *Testimonios* and dreams from racialised students provided insights into their educational experiences.

Organised by themes, these narratives addressed the research questions, focusing on the experiences and dreams of Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. The following section focuses on how the research has responded to the research questions.

#### 7.2.1 What are the experiences of racialised students in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology?

Participants shared *testimonios* about their experiences in Portuguese psychology courses, discussing "collective experiences, political injustices, and human rights struggles" (Huber & Villanueva, 2019, p. 2), highlighting both their challenges and resilience. Mainstream knowledge production and teaching practices in Academia often overlook individual and collective struggles.

*Testimonio* provides an approach that can address the disregard for the experiences of marginalised individuals. In analysing and understanding these

*testimonios*, my role was to interpret the codes and themes, situating their relevance to the research questions (Byrne, 2022). This section focuses on how the participants' experiences respond to the research question: "What are the experiences of racialised students in the context of Portuguese Higher Education in psychology?"

Firstly, the section "Otherness" in the fifth chapter, "Disconnection," examined the experiences of racialised students navigating environments influenced by colonial legacies of racism and xenophobia. These students face marginalisation and social exclusion from peers, faculty, and staff. Their *testimonios* highlight personal encounters with racism, classism, and xenophobia, revealing a broader collective experience. Previous research has shown that racialised individuals in Academia often experience feelings of marginalisation and inferiority (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Carmona & Luciano, 2014; Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Huber, 2010; Kilomba, 2012; Reyes, 2022; Rosiles, 2018). Ultimately, these individual challenges connect to broader systemic practices of exclusion in Academia.

The section on Language and Oppression, featuring individual *testimonios*, highlights the crucial role of language in sustaining a collective struggle within Portuguese Higher Education psychology. Personal experiences of linguistic prejudice and the suppression of native dialects reveal a widespread challenge against epistemic violence. Participants' *testimonios* illustrated how the European variant of Portuguese is imposed in psychology classrooms, which erodes the diverse cultural and linguistic identities of racialised students. Specifically, experiences of language correction and the enforcement of standardised European Portuguese create a collective struggle that

marginalises and disconnects these students from their cultural heritage.

Previous research has highlighted this issue (Ambrósio et al., 2019; Araújo, 2007, 2018; Nada & Araújo, 2019; Oliveira, 2013; Pires, 2000). This process can be seen as fostering the alienation of racialised students from their knowledge systems, thereby reinforcing colonial power within Portuguese academic structures.

Another insight highlights how the experiences of racialised students reveal systemic discrimination and inequality. The sections "Disabling Spaces" and "Racist and Xenophobic Academia" in Chapter Five, "Disconnection," show that the exclusion of these students leads to silencing and perceived discrimination. Individual *testimonios* reflected a collective experience of navigating a university environment that is predominantly "white," where knowledge production is centred on Eurocentrism, limiting the recognition of knowledge from historically marginalised communities. As demonstrated in previous research (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Collins, 1998; Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Kilomba, 2012, 2021), Academia functions as a "white space," marginalising individuals and perpetuating a system that continuously suppresses the experiences of the racialised Other. This contributes to feelings of exclusion and inferiority. Overall, these systemic inequalities highlight a lack of alternative ways of knowing, thereby reinforcing the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge.

Nevertheless, the research participants' *testimonios* highlighted systematic patterns of racism denial in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. Similar to previous studies that discuss Luso-tropical beliefs (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Almeida & Corkill, 2015; Araújo, 2007, 2018; Castelo, 2011; Maeso & Araújo, 2010), students' narratives illustrated the

colonial legacy of racism denial, which is rooted in the ideology of Luso-tropicalism. This ideology continuously portrays Portugal's relationship with colonisation as benevolent and inclusive. Participants' *testimonios* emphasised how this denial manifests itself. By dismissing structural racism and reinforcing myths of racial harmony, the denial of racism in Portuguese Academia acts as a subtle enforcement of racial inequality and disenfranchisement.

Finally, students' *testimonios* on racism denial highlighted their experiences with the ongoing challenge of having their voices heard. As observed in previous studies (Agra Figueiredo et al., 2021; Araújo, 2018; Cabecinhas & Macedo, 2019; Maeso & Araújo, 2010), the denial of racism reveals a systematic pattern within Academia that refuses to address the colonial legacies perpetuating racism, xenophobia, and classism in Portuguese universities. This denial serves to maintain the status quo of racial power in Higher Education, restricting access, agency, and the humanisation of individuals in academic spaces.

Another relevant insight provided by participants' *testimonios* relates to the pathways of change revealed through their experiences. The theme "Zone of Possibility" in the fourth chapter, titled "Connection," focuses on how participants described their resistance to and navigation of systemic barriers within psychology courses in Portugal. Similar to findings in previous studies (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2018a, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Dutta & Atallah, 2023; Dutta et al., 2022; Reyes, 2022), racialised students highlighted the importance of collaboration, mutual respect, humanisation, and dialogue in navigating the frontiers of environments shaped by colonial legacies.

In the fourth chapter, titled "Connection," the theme of Belonging explores how the patterns of change revealed in *testimonios* indicate a shift towards an

academic environment centred on pluriversality, relational accountability, and self-determination (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021) regarding students' integration experiences. It highlights the crucial role of relational practices, mutual respect, and humanisation by faculty, staff, and peers in valuing the presence of racialised students at the university. The change pathways described in these *testimonios* emphasise that relationships are central to fostering mutual respect and coexistence, positively impacting the personal and academic development of racialised students. This serves as an invitation to reimagine the psychology classroom as a space for discussing individual and collective liberation struggles (Bell, 2018a, 2022; hooks, 1989; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Thus, practices that nurture a sense of belonging among racialised students can combat the effects of colonial legacies and promote social change within academic settings.

Furthermore, exploring the concept of integration from a decolonial perspective, I discuss this process on three levels. First, promoting the integration of racialised students requires a genuine commitment and active efforts to create a psychology classroom that is welcoming, respectful, and accountable. In this context, integration involves creating an environment where individuals' presence and knowledge systems are valued (Martín-Baró, 1994; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Tynan, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Second, integration can serve as a tool to enhance cultural awareness and sensitivity. It invites individuals to appreciate different ways of being, knowing, and relating to one another. In this sense, integration becomes “an opportunity to learn from the universe of knowledge humans have created” (Bell, 2022, p. 6). Finally, integration grounded in dialogue and conscientisation (Freire, 2013) has the

potential to counteract exclusion and alienation (Fanon, 2008) resulting from colonial legacies. Through decolonial approaches, integration can foster inviting spaces where individuals experience reciprocity, mutual trust, and rehumanisation (Freire, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994; Tynan, 2021).

Considering these insights, it is clear that various forms of colonial legacies have shaped the experiences of research participants within the context of Portuguese Higher Education. As discussed in Chapter Five, "Disconnection," the *testimonios* from academic spaces illustrate a persistent separation in Portuguese Higher Education psychology classrooms. These *testimonios* show how hierarchies, otherness, and Eurocentrism contribute to an academic atmosphere marked by absence. Absence of racialised people. Absence of alternative knowledge. An absence that renders the classroom a disabling space for the racialised Other, as it prioritises a Eurocentric curriculum and ways of relating guided by racism and xenophobia.

Another significant result concerns how the research participants perceive and experience otherness in four different ways in the context of Portuguese Higher Education psychology courses:

1. Participants' *testimonios* reveal experiences of racism, xenophobia, classism, and linguistic discrimination. First, these issues are often conveyed verbally and reflect experiences that lead to exclusion. Second, participants report overlapping experiences of discrimination based on skin colour, ethnicity, and nationality. Lastly, in Portugal, those targeted by racism due to their skin colour are frequently labelled "*estrangeiro*" (foreigner), as national identity is often associated with being White.

2. The *testimonios* reveal critical aspects of experiencing otherness, notably through marginalisation and feelings of inferiority. In Higher Education, marginalisation often manifests as exclusionary practices that push racialised individuals to the margins of knowledge production, while their ways of knowing are frequently deemed inferior. These dynamics lead to a perception of irrelevance in the knowledge and experiences of racialised students. Consequently, this can create an inferiority complex and result in negative impacts on mental health, well-being, and academic engagement, perpetuating exclusion and undermining their potential.
  
3. Participants express a third form of otherness through language. The *testimonios* highlight how language serves as a tool of oppression. The dominant European version of Portuguese imposes itself on students, marginalising their knowledge and identities, and enforcing this variant as the academic standard, rendering other dialects inferior. This linguistic oppression negatively affects academic evaluations, interactions, and self-expression, functioning as a form of epistemic violence that reinforces a colonial legacy. Racialised students and their cultures face alienation, as the correction of their Portuguese variants aligns them with a standardised European version, creating a hierarchy that positions them as linguistically inferior. Such practices, as Spivak's (2023) concept of subalternity suggests, deny these students their linguistic agency and ability to express their experiences and aspirations within the academic environment.

4. The final aspect of otherness relates to participants' *testimonios* about racism denial. This denial refuses to acknowledge racism as a systemic oppression rooted in historical power structures from colonisation, slavery, and the erasure of Indigenous communities. In academic settings, denying racism reinforces discriminatory practices and dehumanises racialised students. The myth of Luso-tropicalism, which promotes false racial harmony, serves as a colonial legacy that invalidates the real experiences of racial injustice within Portuguese universities and society. These *testimonios* reveal how denial sustains racial power structures, making discussions about race and racism particularly challenging.

The discussion of the results relates to the findings in the fourth chapter, "Connection," which focuses on two main themes: Zones of Possibility and Belonging. I approach these *testimonios* cautiously, acknowledging that psychology courses in Portuguese Higher Education often lack pedagogical and relational approaches associated with liberation practices, such as dialogue, conscientisation, and collaboration. The subthemes primarily describe positive relationships within Western neoliberal universities. Participants in the Zones of Possibility section portray psychology courses as supportive spaces for multiculturalism. However, as noted in prior research (Araújo, 2018; Maeso & Araújo, 2010), multiculturalism and interculturality can obscure deeper issues, masking Portugal's colonial history and the realities of racism.

In Belonging, research participants shared experiences of feeling integrated and supported through fair and inclusive treatment. However, these participants' accounts reflect a subtle minimisation of the persistent impacts of oppression

experienced by racialised students, suggesting nuanced layers within their shared experiences. These narratives have the potential to highlight experiences of assimilation, which can serve as a form of depoliticisation concerning issues of racism and xenophobia. Previous research (Araújo, 2018; Maeso & Araújo, 2010) has described this assimilation as the process whereby the racialised individual conforms to European ways of understanding and being, striving to align with the myth of the "good migrant," which falsely promises academic success. I approach these *testimonios* cautiously, acknowledging the participants' interpretations of their realities, particularly how positive experiences often correlate with contexts of fair treatment and opportunities. In analysing these accounts, I remain committed to reciprocity and respect, ensuring that participants' chosen narratives are honoured and valued.

This section reviewed how the *testimonios* addressed the first research question about experiences in Portuguese Higher Education psychology courses. I revisited Chapters 4 (Connection) and 5 (Disconnection) to illustrate how these *testimonios* responded on multiple levels, concluding with key findings and unexpected results. The following section will explore how these findings connect to participants' dreams and aspirations from Chapter 6.

#### 7.2.2 What are the hopes, dreams and aspirations for the university's future?

During the research encounters, participants shared their experiences of oppression in Portuguese Higher Education while expressing their dreams and aspirations for a more humanised future (Huber & Villanueva, 2019). Dreaming as a shared practice has the potential to challenge colonial legacies, reconnect

people with ancestral ways of knowing and relating, and facilitate healing through storytelling (Chilisa, 2019; Dutra & Ojha, 2016; King et al., 2011; Lawrence, 2018; Nirmal & Dey, 2022; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Analysing participants' *testimonios* with their dreams reveals challenges and allows for envisioning change, as “dreaming the world otherwise becomes possible” (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 196). This section focuses on how the participants' experiences addressed the research question: What are the hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the university's future?

Firstly, the research participants' dreams and aspirations varied from individual, concrete goals to more expansive, collective visions. I categorised these aspirations into three levels: collective insights, cultural reconnection, and pathways for change. At the collective level, participants shared their hopes through the theme of Personal Dreams in Chapter Six, Reconnection. They expressed a desire to complete their degrees and pursue careers in psychology despite facing systemic racism and oppression within academic environments. Their personal goals represented not only individual success but also a form of resistance to the barriers in Academia.

For instance, research has shown that racialised students in Portuguese universities often face ongoing financial challenges, discrimination, and issues related to belonging (Doutor et al., 2018; Jardim, 2013; Oliveira, 2013; Pires, 2000; Semedo, 2010; Vinagre, 2017). This insight underscores how these students' aspirations reflect their desire to complete their studies, secure professional opportunities, and confront the enduring colonial legacies within Portugal's academic landscape. In Chapter Six, "Reconnection," the theme of Collective Dreams focuses on various approaches to knowledge in psychology

courses in Portugal. Participants envision a university that embraces multiple ways of knowing to transform Academia and challenge traditional Eurocentric perspectives in Western neoliberal universities. Research has highlighted the role of pluriversality in fostering institutional change in Higher Education (Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; King et al., 2011). Participants' shared dreams relate to a desire to integrate diverse epistemologies into the classroom and cultivate empathy-based relationships.

Furthermore, the participants' dreams and aspirations ranged from individual, tangible goals to broader, collective, and utopian visions. Reflecting on their experiences in Portuguese Higher Education psychology, these dreams provided insights on three levels: reconnection with cultural identity, community understanding, and pathways for change:

1. Participants initially shared personal goals, such as completing their degrees and pursuing careers as psychologists, despite systemic barriers like racism and oppression. They also sought to reconnect with their racial and cultural identities, aiming for respect and inclusivity in Eurocentric academic environments. At a collective level, they envisioned spaces that value diverse voices and challenge Eurocentric traditions to decolonise education. Previous research (Bell, 2018a, 2022; Freire, 2013; Gopal, 2021; hooks, 2014; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; King et al., 2011; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016; Reyes, 2022; Tate & Bagguley, 2017) highlights that diverse educational settings guided by liberation practices can address historical oppression and inequality. These visions indicate a reimagined future for Portuguese Higher Education in psychology that honours the

cultural identities of racialised students and promotes liberation within academic spaces.

2. Concerning community understanding, reimagining an academic space through decolonial dreams involves prioritising the lived experiences and aspirations of the historically oppressed in the classroom (Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016). It also relates to the decolonial process of reconnecting with ancestral ways of knowing and cultures displaced by colonial legacies (Chilisa, 2019; Laenui, 2000). Additionally, it emphasises establishing relationships based on belonging, collectiveness, and mutual respect rather than individualism and separation (Chilisa, 2019; Tynan, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Ultimately, envisioning an academic space guided by community values means dreaming of a "utopian New University unconstrained by the dream killer that is the current university" (Bell et al., 2019, p. 852).
3. In the final level, participants discussed pathways towards change by sharing their visions for the ongoing project (Maldonado-Torres, 2020) of decolonising Academia. Their dreams reflected a desire for a psychology classroom that incorporates a variety of voices in the curriculum and promotes diverse participation in academic spaces. They envisioned transforming the Eurocentric canon by embracing marginalised ways of knowing, fostering mutual respect, and promoting horizontality. As noted in the literature (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell, 2018a, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Bhambra et al., 2018; Dutta & Atallah, 2023; Dutta et al., 2022; Gopal, 2021; Joseph Mbembe,

2016; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016), dismantling Eurocentrism and embracing diverse approaches to knowledge are integral to the broader movement of decolonising Higher Education. Therefore, the dreams expressed by participants are potential aspirations for liberation and transformation in Portugal's future of Higher Education.

These dreams highlight critical pathways for change and the decolonisation of Academia, that is:

- a) Change involves embracing epistemic diversity by reclaiming non-Eurocentric ways of knowing, such as storytelling, relationality, dialogue, and Ubuntu practices. These approaches challenge the colonial legacies embedded in Western neoliberal universities.
- b) This change emphasises the creation of horizontal, humanised academic spaces that celebrate dialogue across diverse knowledge traditions. Such an approach can reshape classroom dynamics by fostering reciprocity, accountability, and mutual respect among faculty, students, and staff.
- c) Change entails integrating the experiences and knowledge of historically marginalised communities as central to teaching and learning. This allows for a more contextualised understanding of reality.
- d) Change also involves continuously addressing structural inequalities within Academia. By fostering opportunities to recognise and confront the structural barriers that perpetuate racism, oppression, and epistemic injustice, people can work towards a more equitable Higher Education system.

- e) Ultimately, promoting critical and liberatory education in psychology classrooms is crucial for effecting change. Education can be a powerful tool for liberation, as conscientisation encourages the creation and cultivation of humanised teaching and learning environments (Freire, 2013). These key features highlight the collective dreams of research participants and suggest strategies for decolonising Academia.

Martín-Baró (1994) envisioned a psychology that addresses the impacts of racism, poverty, and violence. This approach fosters the remembrance of historical legacies and encourages critical reflection, enabling people to understand and respond creatively to the world around them.

Moreover, Baró's (1994) proposal for renewing psychology consists of three main goals. The first goal is for psychology to shift its focus from individual career aspirations and academic publications to addressing the needs and suffering of the oppressed majority. Instead of perceiving psychological issues as individual problems, psychologists should emphasise the connections between personal distress and the broader social, economic, and political contexts. This understanding can help address the root causes of psychological suffering (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 27). The second goal is to establish a new knowledge approach within psychology, built through dialogue and evolving understanding. This new approach would emphasise critical and utopian imagination. Psychologists should facilitate community dialogues, enabling individuals to discover their historical memory, critical analysis, and social action capacities rather than positioning themselves as authoritative experts (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 28). The third and final goal is for psychology to adopt a transformative practice emphasising communal learning through participatory

research. In this approach, psychologists and local participants collaborate to co-create strategies and solutions, which can lead to transformative outcomes for both researchers and the communities they study. This fosters humanisation and collaboration, offering hope for improving repressive or failing institutions (Watkins & Shulman, 2010, p. 28).

Furthermore, participants' visions for the future of Portuguese psychology encompass both personal and collective aspirations. Personal dreams often include concrete goals, such as completing Higher Education and establishing a career in psychology. In contrast, collective dreams focus on creating a more humanised and inclusive academic environment. At the same time, personal aspirations are centred around academic success and overcoming challenges like racism and oppression; collective dreams advocate for including marginalised communities, more diverse curricula, and epistemic inclusivity. These dreams challenge Eurocentric approaches and call for a decolonial shift toward a pluriversal and inclusive academic landscape.

Through participants' personal and collective visions for the future of Portuguese Higher Education, I identified six key elements that can serve as strategies for commitment and action towards a reimagined Portuguese psychology Academia:

1. Academic achievement as enablement and challenge: Completing studies and transitioning to the job market poses opportunities for autonomy and significant challenges for racialised students. Understanding the systemic barriers they face in Academia is crucial to addressing their struggles effectively. Studies completion and transition to the job market are both a source of autonomy and a

relevant challenge for racialised students. Therefore, comprehending systemic barriers created by others in Academia appropriately addresses these students' struggles.

2. Desire for recognition and respect: Racialised students strongly desire to be acknowledged and respected within the academic community. They wish for their contributions to psychology to be recognised and valued.
3. Aspiration for professional opportunities to contribute to the community: Participants emphasised the importance of achieving professional milestones that enable them to contribute to their communities. Their dreams highlight the need for support systems, policies, and pedagogical approaches that connect teaching and learning to the challenges faced by these communities.
4. Recognition of pluriversal ways of knowing: Participants called for Academia to embrace and incorporate multiple knowledge systems as a standard practice. This acknowledgement is essential for decolonising Higher Education and psychology, ultimately promoting epistemic and social justice.
5. Need for nondiscriminatory pedagogical practices: The participants emphasised the importance of pedagogies that dismantle colonial legacies in Higher Education. Approaches that encourage dialogue, community building, critical thinking, and conscientisation can potentially foster more equitable relationships and knowledge creation within Academia.

6. Liberation through education: Participants emphasised that education can serve as a tool for empowerment, mainly when guided by principles of humanisation, respect, and liberation. This empowerment can benefit individuals and communities, fostering a sense of shared purpose and belonging.

In summary, this section examined how the participants' experiences addressed the first question regarding their visions for future psychology courses in Portuguese Higher Education. To do so, I revisited the analysis presented in Chapter Six, titled "Reconnection." I then discussed how this analysis responded to the research question at various levels, highlighting the critical aspects of these shared dreams. The following section will explore this research's contributions to theory and practice.

### 7.3 Recommendations for Theory and Practice

*Testimonios* and social dreaming offer insights into oppression and potential pathways for social change. This section presents practical and research contributions from the study, focusing on suggestions for addressing oppressive dynamics in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. I hope these insights aid researchers, faculty, policymakers, and students in the unfinished project of decolonising Portuguese Academia. Departing from practical recommendations and considering the analysis in Chapter 4, I propose four essential actions:

1. Promotion of Cultural Sensitivity Training - Universities should encourage students, faculty, and staff to develop a deeper understanding of cultural awareness and sensitivity, such as:

- a. Understanding cultural identities and positionalities is a tool for self-reflection. It enables individuals to recognise how identities influence perceptions, actions and biases. Such awareness fosters critical self-reflection and enhances relationships in Higher Education.
- b. Embracing decolonial perspectives in psychological and academic spaces can broaden the understanding of colonial legacies within universities. This approach can increase awareness of coloniality in Academia and inspire a commitment to challenging the systems of oppression that persist in Higher Education.
- c. Promoting awareness of language sensitivity, belonging, and microaggressions. Focusing on Portuguese language sensitivity can create inclusive academic environments that foster connections between diverse communities. This initiative will enhance individuals' ability to identify microaggressions as overt forms of racism, particularly in psychology courses in Portugal, and cultivate non-discriminatory practices. Such practices can inspire transformative work within broader academic contexts, including those of Spanish, French, English, and other historical colonial empires.
- d. Encouraging open and supportive conversations about race, privilege, and humanisation in Higher Education can lead to a more inclusive academic environment. These discussions can help address and work toward dismantling racism and xenophobia in Portuguese psychology classrooms.

By implementing these actions, we can ensure that individuals in Academia have opportunities to cultivate educational practices rooted in mutual respect, nurturing, and humanisation.

2. Promotion of support communities - Academia has the resources and spaces to encourage the development of peer support communities, allowing all students to connect and build supportive relationships. This can enhance their sense of belonging through the following initiatives:
  - a. Create student-led groups based on shared interests or identities (e.g., cultural, academic, or extracurricular). Forming groups based on shared interests or identities—cultural, academic, or extracurricular—can provide students with a platform to connect. These groups foster a sense of shared purpose and create supportive relationships within the academic community.
  - b. Creating participatory and action-oriented projects that engage faculty, staff, and students from diverse backgrounds in dialogue, as well as collaborative projects, can help develop a critical awareness of the issues faced by their communities. This approach encourages problem-solving and social transformation by raising awareness of structural challenges.
3. Promotion of small classes: Encouraging smaller class sizes in psychology education can facilitate closer interactions between students and faculty. This setting promotes dialogue, mutual support, and collaborative work, enhancing the learning experience.

Considering the analysis in Chapter Five, "Disconnection," I propose the following practical recommendations:

1. Addressing the colonial legacies within the psychology curriculum -  
Academia should continuously revise psychology curricula to create opportunities for critical discussions about colonial legacies in the field.  
This can be achieved by:
  - a. Fostering pluralism in Portuguese psychology universities and integrating non-Western epistemologies through workshops, seminars, and projects. Encouraging dialogue between diverse knowledge systems can promote pluriversality and foster a curriculum that values mutual respect and diverse participation.
2. Combating Language Oppression: I recommend that universities in Portugal develop and implement policies, resources, and practices to address the plurality within Portuguese and its varieties in speaking and writing. The goal is to ensure that linguistic diversity is respected and encouraged.
3. Commitment to Humanised Treatment: I suggest that universities make structural changes within their hierarchical systems to address marginalisation resulting from the ranking of knowledge and individuals. This includes revising grading processes, enhancing student support systems, improving access to resources, and diversifying teaching methods. As discussed in section 5.1, hierarchical approaches in teaching lead to experiences of marginalisation and inferiority. Then, tailoring grading, support, and teaching approaches could challenge dehumanisation in the classroom, fostering dialogue, reflexivity and contextualisation of knowledge production.

4. Accessible Feedback Mechanisms: Establishing a system that allows students to report experiences of racism, xenophobia, and marginalisation in Higher Education is essential. This proposal could help create a culture of fairness and justice within academic institutions.

Throughout Chapter 6, reconnection, the suggestions for recommendations are as follows:

1. Promotion of transformative pedagogies: It is suggested that incorporating liberatory and decolonial pedagogies, which prioritise dialogue, community building, and humanisation, can aid in both personal and collective healing processes and contribute to the social transformation of oppressive structures.
2. Promote the care and support of mental health and well-being: Academia has the resources to establish a dedicated support system for the mental health and well-being of racialised students. The recommendation highlights that by addressing disparities in mental health, universities acknowledge the unique psychosocial challenges faced by racialised students in Academia.
3. Promote engagement with *testimonios* and social dreaming: Academic spaces should recognise the pedagogical and emancipatory value of *testimonios*. Racialised students should be encouraged to share their experiences of oppression while envisioning and co-creating a more humane and inclusive university environment.

These practical recommendations invite policymakers, faculty, staff, and students to explore ways to address the challenges experienced by racialised

students and engage in a future-making process that includes dreaming as a pedagogical approach to teaching and learning psychology.

For future research, I suggest the following concrete ideas:

1. Assessing the role of communities of support in Academia: Future research could focus on understanding how peer support networks promote a sense of belonging, academic success, and well-being among racialised students. This could lead to the development of adequate peer support and community-building strategies.
2. Examining the impact of initiatives towards the decolonisation of Academia: Conducting studies to evaluate the effects of decolonisation practices within academic contexts can provide insights into how these efforts enhance feelings of belonging and humanisation for racialised students and beyond.
3. Exploration of faculty and staff perceptions of racialised Other: Future research could shed light on how faculty and staff relate to, engage with, and understand the presence of racialised students in Higher Education. This understanding could help identify areas for improvement in pedagogical practices and institutional policies.
4. Investigating the relationships between individual social and political experience levels: Future psychological research could explore how social and political factors shape individual experiences. This approach can deepen our understanding of how policy-making influences individual and collective struggles, and highlight the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing and reforming policies that perpetuate injustices.

In summary, this section discussed practical and research recommendations derived from the study's analysis of *testimonios* and dreams. These suggestions have the potential to support ongoing research aimed at understanding the experiences of racialised students in Higher Education and to promote meaningful changes in the academic environments of Western neoliberal universities. The following section will address the strengths and limitations of this study.

#### 7.4 Strengths and Limitations – Reflective Process

This study enhances our understanding of the experiences of racialised students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology courses. Using *testimonios* and dreams, it explores themes of connection, disconnection, and reconnection. The research highlights the ongoing sense of otherness shaped by colonial legacies and suggests alternatives for reimagining academic spaces. This section analyses the strengths and limitations of the study.

Firstly, I have observed that a central contribution of this study is the articulation of theory. Guided by decolonial paradigms in qualitative research (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021) and decolonial strategies in education (Zavala, 2016), this research integrates decolonial and Indigenous frameworks (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021) with liberatory and critical approaches in pedagogy (Freire, 1996, 2013) and psychology (Fanon, 2008; Kilomba, 2021; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Through this engagement, I discovered opportunities to design a research framework that understands lived experiences, emphasising the values of dialogue, conscientisation, humanisation, and liberation.

By integrating various research methods, this study contributes to further inquiries. Specifically, it combines *testimonios* (Brabeck, 2006; Huber, 2009; Huber & Villanueva, 2019) and social dreaming (Dutra & Ojha, 2016; King et al., 2011; Lawrence, 2018) to focus on marginalised experiences, voices, and meaning-making. This approach helps to understand everyday accounts of otherness in Higher Education, highlighting hopes and aspirations for transforming these spaces. Additionally, the study employs thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Byrne, 2022; Clarke & Braun, 2017), informed by Indigenous approaches that emphasise relationality (Kovach, 2021; Tynan, 2021). Combining these data collection and analysis methods, this research explores methodologies supporting decolonisation efforts.

I argue that combining *testimonios* and social dreaming offers a valuable approach to materialising the steps of the decolonisation process into research strategies. In this context, the decolonisation process (Chilisa, 2019; Laenui, 2000) encompasses recovery and mourning, which focus on reclaiming and honouring the identities, languages, and knowledge that were taken through colonisation. The next step, dreaming, involves reimagining the past and present to envision a more humanised future. I see *testimonios* as verbal journeys that facilitate reclamation and mourning in the face of structural inequalities. On the other hand, social dreaming serves as a collective strategy for envisioning a better future. Together, these approaches have the potential to create research opportunities that transition from a state of “luto” (mourning) to “luta” (struggle) in the broader efforts to decolonise Academia.

This study presents several key theoretical contributions that support a deeper understanding of colonial legacies and their enduring influence on academic

structures, particularly in Portuguese Higher Education. First, by analysing participants' experiences through "Connection, Disconnection, and Reconnection," the research highlights the systemic barriers faced by racialised students, including epistemic hierarchies, Eurocentrism, and marginalisation. These findings assist the unfinished decolonial project by advocating for pluriversality, emphasising the need to incorporate diverse epistemologies and reimagine academic spaces beyond Eurocentric norms. Second, in drawing on concepts such as "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2018) and relationality from Indigenous frameworks (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021), the study connects critical approaches to pedagogy in psychology with Indigenous methodologies to propose a robust model for decolonising education. Additionally, it critiques ideological constructs like Luso-tropicalism, which perpetuates the denial of racism and calls for a reframing of academic practices to acknowledge and dismantle these colonial legacies.

Moreover, a third novel contribution to the theory is that this research also encourages engagement with psychology as a discipline capable of fostering social liberation and epistemic justice. Inspired by Martín-Baró's (1994) vision of transformative psychology, the study underscores the field's potential to address systemic oppression and promote collective healing through humanising pedagogies. By relating these approaches to a broader critique of Eurocentric educational systems, the research advances theoretical discussions about how academic institutions can serve as sites of resistance, solidarity, and transformation.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are consistent with prior research on the decolonisation of Higher Education, particularly concerning the experiences of

racialised students in academic environments. Studies by Arday and Mirza (2018), Kilomba (2012), and Reyes (2022) confirm that racialised students encounter systemic barriers rooted in colonial legacies, such as Eurocentrism and racism denial. This relates to the participants' *testimonios*, which underscore the themes of exclusion, marginalisation, and epistemic violence within psychology courses at Portuguese Higher Education institutions. This study supports the idea that Academia functions as a "white space," limiting access to diverse systems of knowledge and contributing to the disenfranchisement of racialised students. This theme has also been a focus in previous research on inequalities in Higher Education (Collins, 1998; Bell et al., 2019).

In addition, this study's findings regarding racism denial in Portuguese Academia reflect previous research by Agra Figueiredo et al. (2021) and Araújo (2007, 2018). Participants' *testimonios* underscore how racism denial materialises within classroom dynamics, aligning with prior critiques of Portuguese exceptionalism and its colonial underpinnings. These *testimonios* reveal how institutional and pedagogical practices silence racialised voices, perpetuating Eurocentric frameworks and hierarchical power relations in Higher Education. Additionally, the study highlights the active mechanisms through which colonial legacies shape academic spaces, offering further empirical evidence of racism denial as a systemic issue. By connecting these dynamics to students' lived experiences, the research affirms the findings of previous studies and extends them by illuminating the impact on knowledge production and student agency. As a result, this alignment strengthens the argument that

colonial ideologies remain deeply embedded in Portuguese Academia, demanding urgent intervention and transformative practices.

By highlighting how *testimonios* and social dreaming can serve as pathways for resistance and re-imagination, this study aligns with previous research on decolonial pedagogies (Bell, 2022; Bell et al., 2019; Dutta & Atallah, 2023; Dutta et al., 2022; Freire, 2013; King et al., 2011; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). Similar to studies on relational and participatory pedagogies, the findings indicate that storytelling and social dreaming create opportunities for envisioning a more inclusive academic environment. This contributes to the broader discourse on decolonisation and liberation in education (Dutta et al., 2022; Bell, 2022). These practices challenge existing power structures and equip marginalised students with tools to navigate and resist the oppressive systems they encounter in Academia.

Additionally, the findings of this study emphasise the practical benefits of using *testimonios* and social dreaming as pedagogical tools in Portuguese psychology classrooms. Previous research supports this approach (Carmona & Luciano, 2014; Cervantes et al., 2021; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Silva et al., 2022). *Testimonios* focus on the lived experiences of racialised students and serve as powerful storytelling methods that resist the systemic erasure of marginalised voices. By incorporating *testimonios* into teaching practices, educators can directly address structural inequalities and create a more inclusive learning environment. This method allows racialised students to share their personal and collective struggles, fostering critical reflection and raising awareness about issues such as racism, xenophobia, and other forms of exclusion in Higher Education. Such practices help cultivate empathy, encourage critical dialogue,

and promote a more relational approach to teaching—essential components in combating the dehumanisation faced by many racialised students.

As a pedagogical strategy, dreaming allows students to envision possibilities for liberation and systemic change, as previously highlighted in research (Dutra & Ojha, 2016; King et al., 2011; Lawrence, 2018; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). It serves as a coping mechanism for navigating spaces shaped by colonial legacies and a concrete strategy for imagining more just and inclusive academic futures. The findings of this research have the potential to encourage educators to actively involve students in reimagining the psychology curriculum in Portuguese Higher Education. Educators can challenge Eurocentrism and develop a praxis of liberation by integrating dreaming into classroom practices. This approach promotes intellectual growth and fosters emotional and political enablement, positioning the classroom as a space for resistance and transformation.

In addition, this research highlights several practical implications for developing a decolonised curriculum in psychology within Portuguese universities. It builds on previous discussions about the decolonisation of Academia (Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bhabra et al., 2018; Dupree & Boykin, 2021; Gopal, 2021; Joseph Mbembe, 2016; Ramón & Ernesto, 2016). The *testimonios* and dreams shared by participants emphasise the need for a curriculum that challenges Eurocentric frameworks and embraces epistemic diversity. A reformed syllabus should incorporate perspectives from racialised, Indigenous, and marginalised communities, recognising that their ways of knowing and being are equally valid. This approach would ensure that psychology students encounter various

knowledge systems, fostering a deeper understanding of intersectionality, coloniality, and the sociocultural factors that influence mental health.

Moreover, the curriculum should emphasise pedagogical strategies, such as storytelling and social dreaming, to promote liberation. These methods allow students to connect with both personal and collective experiences of oppression, providing a platform to envision more liberatory futures. By incorporating relational and participatory teaching methods, such as *testimonios* and social dreaming, students can navigate and critically reflect on the colonial legacies present in academic spaces and broader psychological practices. This approach will equip future psychologists with the tools to address structural inequalities in various contexts. Furthermore, the academic curriculum in psychology should strongly emphasise reflexivity, encouraging a critical examination of power dynamics within psychology and Higher Education. The findings suggest that Portuguese universities must actively challenge the colonial structures embedded in academic practices. We must foster an environment that encourages students to engage in critical dialogue to achieve this. It will require rethinking traditional teaching methods, such as the banking education model, integrating interdisciplinary approaches, and creating a sense of belonging for racialised students in academic spaces. Ultimately, this effort aims to cultivate a more inclusive and humanising discipline of psychology.

Nevertheless, this study has some limitations. This study offers relevant insights, but its limitations are shaped by a small sample size. While it allows for a deeper understanding of the experiences of racialised students in Portuguese psychology Higher Education, the findings may not accurately portray the diversity of all students across Portuguese universities. Thus, instead of

generalizability, the results provide insights into the unique experiences of the participants and the academic landscape. Despite this, the study supports uncovering key experiences of marginalisation and resilience among racialised students in Portuguese psychology Academia, contributing to our understanding of systemic inequities and promoting footing for future research and transformative action.

One limitation of the methodological approach that includes *testimonios* and social dreaming is its reliance on subjective and narrative-driven qualitative methods. While these tools are relevant for decolonial inquiry, they emphasise personal accounts and collective aspirations. This focus can limit the ability to quantify the experience of systemic racism and colonial legacies in Higher Education. Therefore, incorporating mixed-methods studies could complement these findings and offer a more comprehensive analysis. Nonetheless, the value of this approach remains significant. Centring lived experiences and fostering rich, relational insights, *testimonios* and social dreaming offer pathways to understanding and challenging entrenched colonial dynamics. This methodology amplifies marginalised voices, a critical step in envisioning and enacting transformative change within academic contexts.

Moreover, this study has limitations, as it focuses solely on psychology courses within the Portuguese Higher Education system. While it offers insights into how colonial legacies continue to influence Portuguese academic spaces, it may not fully address how these issues affect other disciplines. Although the findings illuminate specific colonial dynamics in Portuguese Academia, the research does not compare these dynamics with those in other fields of knowledge. Further research could deepen our understanding of how these issues manifest

across different disciplines in Portuguese Higher Education and other countries. Despite these limitations, this study's focused exploration makes significant contributions by highlighting the nuanced and systemic ways in which colonial legacies operate within psychology education. Its in-depth findings provide a framework that can inspire similar inquiries across other academic disciplines, emphasising the urgency of decolonial interventions in Higher Education.

This research is grounded in an intersectional, storytelling and relational epistemology; however, it does not prioritise gender as a central analytical axis. This choice reflects a broader trend in decolonial research—particularly within global health and Higher Education studies—where, as noted by Nassiri-Ansari and Rhule (2024), gender is frequently marginalised despite its deep connections with coloniality. My focus has been on examining the racialised structures of exclusion in Portuguese Academia through the lived experiences of marginalised students. Racialisation, understood here as a colonial tool of dehumanisation, never acts neutrally or without embodiment; it weaves itself profoundly with gender, class, and sexuality. Although I do not explicitly theorise gender as a primary object of inquiry in this research, it is present in the *testimonios*, particularly when participants recount experiencing gendered racism, such as when others stereotype them based on their clothing or behaviour. These expressions of othering, as illustrated by Flávia's *testimonio* (p. 217), reveal the colonial inscription of difference along both racial and gendered lines. I recognise that a more in-depth engagement with feminist decolonial and Black queer feminist theories could have provided a stronger analysis of these intersections. The works of Kilomba (2012, 2016, 2021), Lorde (1984, 1987), hooks (1991, 1996, 2014) and Davis (2023), among others, are

integrated into my analytical framework. However, their epistemologies could have been more systematically utilised to explore how systems of oppression operate through both gender and race. To address this limitation, I have approached relationality as an ethical-political commitment that inherently encompasses gender, sexuality, and class as interrelated aspects of subjectivity and resistance. My methodological orientation, particularly through *testimonios* and social dreaming, highlights the experiences of participants who are racialised, queer, and gendered subjects, thus amplifying voices that have been historically marginalised in academic contexts. Additionally, I highlight that my analysis is developed from the position and intersection of being a queer Black man, as discussed in Section 3.4 of the methodological chapter. Future work would benefit from expanding this intersectional analysis by explicitly centring decolonial feminist praxis, to avoid perpetuating the marginalisation of gender within decolonial scholarship, which remains an unfinished and contested field.

A key limitation of this research is the underrepresentation of Indigenous participants, only one out of twelve, resulting in a limited understanding of Indigenous traditional epistemologies. This imbalance can hinder the recognition of Indigenous voices and knowledge systems in the *testimonios* and dreams shared by the participants. When Indigenous experiences are not extensively included, there is a risk of perpetuating epistemic injustice, where dominant (often Western) frameworks overshadow or delegitimise other ways of knowing, being, and doing. Literature emphasises that such imbalances can also affect the relational dynamics of dialogues during data collection (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021). Indigenous methodologies often prioritise relationality, respect, and reciprocity, which are not always

captured by conventional qualitative methods. The presence of only one Indigenous-identifying participant limits the diversity and richness of Indigenous epistemological perspectives in the data. I recognise that this underrepresentation is not merely a numerical issue; it is also an epistemic one, restricting the study's ability to engage with the plurality and relational nature of Indigenous knowledge systems, acknowledging that the experiences of Indigenous participants may be qualitatively different from those of other students in this research. Despite this limitation, including even one Indigenous perspective remains relevant and valuable. It serves as an entry point for Indigenous epistemologies to inform the research, underscoring the importance of relationality, respect, and the need for epistemic justice. A way to mitigate this limitation is to centre the scholarship of Indigenous scholars discussing coloniality, liberation, and decolonisation from the standpoint of the Global South. This includes scholars from South America, Africa, Asia, and Australia throughout the conceptualisation, analysis, and discussion phases of the research.

Furthermore, addressing deep-rooted, systemic issues within a limited timeframe presents a significant challenge. While the research focuses on students' current experiences and aspirations, it may not fully capture the long-term impacts of racism and marginalisation throughout their academic and professional journeys. This highlights the need for further studies to explore how these experiences evolve and to assess the long-term effectiveness of proposed strategies for decolonising education. The following section presents the conclusions drawn from this research. Nonetheless, the study offers a critical perspective on the lived realities of racialised students, serving as a

supportive basis for ongoing and future research. Its emphasis on students' dreams and everyday experiences provides a valuable lens for understanding the urgent need for transformative interventions in Higher Education.

## 7.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, this thesis examined the experiences of racialised students in Portuguese academic psychology spaces through a decolonial lens, employing *testimonios* and social dreaming as central methodologies. The findings highlight the systemic nature of racism within academic institutions, showing that the struggles faced by these students are not isolated incidents but deeply embedded within the colonial legacy of Portugal's educational structures. By focusing on *testimonios*, the research revealed how racialised students navigate spaces of exclusion, racism, and epistemic violence, with their lived experiences demonstrating the limitations of current pedagogical practices in fostering inclusive and equitable academic environments.

Furthermore, in this research, participants expressed their dreams for a more just and inclusive academic future where diverse ways of knowing are acknowledged and respected as equally valid. This vision for change is more than a utopian ideal; it serves as a vital survival strategy for racialised students in environments shaped by enduring colonial legacies. Participants consistently expressed their desire for a changed university, challenging superficial diversity initiatives that do not address more profound systemic inequalities. They called for academic spaces that promote connection, value alternative ways of knowing, encourage mutual respect, and foster belonging and humanisation.

Additionally, this thesis has demonstrated how the knowledge shared in Cidinha Aparecida's anecdote about the “mosquito fallen into milk” remains relevant in academic spaces in Portuguese psychology. Metaphorically, the mosquito represents the racialised Other, who is dehumanised and defined by their skin colour, origins, nationality, and accent. The act of falling symbolises the ongoing marginalisation, feelings of inferiority, racism, language oppression, and denial of racism prevalent in Academia. The milk represents the classrooms, corridors, and relationships centred around White and Luso-tropical perspectives of being and knowing. However, this thesis also presents the possibility of tangible, collective, and utopian dreams that can dismantle these realities. Through dialogue, conscious awareness, and the reimagining of options, individuals can cultivate a dreaming practice that regenerates and transforms academic spaces into environments of interconnection and humanisation.

Moreover, this research underscores the pressing need to move beyond superficial approaches to diversity and strive for a genuine, structural transformation that values multiple ways of knowing. Intersectionality is a crucial tool for understanding the various layers of disenfranchisement experienced by racialised students. By combining *testimonios* and social dreaming, we can create pedagogies of liberation that challenge the colonial legacies still in Academia. Neoliberal Western Higher Education is not in crisis. Racialised students are likely to be facing challenges every day. Portuguese Higher Education has been functioning as intended, as its design has continuously limited access and achievements for racialised individuals since colonial times. The violence faced by Black and brown bodies is a result of academic systems shaped by these colonial legacies. This thesis advocates radically reimagining

the university as a space where all students, regardless of racial or cultural background, can thrive.

## 7.6 Final Thoughts

Education is a transformative journey. Writing a doctoral thesis involves engaging in this process of transformation. While I have changed, I am still in the midst of that change. Like hooks (1991), who found her way to theory through personal struggle, I pursued a PhD due to the ongoing challenges of racialisation in Portuguese academic spaces and beyond. I deeply needed to understand what was happening to me and others with similar experiences. I believe that together, we can work towards dismantling colonial legacies, and I viewed a PhD as an opportunity for renewal—a place to envision and work toward change. Although this study concludes with my final words, the impact of the research and writing process on my life will endure. Education truly is liberating.

Firstly, this thesis was written in an atmosphere of fear: border regimes, racial riots, rising living costs, surveillance, and scepticism—whether in the UK or Portugal. I embarked on this study with trepidation, uncertain if I could complete it. Feeling powerless and afraid, I found that finishing my research was possible only because of the support from individuals inside and outside Academia. The everyday disconnection I experienced could have rendered years of work meaningless without these connections. Through the relationships I built, particularly with the participants who shared their experiences, I was able to reconnect with myself, Portugal, the UK, the university, and my research.

Anger has been a constant presence from the beginning—a motivating force that drove me to complete this task. Joy emerged like rays of light after a rainy day. As the rain continued, moments of joy appeared, filling me with glimpses of hope. This allowed my work to become practically achievable. I learned to read, ask questions, engage in dialogue, and write. I learned how to learn. My progress was made possible through the invaluable time, patience, understanding, and care of critical individuals who supported me on this journey and contributed to this work. For that, I will be forever grateful.

Furthermore, I completed this thesis while continuously battling dread: the fear of not securing funding, lacking accommodation, and being alone in a foreign country. This fear can be paralysing, yet it also reminds me of the purpose behind my research. Driven by that purpose, hope, and profound respect for those who contributed to this work, I pressed on despite the daunting challenges of writing a PhD thesis—a decolonial thesis. I pursued this research out of a deep desire to understand the ongoing experiences of oppression that racialised individuals face daily in Academia. This thesis represents a continuous effort to bridge theory and lived experiences. It is not a flawless work; instead, it reflects my commitment to intellectual honesty. I honour the knowledge of those who came before me and hope this thesis contributes to meaningful steps toward change. This decolonial inquiry was developed within the neoliberal Western Higher Education framework in a once-central country to the colonial project. I want to reflect on the process of completing a decolonial thesis in this socio-political context. A key challenge in this endeavour is producing knowledge within a system that has historically defined modes of inquiry and objects of research, often expecting neutrality, objectivity, and

universal applicability. This can create concerns about producing work that may be deemed unscientific. To avoid being paralysed by these fears, engaging in open and honest dialogues with my supervisory team, friends, and fellow researchers who share a vision for transforming Higher Education and rethinking how we approach knowledge and research was essential.

A significant challenge arises when engaging in work that disrupts conventional logic. In Western neoliberal universities, influenced by colonial structures, practices such as rankings, quantifiable research, and a banking education model prevail. These factors can complicate efforts to produce a decolonial thesis, as institutional barriers often impose strict expectations for research outcomes, tight deadlines, and limitations on proposing liberatory approaches. Therefore, for me, it was crucial to establish connections and build communities across various European universities to foster the development of critical and reflective scholarship.

Regarding academic standards, PhD candidates must adhere to norms of knowledge production that are often rooted in Eurocentrism. As a result, we are expected to use academic language, methodological approaches, and theoretical frameworks that align with traditionally accepted models when presenting our theses. Consequently, alternative ways of knowing are often considered marginal or less rigorous, necessitating justification.

In my own experience, I used the example of a methodology based on dreams that I encountered at the beginning of this process. With the encouragement of my supervisors and the opportunity to articulate these dreams through decolonial thought, I gained confidence in conceptualising and developing a research design that incorporates dreams as a valid method of knowledge. A

fundamental aspect of completing a decolonial thesis involves the influence and relationship with the supervisory team. Over the years, I have shared ideas to conceptualise my thesis, and in return, I have received primarily honest, curious, and open feedback. Despite facing challenging moments due to differing worldviews and research approaches, I found that a critical element of my study was to seek opportunities for dialogue and mutual respect.

Writing a decolonial PhD thesis can be an emotional and psychologically taxing experience. As a Black person and an immigrant with English as my second language, discussing issues such as racism, xenophobia, and linguistic oppression often left me feeling isolated and facing mental health challenges. Engaging in work that aims to dismantle practices of marginalisation in Higher Education also meant confronting the same alienating dynamics prevalent in Eurocentric and neoliberal academic settings. This situation led to feelings of anxiety, doubt, overthinking, and a sense of worthlessness and helplessness. Accessing mental health support was crucial for me during this time. Initially, I received limited sessions through the university, but later, I benefited from counselling provided by the National Health Service in the UK, which helped me overcome these difficulties.

The lack of financial support significantly hindered the completion of my decolonial PhD thesis. Decolonisation is often treated as a buzzword, leading universities to engage with decolonial work in a performative manner to improve their rankings. As a result, universities rarely prioritise decolonial research, leading to scarce funding opportunities. In my situation, I had to adapt my resources, work part-time, and carefully choose research opportunities. This shortage of resources has delayed the completion of my thesis. Since

universities typically prioritise projects that align easily with market demands and global rankings, decolonial research tends to be overlooked as it focuses on long-term epistemic and relational changes.

Building on my grandma's anecdote of the mosquito falling into the milk, this research has demonstrated how, in the context of Portuguese Higher Education, the racialised Other has been dealing with the dehumanisation of facing academic systems that have been reiterating colonial legacies of human and epistemic superiority. Nevertheless, it also demonstrated the role of reimagining a new future as a possibility of disrupting the colonial legacies of inferiority, marginalisation and denial in Higher Education. Bringing forward *testimonios* of inequality addresses these ongoing experiences and reasserts the importance of recovering the ancestral power of dreams to shape the future.

Reflecting on my grandma's story about the mosquito trapped in the milk, this research highlights how, within the context of Portuguese Higher Education, marginalised racialised individuals confront the dehumanisation inherent in academic systems that perpetuate colonial legacies of human and epistemic superiority. However, it also underscores the potential for reimagining a new future to disrupt these colonial legacies of inferiority, marginalisation, and denial in Higher Education. By sharing *testimonios* of inequality, we address these ongoing experiences and emphasise the importance of reclaiming the ancestral future-making power of dreams.

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## Appendix 1 – Ethics and the Oppressed

Ethics plays a crucial role in conducting research by guiding the parameters and informing the reflexivity between researchers and their participants. According to the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics, an ethical researcher "prioritise respect for the rights and dignity of participants in their research and also consider legitimate interests of stakeholders such as funders, institutions, sponsors and publics" (Oates et al., p. 4). Research ethics encompass the "moral principles guiding research from its inception through to completion and publication of results" (Oates et al., p. 5). Moreover, the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct defines the role of psychologists:

"...are committed to increasing scientific and professional knowledge of behaviour and people's understanding of themselves and others and to the use of such knowledge to improve the condition of individuals, organisations, and society. Psychologists respect and protect civil and human rights and the central importance of freedom of inquiry and expression in research, teaching, and publication" (American Psychological, 2002, p. 3).

In a similar perspective on the role and responsibilities of researchers in psychology, the Code of Ethics of Portuguese Psychologists states that psychologists are accountable for the development of scientific knowledge to "enhance the potential of psychological intervention, which will benefit individuals and society as a whole"(dos Psicólogos Portugueses, 2011a, p. 107). These guidelines reflect the current conventions and norms established by professional regulatory bodies, outlining the ethical considerations involved in conducting research with human participants in psychology. However, these considerations may also embody modern/colonial assumptions about

knowledge, the roles of psychologists and researchers, and the research participants.

Like many other social sciences, psychology has established its discipline, focus, and code of conduct by considering universal aspects of human socialisation and individuality (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021). In seeking to universalise the human experience, researchers have often essentialised their relationship with the Other, positioning themselves as specialists and authorities. This dynamic is reinforced by conventions created for the Indigenous or racialised subject rather than by them (Chilisa, 2019; Kilomba, 2021; Smith, 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

According to Smith (2021), learned societies and organisations that regulate and promote research and professional practices have historically perpetuated systems of human hierarchisation, elitism, and patriarchy. Smith explains that these societies "exerted some form of ethical control over their members, partly by encouraging the view that they were good scholars with open minds, and mostly by insisting that they should be gentlemen with the 'right conduct'" (Smith, 2021, p. 89). While some of these societies and professional regulatory bodies are currently acknowledging and reflecting on their problematic histories with Indigenous and racially marginalised groups through official apologies (American Psychological, 2003, 2021a, 2021b; Ordem dos Psicólogos, 2021), the assumption that research is universally beneficial requires ongoing scrutiny and contextual understanding. As Smith points out, "social 'good' against which ethical standards are determined is based on the same beliefs about the individual and individualised property" (2021, p. 123).

Some scholars understand ethics in research as a process of contextual relational negotiation (Glesne, 2016; Pillow, 2003; Smith, 2021; Tuck, 2009).

Within psychology, academic and disciplinary communities have continually defined ethical principles that guide research involving human subjects.

Nonetheless, some individuals may still view the racialised Other and Indigenous people as “natural objects of research”(Smith, 2021, p. 122).

Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that the Indigenous and racialised Other:

“...have been, in many ways, oppressed by theory. Any consideration of the ways our origins have been examined, our histories recounted, our arts analysed, our cultures dissected, measured, torn apart and distorted back to us will suggest that theories have not looked sympathetically or ethically at us” (2021, p. 38).

On the other hand, regulatory bodies have been working to establish codes of conduct to prevent ongoing harm to marginalised communities. The British Psychological Society defines ethical standards that highlight the responsibilities of psychologists. According to these standards:

“Psychologists have and show respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons. In the research context this means that there is a clear duty to participants. For example, psychologists respect the knowledge, insight, experience and expertise of participants and potential participants. They respect individual, cultural and role differences, including those involving age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, education, language and socioeconomic status” (Oates et al., p. 7).

Similarly, the American Psychological Association suggests that Psychologists:

“...are aware of and respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status, and consider these factors when working

with members of such groups. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudice" (American Psychological Association, 2002, p. 4).

While these definitions emphasise the importance of ethics and respect for cultural differences—such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender—in research, they also imply that being aware of issues like racism, xenophobia, sexism, and homophobia is an essential quality for psychologists and researchers.

The Portuguese guidelines also present similar proposals but raise concerns regarding their views on ethnicity, cultural origins, and nationality, which they categorise under "cultural minorities" (dos Psicólogos Portugueses, 2011a, p. 113). These assumptions reflect a continuation of Western practices in psychology, naturalising/essentialising the researcher/psychologist as fundamentally neutral, objective, and with universal views on Indigenous/racialised Other individuals, groups and communities (Kilomba, 2016; Smith, 2021).

Indigenous and racialised communities have unique ethical frameworks that prioritise culturally specific values in research. These frameworks extend beyond respect to encompass elements such as generosity, deep listening, care for the Other, land stewardship, and preserving ancestral knowledge—essential components of knowledge generation for Indigenous and racialised groups (Smith, 2021). Reflecting on these ethical codes involves considering the potential for epistemic restitution (Mignolo, 2002) and how researchers engage with participants. According to Smith, Indigenous ethical guidelines:

"... emphasise critical values that are as much about personal integrity as they are about collective responsibility, and as much about research as they are about education and other forms of engagement. In indigenous frameworks, relationships matter. Respectful, reciprocal, genuine relationships lie at the heart of community life and community development" (2021, p. 125).

These principles are not prescriptions or rigid definitions for researchers; instead, they centre on dialogue, relationality, and reciprocity (Chilisa, 2019). Together with respect, these principles form the foundation for "balance and harmony" (Smith, 2021, p. 125), which fosters human connection.

Ethical practices that rely on the researcher/subject framework often perpetuate colonial legacies, reinforcing a binary of coloniser/colonised (Chilisa, 2019). In Western ethical guidelines, the perspectives of Indigenous and racialised individuals are frequently overlooked in the formulation of research problems, design, purpose, and dissemination (Chilisa, 2019; Glesne, 2016). In this course, researchers are encouraged to reflect on their privilege in holding the voice and means to express their worldviews and theories. Conversely, Indigenous and racialised individuals often face ongoing silencing and exclusion from knowledge creation (Chilisa, 2019). Chilisa argues that power inequalities in research are evident when researchers conduct investigations where "ethics protocols of individual consent and notions of confidentiality have been misused to disrespect and make value judgments that are psychologically damaging to communities and nations at large" (Chilisa, 2019, p. 86). Incorporating Indigenous and racialised perspectives into ethical and methodological approaches involves recognising alternative ways of relating, emphasising self-determination, and fostering reciprocity and respect throughout the research process (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2021; Tuck, 2009) continuously.

Ethics is a crucial aspect of relatedness that extends beyond academic and professional guidelines for practice and research. As Glesne, (2016, p. 158), ethics “is not something that you can forget once you satisfy the demands of university ethics committees and other gatekeepers of research conduct”. Instead, "ethics are inseparable from your everyday interactions with research participants and with your data" (Glesne, 2016, p. 158). Ethical research codes are essential because they guide the integrity and alignment between the researcher, the research objectives, and the individuals and groups participating in the research. This is achieved through dialogue, reciprocity, relationality, respect, and continuous negotiation (Chilisa, 2019; Glesne, 2016; Smith, 2021; Tuck, 2009). Adhering to these principles within and outside Academia is foundational for connectedness, equal relationships, and re-humanisation. Ethics also provide a means to confront and counteract the unethical legacies associated with research involving Indigenous and racially marginalised participants.

Ethical guidelines from major organisations, such as the American Psychological Association, the British Psychological Society, and the Portuguese Psychologists' Order, emphasise three fundamental principles for conducting research with humans: respect, justice, and beneficence (American Psychological, 2002; dos Psicólogos Portugueses, 2011b; Glesne, 2016; Oates et al., 2001). According to Glesne (2016), the first principle, respect, emphasises protecting participants' self-determination by ensuring their voluntary and informed consent to participate in research. The second principle, beneficence, dictates that research should not cause harm or distress to participants and that their privacy must be upheld throughout the research

process. The third principle, justice, aims to prevent the unequal treatment of marginalised groups by ensuring fair contributions to research. This is particularly important in addressing sociopolitical issues and reimagining the academic environment from the perspectives of racialised and Indigenous students. Therefore, upholding the principles of respect, fairness, and beneficence in qualitative psychology research involving Indigenous and racialised participants requires adherence to an ethical code that prioritises their psychological and social well-being.

For this research, consent was obtained in a dialogical and voluntary manner. Consent is essential for fostering a sense of "cooperation and partnership" (Glesne, 2016, p. 160) between the researcher and the participants. Glesne emphasises that research participants should be informed about the research's purposes, procedures, and how the results will be shared and that their participation must be voluntary (2016, p. 160). Thus, written consent forms not only request signatures but also provide participants with important information about the research goals and the implications of their involvement. This highlights the ongoing nature of the consent process (Chilisa, 2019; Glesne, 2016; Smith, 2021). Smith shares similar views on consent and acknowledges that consent:

"...is not so much given for a project or specific set of questions, but for a person, for their credibility. Consent indicates trust and the assumption is that the trust will not only be reciprocated but constantly negotiated – a dynamic relationship rather than a static decision" (2021, p. 37).

This approach recognises consent as an ongoing negotiation, emphasising continuous dialogue and respect for the decisions of Black and Brown

immigrant students in Portuguese Higher Education psychology. These students are invited to contribute to the research and can withdraw their participation at any time before their data is anonymised.

This research emphasised respect and beneficence by creating open spaces for dialogue regarding the risks and opportunities for participants. Care involves safeguarding participants' anonymity, privacy, confidentiality, and mental and physical well-being (Glesne, 2016). According to Glesne, in qualitative research, "the nature of field relationships and the responsibility to those relationships can become, and perhaps should be, more important ethical standards than merely protecting privacy" (2016, p. 163). Therefore, the concept of relatedness in research emerges as a crucial aspect of beneficence that spans the entire research process, including data collection, analysis, writing, and dissemination (Chilisa, 2019; Glesne, 2016; Smith, 2021). This research addresses the issue of anonymity with the participants, taking into account the potential impact on their lives. Since specific details may be omitted or altered, participants discussed what aspects of their identities and the study context should be kept anonymous or openly disclosed. (Glesne, 2016).

In this inquiry, informed consent and beneficence were ongoing processes, while the principle of justice focused on the vulnerability of research participants (Glesne, 2016). This study examined the lived experiences of Black, Brown, Immigrant, and Indigenous students, groups that faced continuous structural marginalisation and silencing, often categorised as ethnic and racial minorities (American Psychological, 2002; dos Psicólogos Portugueses, 2011a; Glesne, 2016; Oates et al., 2001; Smith, 2021). The importance of justice in researching Indigenous and racialised participants recognised that "this provision is to

protect groups of people who may not be able to give informed consent competently or who might feel coerced" (Glesne, 2016, p. 167). Thus, the principle of justice allowed for reflexivity in the research, ensuring that the experiences of Indigenous and racialised individuals were not seen as inherently marginal, but rather as connected to the contexts that contributed to their marginalisation.

Justice also emphasises the importance of reciprocity in research. In this research, justice was achieved by committing to avoiding extractive research practices; reciprocity fosters an atmosphere of mutuality, gratitude, accountability, and connection with research participants (Glesne, 2016; Smith, 2021; Tynan, 2021). In this context, the practice of justice involved collaborative efforts to honour participants' feelings, thoughts, and voices, exploring and understanding their lived experiences (Glesne, 2016, p. 170).

This research was guided by respect, justice, and beneficence principles and adhered to a collaborative, reciprocal, and restorative ethical code with its participants. Recognising that research in psychology is not neutral, objective, or universal (Chilisa, 2019; Glesne, 2016; Kilomba, 2016; Smith, 2021), the study outlined its assumptions and epistemological framework within the contexts of decoloniality, community psychology, liberation psychology, and pedagogy (Chilisa, 2019; Fanon, 2008; Freire, 2013; Glesne, 2016; Martín-Baró, 1994; Orford, 1992; Watkins & Shulman, 2010) while maintaining transparency with participants and stakeholders involved in the research process. The goal of these efforts was to establish a trusting relationship that would facilitate an understanding of participants' experiences within the context of psychology academic courses in Portugal.

Several key commitments guided this research. First, I prioritised not causing harm and considered potential risks to participants' well-being. Second, I emphasised transparency about the study's nature, including data ownership and research goals. Informed consent was an ongoing process that fostered a space for diverse voices and discussions on confidentiality, accountability, and expected outcomes. I valued ethical responsibility, prioritising dialogue and collaboration over strict research protocols. Additionally, we ensured that research findings were accessible to participants and that data were protected using agreed-upon security measures (Chilisa, 2019; Glesne, 2016; Smith, 2021). These commitments aimed to engage participants in research focused on epistemic restitution, social justice, and re-humanisation in psychology education in Portugal.

The ethical approach in this research focused on the relatedness and connectedness between the researcher and participants. In relational ethics, there was a shift in the researcher's power, emphasising establishing relationships grounded in care, respect, and reciprocity with research participants (Glesne, 2016; Icaza Garza, 2017). An ethical framework guided by hospitality allowed for a reexamination of "role of power in research relationships and our efforts to make the research process more horizontal" (Glesne, 2016, p. 180), and opened up opportunities "to forge new ways of constructing ethics that focused on specific contexts, participants, and relationships" (Glesne, 2016, p. 181). This approach led to research that fostered respect and reciprocity connections between researchers and participants, creating spaces for ethical engagement.

The ethics of care in this research involves understanding the historical legacies and ongoing harm experienced by marginalised communities. Tuck highlights that racialised and Indigenous individuals "may be wary of 'scientists' because of their and their ancestors' prior experiences with researchers" (2009, p. 410). These concerns are valid, given the centuries of dehumanising practices associated with damage-centred research (Chilisa, 2019; Tuck, 2009; Watkins & Shulman, 2010). This approach often portrays the voices of the oppressed primarily through narratives of pain, resulting in a "pathologising perspective in which the oppression singularly defines a community" (Tuck, 2009, p. 413), as a homogeneous entity.

This investigation adopted an ethics of care approach, aiming to engage with desire-based research as an alternative that emphasised "understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives" (Tuck, 2009, p. 413). Tuck contended that "desire accounted for loss and despair, but also for hope, visions, and the wisdom of lived lives and communities. Desire was connected to the 'not yet' and, at times, the 'not anymore.'" It is related to longing and a present moment enriched by the past and the future. Desire was integral to our humanness (Tuck, 2009, p. 417). Consequently, a desire-based ethical stance in research fostered the development of dreaming, dialogue, radical humanisation, and imagination. These elements represented epistemological, relational, and ontological shifts in response to the coloniality of academic spaces (Bell, 2022; Tuck, 2009).

This research aimed to create a code of conduct focused on humanisation by combining reflexivity with respect, justice, and beneficence. Chilisa advocated for applying Ubuntu, a Bantu philosophy that embodies the concept "I am

because we are." This perspective emphasised our shared humanity and provided a framework to challenge established positions of dominance and harmful deficit narratives. Ubuntu was instrumental in decolonising prevailing meanings and offered guidance on the responsibilities and obligations of researchers toward the individuals being studied (2019, p. 25). With this approach, this research fostered a sense of community, belonging, togetherness, and overall well-being.

Ubuntu serves as an ethical framework that emphasises the importance of relationships, focusing on collaboration, collectivity, and reciprocity. This perspective provides a way to understand and articulate reality while humanising the research process. Research practices and ethical considerations influenced by Ubuntu can create pathways for mending, healing, and restorative interactions when working with Indigenous or marginalised participants. This approach counters the harms inflicted by the Cartesian dichotomy, which separates identity, experience, and self-determination, perpetuating the cultural and colonial legacy of epistemological assumptions that racialise and marginalise students in university environments (Bell, 2022; Chilisa, 2019; Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

## Appendix 2 – Ethics Approval

**From:** Worktribe <noreply@worktribe.com>

**Sent:** 15 January 2024 4:49 PM

**To:** Bell, Deanne <deanne.bell@ntu.ac.uk>

**Subject:** Annabel Cali marked the application as favourable opinion: Witnessing Dreams of Liberation: Understanding Colonial Legacies, Racism, and Denial in Portuguese higher education psychology.



Worktribe.

[Witnessing Dreams of Liberation: Understanding Colonial Legacies, Racism, and Denial in Portuguese Higher Education psychology.](#)

Annabel Cali marked the application as favourable opinion:

[Annabel Cali](#)

Response:

Following resubmission, we are pleased to inform you that the Schools of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BLSS REC) were happy to verify that in their judgement there were no outstanding ethical concerns that required further discussion or exploration prior to data collection and as a result the Committee is satisfied that your research ethics application has met with a favourable ethics opinion.

The favourable ethics opinion of your application is valid until **30 September 2025**. Should your project extend beyond this time then an application for an extension would need to be submitted to the BLSS REC through the Worktribe Ethics Module.

Please note: your project has been

granted a favourable ethics opinion based on the information provided in your application. However, should any of the information change at any point during your study or should you wish to engage participants to undertake further research, then you are required to resubmit your application to the BLSS REC through the Worktribe Ethics Module for further consideration.

If you do resubmit your application and if you wish to make changes to your existing document(s), please use track changes so we can identify where the changes have been made. To make amendments you will need to delete the old document and replace with a new one. Please put AMENDED and the DATE in the saved document title. Please **DO NOT** replace the existing document(s) with a '**clean**' copy, as we will not be able to identify where the changes have been made.

Receipt of a favourable ethics opinion does not constitute permission to proceed with the research. A 'breach of integrity' would technically occur if the researcher goes ahead with the project without the correct governance approvals being in place first, which could be considered to be Research Misconduct.

REC documentation should require an explicit commitment from research teams to consider the possible impact that any changes to their research project, but in particular changes to research design and methods of data collection, have on research ethics; and, therefore, whether a follow-up ethics review of a substantial amendment is required. If researchers are unsure, they should discuss the matter with their REC Chair in the first instance.

Examples of substantial changes that would require a research ethics application for review of a substantial amendment include:

- (i) the safety or physical or mental integrity of the research participants (normally requiring amendments to information sheets, consent forms and other participant facing documents);
- (ii) the scientific value of the study (normally requiring changes to the study methods);
- (iii) the conduct or management of the study, (this might include changes in recruitment strategies, data management, or changes that might affect risk assessment);
- (iv) the quality or safety of any equipment used in the study.

On behalf of the Committee, we would like to wish you success with the completion of your project.

Annabel Cali  
BLSS Ethics Officer  
Research Governance and Policy

*Set Decision Date to 15 January 2024, 16:47*

*Changed Approval End Date to 30 September 2025, 00:00*

*Changed Response*

*Changed Status to Favourable Opinion*

*Reassigned to [Delso Batista Junior](#), [Deanne Bell](#), [Stephanie Davis](#), [Ricky Gee](#) and [Phil Banyard](#)*

*Notified Deanne Bell, Delso Batista Junior, Phil Banyard and Ricky Gee*

Appendix 3 – Research Invitation Email

[PORTUGUESE]

*Prezado potencial participante,*

*Espero que se encontre bem. Estou a entrar contato para conversarmos sobre sua participação na investigação de doutoramento que estou a conduzir, uma vez que indicou interesse em colaborar por meio de uma entrevista.*

*Meu nome é Delso Batista, sou luso-brasileiro, psicólogo, negro, imigrante e queer, e me encontro no Reino Unido como estudante de doutoramento em Psicologia na Universidade Nottingham Trent.*

*O título da minha dissertação é "**Testemunhando Sonhos de Libertação: Diálogos sobre Legados Coloniais, Racismo e Negação na Psicologia do Ensino Superior Português**". Como parte da minha pesquisa, entrevistarei outras pessoas negras/pretas, imigrantes e indígenas que desejem contar suas experiências e histórias, discutir seus pensamentos, sentimentos, sonhos relevantes sobre o tópico de ser ou ter sido estudante de psicologia em uma universidade Portuguesa.*

*As entrevistas serão anonimizadas. Vou gravar as entrevistas e transcrevê-las. Em minha dissertação, onde incluo ideias que emergirem de nossa conversa, não usarei qualquer informação de identificação que revele sua conexão com as ideias.*

*Espero que as entrevistas durem aproximadamente 30 minutos a 1 hora. As entrevistas acontecerão através do TEAMS, portanto são online.*

*Peço que responda a esse e-mail se você estiver interessado em discutir este tópico comigo, para o propósito desta pesquisa, o que pode contribuir no avanço do conhecimento sobre essas questões em Portugal.*

*Um abraço e muito obrigado.*

[ENGLISH]

Dear potential participant,

I hope this message finds you well. I am reaching out to discuss your participation in the doctoral research I am conducting, as you have indicated an interest in collaborating through an interview.

My name is Delso Batista, and I am a Luso-Brazilian, psychologist, Black, immigrant, and queer. I am a doctoral student in Psychology at Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom.

My dissertation title is ***"Witnessing Dreams of Liberation: Dialogues on Colonial Legacies, Racism, and Denial in Portuguese Higher Education Psychology."*** As part of my research, I will interview other Black, Brown, immigrant, and Indigenous individuals who wish to share their experiences and stories and discuss their thoughts, feelings, and dreams related to being or having been a psychology student at a Portuguese university.

The interviews will be anonymised. I will record the interviews and transcribe them. In my dissertation, where I include ideas from our conversation, I will not use any identifying information that reveals your connection to the ideas.

I anticipate that the interviews will last approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour. They will be conducted online through TEAMS.

Please respond to this email if you are interested in discussing this topic with me for this research, which can contribute to advancing knowledge on these issues in Portugal.

Best regards, and thank you very much.

Kind regards,

**Delso Batista**

Registered Member MBACP, EuroPsy Psychologist EFPA, Master in Psychology, Psychotherapy, and Counseling. Ph.D. Candidate in Psychology.

Preferred Pronouns: He/Him

Nottingham Trent University 50 Shakespeare Street | Nottingham | NG1 4FQ.  
E: delso.batistajunior2021@my.ntu.ac.uk



Department of Psychology

**Participants' Information Sheet –  
Witnessing Dreams of Liberation in  
Portuguese Higher Education  
Psychology**

---

## **Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to consider taking part in this research project. Before deciding whether to participate in the conversation, you must understand why the research is being conducted and what your collaboration will involve. I would appreciate your careful reading of the following information before deciding. Please feel free to contact me if any of the information provided needs to be clarified or if you wish to discuss your collaboration on this project further.

## **What is the purpose of this study?**

This study aims to understand narratives of racialised students' lived experiences in the context of Portuguese higher education psychology. According to several scholars, universities have been a site where Black, Brown and Indigenous students have experienced racism and denial (Abrantes & Roldão, 2019; Ambrósio et al., 2019; Arday & Mirza, 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Maeso & Araújo, 2010). In Portugal, evidence shows that black, brown racialised and Indigenous students face everyday experiences of racism (Doutor et al., 2018; Duque, 2012; Jardim, 2013; Oliveira, 2013; Pires, 2000; Semedo, 2010; Vinagre, 2017). The context of this research is the Portuguese university psychology courses, and this study design aims to contribute to the existing knowledge that addresses the problem of racism and denial in Portugal. This project aims to create opportunities for participants to share their stories. Through liberation psychology practices, the research participants are invited to participate in a space where they can share their lived experiences and engage in dialogue and collaborative work. The participants in this research will be encouraged to reimagine the spaces and futures for psychology learning and teaching in the context of Portuguese Universities. With this approach, the thesis's outcomes are likely to enhance the understanding of the ways of knowing from the participants, providing a more profound comprehension of their relationships within Portuguese academia, which has the potential to inform socio-political practices and discourses concerning the experiences of this group of black and brown racialised/Immigrant students. In the scope of hopes of this project, this study aims to discuss and explore your understanding of your experiences as a student, accounts of everyday life events, and dreams for the future of psychology practices and teaching, generating knowledge in a better understanding of the reality of black and brown racialised/Indigenous students in Portuguese university psychology courses.

## **Who is running the study?**

My name is Delso Batista, and I am a doctoral candidate in Psychology at Nottingham Trent University (NTU). I am conducting this study for my doctoral thesis. The project will be under the supervision of the dissertation supervisors, Dr Deanne Bell, Dr Stephanie Davis, Prof. Dr Richard Gee and Dr Phil Banyard.

### **Why have I been chosen to take part?**

You were chosen to participate because you are a person enrolled in psychology undergrad, master's, and PhD in a Portuguese university who self-identifies as Indigenous, Black African, Black Caribbean, Black Brazilian, Black Portuguese, Other Black, Mixed, and Immigrant.

Your experience and knowledge concerning being a black or brown racialised/Indigenous person navigating an academic space in a former colonial empire in many territories in Africa, South America, and Asia are relevant to this research, which aims to comprehend narratives of racism. By understanding your experiences and knowledge, this study aims to contribute to the field of psychology research in Portugal.

Your participation in this research seeks to provide information concerning your experiences as a black or brown racialised/Indigenous student in Portuguese higher education psychology.

With your shared knowledge, this research aims to inform future work in reviewing and establishing psychology's curriculum and teaching/learning approaches in contexts such as the Portuguese psychology courses.

You are selected because your contribution as a black or brown racialised/Indigenous student can amplify the voices in projects aiming to explore possibilities in renewing the context of Portuguese Psychology Universities.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, your collaboration in this research is entirely voluntary. You can also withdraw from the study by asking to terminate the interview or remove your data after the conversation. You do not have to give a reason why you are withdrawing. If you want to cancel your participation, it can be done within four weeks after your interview. You may also choose how you would like to be named in the thesis and discuss how your data will be disseminated. Otherwise, your details will be anonymised as your data is confidential.

If you decide to participate in this study, sign or say yes to indicate that you have understood this information sheet and the consent form and agree to participate.

### **What will I be asked to do?**

1. We will have a face-to-face or phone conversation to discuss the project, allowing you to ask questions.
2. I will record this session for transparency on an agreed date. A simple yes or no may suffice for consent.

3. On an agreed date, hour, and place, I will meet you to have a research conversation where you will be invited to share your experiences prompted by an open set of questions. You will have the opportunity to ask me questions and provide comments about the purposes of the research.
4. I will then transcribe and later analyse the data.
5. I may reflect these to you to ensure accuracy. In that case, I will contact you and relate my understanding of the data in the hope that you will provide further clarification.
6. Once I have written a discussion from the gathered data from this study, I will present and discuss with my supervisors a summary of the data to be added to the thesis.
7. Finally, I will present my thesis findings at Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, United Kingdom. After the presentation, you are welcome to suggest ways you imagine the results could be disseminated in Portugal.

### **How will the conversation be conducted?**

If you decide to participate in this study, I will ask you to be available on the agreed date, but I am flexible to reschedule if you cannot make it for any reason. I aim to have this conversation face-to-face, at your university or any other place you feel comfortable with, including online calls through Teams. The conversation is expected to last between 30 minutes and 1 hour. The discussion should be conducted in a suitable location you suggest. All documentation will be explained to you before the start of the conversation. I will guide you through each step of the process, and you are encouraged to ask questions at any stage.

### **What questions will be asked?**

We will consider questions about your relationships with university spaces and how you feel navigating higher education. You will be asked about accounts that marked your experience at the university and your hopes and ideas about psychology teaching and curriculum. You can answer questions concerning your dreams and hopes for the future of psychology and the university.

### **What will happen to the information I will provide?**

The conversation recording will be transcribed (typed out word for word) and translated (by me). The transcript will be anonymised unless agreed otherwise, and some quotes from what you say may be incorporated into reports about my research, including my thesis. All transcripts will be kept on my work laptop in Word documents. I will transfer the files from my NTU laptop to NTU secure storage as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours, and then delete them from my computer.

Your data will be collected via forms containing name, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, and age. The information you provide will be dealt with by the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation, which is the UK and Portugal law on ensuring your information is kept safe), so it will be securely stored with respect for your confidentiality and privacy. Other forms of personal data, such as video and audio recordings, will be collected and may be destroyed after the transcriptions. The anonymised and transcribed data will be stored for a year after my graduation and archived per the NTU Records Retention Schedule for ten years from the date of deposit.

If the name of someone else you know is mentioned during the research conversation, I will use pseudonyms to hide their identity. However, you may choose how and what names are to be disclosed.

### **How will the research team protect my confidentiality and anonymity?**

All transcripts will be kept in a secure, password-protected location. Only my project supervisors and I will have access to the transcripts and recordings of the discussion. Electronic copies will be stored in NTU's storage system, which is secure in line with UK legal requirements and NTU's and the British Psychological Society's code of ethics.

You will not be named or otherwise identified, unless you have agreed to be named, in any publication arising from this research; all care will be exercised to ensure your identity is kept anonymised by changing your name and excluding any information you may give during the discussion that could identify you.

In addition, the research location will also be kept anonymous to ensure your identity is kept confidential.

Even if you decide to remain anonymous, some of what you say will be included in the final report as quotations from the conversation. The project supervisor, markers and external moderators of the thesis will read these. Quotes may also be included in academic publications about this research.

If you mention another individual with identifiers, they will automatically be anonymised, and all identifiers will be removed from the transcripts unless you wish otherwise.

### **What are the possible benefits/advantages of taking part?**

I hope you find the discussion interesting and take satisfaction from discussing our realities, relationships in learning, and the field of psychology. This research focuses on the voices of historically marginalised people who have been subjected to challenging academic experiences. It is about connecting, recovering, and accounts of lived experiences, dreams, relationships, imagination, and change.

### **What are the possible risks/disadvantages of taking part?**

This study carries minimal risk as you will be narrating your daily life, but know that you have the right to withdraw at any time. It would be best to consider whether talking to a researcher from a UK university carries any risk to you in the context of your university. In case you require further psychological support after the research conversation, you can contact the Counselling and Student Support Services at your university or SNS Counselling Services at <https://www.sns24.gov.pt/servico/aconselhamento-psicologico-no-sns-24/>.

### **What will happen to the results of the research?**

I will write up the results in my thesis, to be assessed by an external assessor and by academic staff at NTU and potentially be published as academic articles or in an academic publication, which may be read by academic staff, practitioners, students, and others working within the field of Psychology. It will potentially be available at the RCAAP - *Repositórios Científicos de Acesso Aberto de Portugal*.

### **How can I find out more about this project and its results?**

After the thesis Viva presentation in the UK, you will be invited to provide suggestions on how you imagine the results could be disseminated in Portugal. A final version of the thesis will be deposited at Nottingham Trent University's Institutional Repository (IRep) for open access.

### **Has anyone reviewed the study?**

My supervisors reviewed the research, and an independent assessor went through the relevant NTU research ethics procedures, receiving a favourable ethics opinion from Nottingham Trent University's Schools of Business, Law, and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. It has been designed in accordance with the British Psychological Society's code of ethics and the Portuguese Psychologists' Order.

### **Who is responsible for the study?**

I will be responsible for this research, which will be conducted under the close supervision of my supervisors. See below for the contact details.

### **Contacts and further information**

#### **Main Researcher:**

Nottingham Trent University,  
50 Shakespeare Street,  
Nottingham.

NG1 4FQ.

Email: [delso.batistajunior2021@my.ntu.ac.uk](mailto:delso.batistajunior2021@my.ntu.ac.uk)

**Supervision Team:**

**Director of Studies:** Dr Deanne Bell, PhD. CPsychol. AFBPsS. SFHEA.

Associate Professor of Critical Psychology and Decolonial Studies

Department of Psychology, Nottingham Trent University

50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham NG1 4FQ

Office: Chaucer 431

T: 0115 848 4169

E: [deanne.bell@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:deanne.bell@ntu.ac.uk)

**Co-Supervisor:** Dr Stephanie Davis, PhD FHEA

Health Justice Researcher

Email: [drstephaniemdavis@gmail.com](mailto:drstephaniemdavis@gmail.com)

**Co-Supervisor:** Dr Ricky Gee, SFHEA

Associate Professor of Sociology

Social and Political Sciences

School of Social Sciences

Nottingham Trent University

Chaucer Building, Goldsmith Street, Nottingham NG1 5LT

Direct Tel: +44 (0) 115 84 85813

Location: Chaucer 3123

Email: [ricky.gee@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:ricky.gee@ntu.ac.uk)

**Advisor:** Dr Phil Banyard

Emeritus Professor of Psychology

Nottingham Trent University,

50 Shakespeare St,

Nottingham

NG1 4FQ

### **Alternative contact**

If you want to speak with someone not directly involved in this research or have questions about your rights as a research subject, please get in touch with Suvo Mitra, Associate Dean of Research at Nottingham Trent University. You can contact them at tel: +44 115 8486803 or send an email to: [suvo.mitra@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:suvo.mitra@ntu.ac.uk)

### **Safety and Wellbeing (HAS)**

Killeavy, Roy

Health and Safety Adviser

Email: [roy.killeavy@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:roy.killeavy@ntu.ac.uk)

Davies, Lisa

Health and Safety Adviser

Email: [lisa.davies@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.davies@ntu.ac.uk)

Nottingham Trent University

Address: 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ

Email: [DPO@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:DPO@ntu.ac.uk)

### **Data Protection Officer**

Nottingham Trent University

Address: 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ

Email: [DPO@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:DPO@ntu.ac.uk)

Please get in touch with the Data Protection Officer if:

You have a question/query about how NTU is using your data;

You would like to report a data breach (if you believe that your data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately);

You would like to complain about how your data is being used.

### **Purpose of NTU Research Privacy Notice (RPN)**

The Research Privacy Notice outlines what NTU does with personal data and how we protect personal data and the rights of research participants during research activities, by the UK GDPR/ Data Protection Act 2018. For more information regarding the RPN, please click on the following link: [Research privacy notice | Nottingham Trent](#)

University

If you have any questions about the specific research study you have participated in, you should contact the research team in the first instance. Any enquiries of a confidential nature should be addressed to the Head of Research Policy and Governance and sent to [anton.muszanskyj@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:anton.muszanskyj@ntu.ac.uk)

You have the right to raise concerns with the Information Commissioner; their website is here: <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

Please review our Research Privacy notice here: [Research privacy notice | Nottingham Trent University](#)

## Appendix 5 – Consent Form

School of Social Sciences

# Informed Consent Form

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Version: 1st

Date: 19/09/2023

**Please tick the appropriate boxes.**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
I have read and understood the participant information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand my participation is voluntary. I can withdraw from the study until four weeks after my participation, counting from the moment the researcher shares with me what data is meant to be used in the research, and I do not have to explain why I no longer want to participate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part in the project involves being interviewed and recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that none of my personal details or identifying information will be revealed to anyone by the researcher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my words may be quoted anonymously in the researcher's dissertation and other publications arising from this research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant[printed]      Signature      Date

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

\_\_\_\_\_  
I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet approved by my supervisor to the participant and thoroughly explained its contents. I have allowed the participant to ask questions, which have been answered.

**Delso de Cassio Batista Jr.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher [printed]      Signature      **04 September 2023**  
Date

**Por favor marque as caixas apropriadas.**

	<b>Sim</b>	<b>Não</b>
Li e compreendi a ficha de informações do participante.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tive a oportunidade de considerar as informações, fazer perguntas e obtive respostas satisfatórias.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entendo que minha participação é voluntária. Posso desistir do estudo até quatro semanas após a minha participação, contadas a partir do momento em que o pesquisador compartilhar comigo quais dados pretendem ser utilizados na pesquisa, e não preciso explicar porque não quero mais participar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entendo que participar do projeto envolve ser entrevistado e gravado.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entendo que nenhum dos meus dados pessoais ou informações de identificação será revelado a ninguém além do pesquisador.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entendo que minhas palavras poderão ser citadas anonimamente na dissertação do pesquisador e em outras publicações decorrentes desta pesquisa.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concordo em participar do projeto.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

---

Nome Participante

---

Assinatura

---

Data

Este formulário de consentimento será armazenado separadamente de quaisquer dados que você fornecer, para que suas respostas permaneçam anônimas.

---

Confirmo que forneci ao participante uma cópia da Ficha de Informações do Participante aprovada pelo meu supervisor e expliquei completamente o seu conteúdo. Dei ao participante a oportunidade de fazer perguntas, que foram respondidas.

**Delso de Cassio Batista Jr.**

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**04 Setembro 2023**

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Nome Pesquisador

---

Assinatura

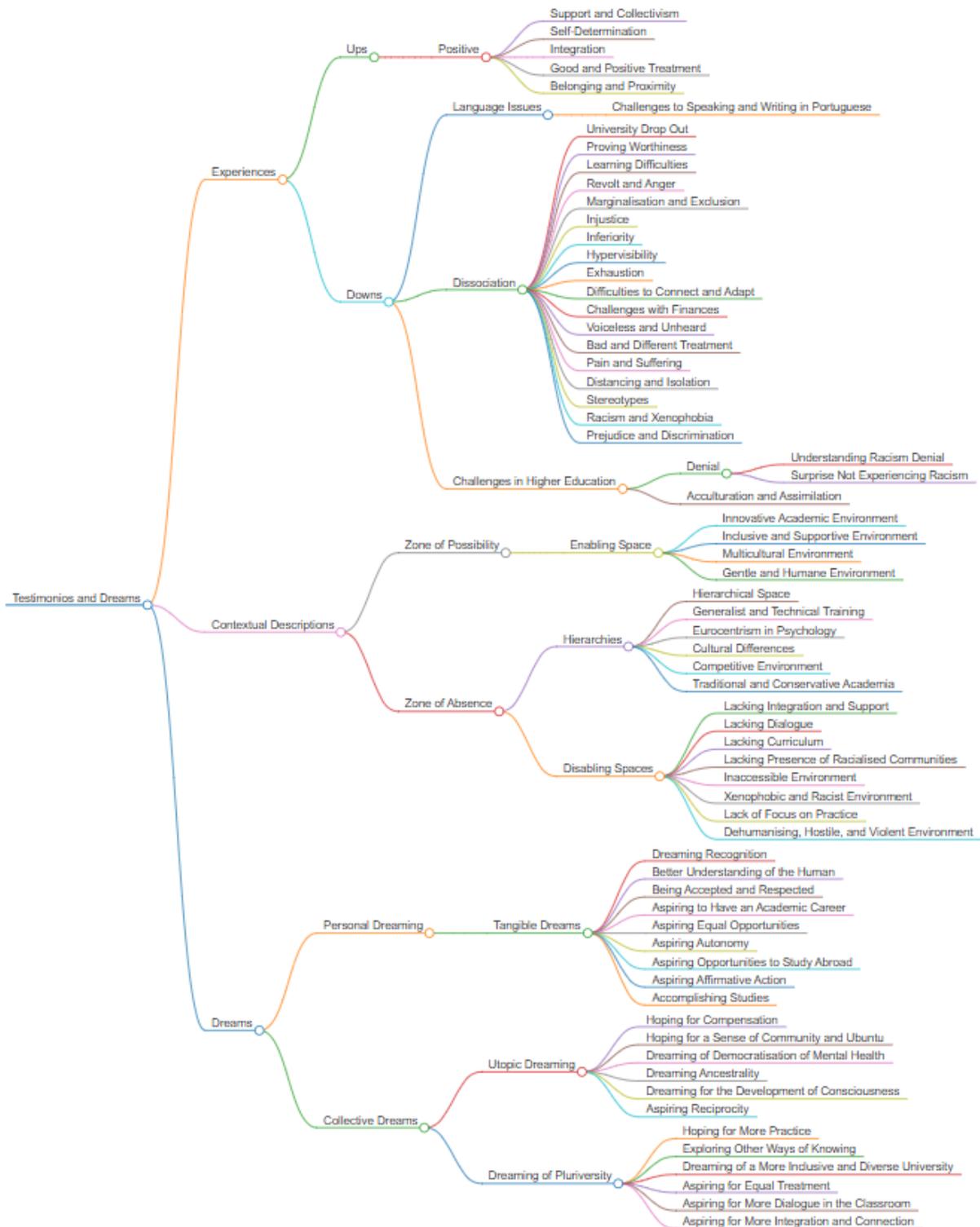
---

Data

Appendix 6 – Sample Transcript with Coding

<p>Describing classroom context</p>	<p>I think the people I interact with there, actually, with the interaction, there was a change in treatment, right? Because what happens... Well, my colleagues... my class is very small because it seems to be a course that not everyone is interested in, so... We are... we were 7, I think half of the girls were from Portugal and the other half, um, me and 3 more, right... 2 more of us were Brazilian, so this, on the one hand, was very positive because it balances, right? And gives strength to certain opinions, anyway, and then this cultural shock made them reframe many things, and this was communicated to us. So sometimes, at the beginning, there was an interpretation of certain things that changed over time, but in a positive sense, like, some because of lack of contact, others because, well, they did not have knowledge, right? But the treatment among colleagues in general, for the most part, is positive, but I realize that the cultural issue itself, right? The education that is here is very different, like, the perspective on some things is very different from ours, like, from mine I mean. So, I have to speak from an individual perspective, right? I notice that, like, some intersections are different. Right, what they have here as someone who lives in a country in Europe, even though Portugal is a poor country compared to others, is different. So, the view of periphery, of, well... of poverty and of certain other situations, like, of privilege, is... even because one of the colleagues, right... And they are also younger, so that makes a difference, but what I noticed is that... now, one of them even verbalized it, like, she even mentioned, right "I, as a white woman, perceive the difference in privileges that I will have and that a migrant, black woman, well, will not have." But she began to realize this after she entered university, the course, and started to have contact with other things... So, in this sense, I perceive that the treatment has been changing, not that it was bad, but that it was different from now. Because there is this awareness.</p>
<p>Experiencing Belonging and Proximity</p>	
<p>Describing Cultural Differences</p>	
<p>Describing Hierarchical Differences</p>	

## Appendix 7 – Initial Coding and Fracturing of the Data using a mindmap



Appendix 8 – Glossary

<b>Terminology</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Coloniality</b>	Coloniality refers to the enduring power, knowledge, and existence structures established during the colonial era. Even after the formal end of colonisation, colonialism continues to influence modern institutions, epistemologies, and social hierarchies. It highlights the ongoing dominance of Western norms over marginalised cultures and peoples.
<b>Colonial Legacy</b>	The colonial legacy refers to the enduring effects of colonial rule on political, economic, cultural, and social systems. This includes the marginalisation of Indigenous and non-Western knowledge, systemic racism, and global power structures that favour former colonial powers.
<b>Conscientização – (Critical Consciousness)</b>	Coined by Paulo Freire, <i>conscientização</i> – critical consciousness is the process of developing a critical awareness of one’s social, political, and economic conditions. It involves recognising oppressive structures and empowering individuals to challenge and transform them through dialogue and action. Freire viewed this as essential for liberation and social justice, enabling individuals to exercise active agency.
<b>Curriculum</b>	A curriculum is the structured content and teaching methods within educational systems. In decolonial contexts, it is often critiqued for its Eurocentric bias, which sidelines non-Western epistemologies and histories while perpetuating colonial narratives.
<b>Decoloniality</b>	Decoloniality is the process of dismantling colonial power structures and epistemologies. It prioritises colonised peoples' voices, knowledge systems, and autonomy to create a pluriversal world where multiple epistemologies coexist without hierarchy.
<b>Dreaming</b>	In decolonial and Indigenous epistemologies, dreaming refers to accessing ancestral knowledge, envisioning futures, and reimagining possibilities beyond colonial oppression. It serves as an individual, social, and political act of connection and resistance.
<b>Healing</b>	Healing is the process of recovering wounds, especially the collective, cultural, and political harm caused by colonialism and systemic oppression. In decolonial contexts, healing often involves reconnecting with ancestral traditions, land, and community to restore well-being.
<b>Hegemony</b>	Hegemony refers to the dominance of one group over others through ideological consent and cultural control rather than force. It normalises the dominant group’s values and beliefs, marginalises alternative perspectives, and sustains power structures. In decolonial contexts,

	hegemony is often linked to coloniality, where Western knowledge and norms are considered superior, silencing non-Western viewpoints.
<b>Humanisation</b>	Humanisation involves recognising and affirming individuals' full dignity and humanity, particularly those who have been dehumanised by oppression. In Freirean pedagogy, fostering critical consciousness and mutual respect is a key goal of education aimed at liberating both the oppressors and the oppressed.
<b>Liberation Psychology</b>	Liberation psychology, developed by Ignacio Martín-Baró, addresses the structural and systemic causes of oppression. It emphasises the importance of community-based practices and collective action in healing and achieving social justice.
<b>Luso-tropicalism</b>	Luso-tropicalism is a pseudo-theory that presents Portuguese colonisation as more benevolent and inclusive, emphasising cultural mixing and racial harmony. This myth has been critiqued for obscuring the racial and colonial inequalities within Portuguese colonies, particularly in Brazil and Africa.
<b>Oppression</b>	Oppression refers to the systemic and structural disadvantage of certain groups based on race, gender, class, or other social categories. It manifests through discrimination, exclusion, and exploitation, often perpetuated by institutions and cultural norms.
<b>Otherness</b>	Otherness defines individuals or groups as fundamentally different, often leading to exclusion and dehumanisation. Rooted in colonial and Eurocentric frameworks, it constructs marginalised identities (e.g., racialised or cultural) as the "Other" in contrast to a dominant norm.
<b>Pedagogy</b>	Pedagogy refers to teaching methods and practices. In decolonial and Freirean frameworks, pedagogy is seen as a tool for liberation that emphasises dialogue, critical thinking, and the co-construction of knowledge between educators and learners.
<b>Racialisation</b>	Racialisation refers to categorising a group of people based on their "race." It involves assigning racial significance to identities, particularly in areas such as housing, employment, and education. In societies where "White" individuals hold power, this process creates a hierarchy that leads to racial inequalities within social structures and systems.
<b>Testimonio</b>	<i>Testimonio</i> is a narrative method in which individuals or communities share their lived experiences of oppression and resistance. This practice often serves as a means of collective memory and political action, amplifying marginalised voices and fostering solidarity and awareness.

## Appendix 9 – Inquiry Questions Guide

1. How would you describe your university?
  - a. How do your colleagues treat you?
  - b. What about your teachers?
  - c. What about staff and administration?
2. How would you describe your experience in your classroom?
  - d. What was your everyday life experience when you were in psychology class?
3. What are the difficulties in being Black, Brown, immigrant or Indigenous in the context of Portuguese psychology courses?
4. What treatment do Black, Brown, immigrant or Indigenous students receive from faculty and staff in Psychology courses in Portugal?
5. How would you describe your psychology course?
  - e. Would you imagine changing anything about it?
6. Can you describe what it means to be a Black, Brown, Immigrant, Indigenous psychology student at your university in Portugal?
  - f. What does it mean to you?
  - g. What about your family and or community?
  - h. For the Portuguese society?
7. As a Black, Brown, Immigrant or Indigenous person, what are your dreams or desires for the future of psychology and Academia?
8. What are your hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future?
  - i. What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations for your family?
  - j. What about your community?
  - k. What does social dreaming mean to you?
9. What were your dreams, hopes, and aspirations to study psychology at a Portuguese University?