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Political identity in contemporary South Africa: a study looking into the construction and articulation of gender on the online phenomenon of Black Twitter

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2017

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Lebethe, Tsholofelo Emily Kelebogile (2017) Political identity in contemporary South Africa: a study looking into the construction and articulation of gender on the online phenomenon of Black Twitter, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <https://hdl.handle.net/10539/24625>

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"*Political identity in contemporary South Africa: A study looking into the construction and articulation of gender on the online phenomenon of Black Twitter. "*

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A research paper submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree

MA: Development Studies

Submitted to the

Faculty of Humanities,

University of the Witwatersrand

11 August 2017

Supervised by: Prof. Bridget Kenny

Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank Prof. Bridget Kenny, my supervisor who helped me through the process of writing this paper. You have been nothing less than kind and patient with me. I will never thank you enough.
- Thank you to the thousands of Black Twitter users who eagerly take to Twitter to engage on issues affecting the Black community. The assertion that you are Black is in itself consciousness. Without you, there would be no Black Twitter.
- Sincere gratitude to Pontsho Mabena. For your time and unwavering support, thank you.
- To my maker, Jesus Christ, none of this would have been possible without God.
- Finally, to my mother, everything that I am and that I hope to be, I owe to you. Thank you for your support, your prayers, your words of affirmation, your daily encouragement and unchanging love. I dedicate this whole degree to you.

Abstract

This study examines the new online phenomenon called Black Twitter and the *publics* that have been formed on this platform in regards to issues affecting black lives. Specifically, it not only introduces to the reader the South African Black Twitter market, but more importantly, it looks at how Black Twitter users construct and articulate their gender identities online. This is done through analyzing trending topics, particularly, through a specific hashtag (#IFApartheidDidntHappen) and accounts (@blak_terrorist and @KasiMlungu) which offer rich insight around racial identities and enables one to analyze the content and possible discourses that come into play on this Black Twitter platform. This paper also contributes to the growing literature on the growing black middle-class by exploring how Black Twitter is providing a voice to groups that were historically excluded from the mainstream media discourse. The key purpose of this paper was to explore, as has been suggested, Black Twitter as a public platform and how its young group of users are moving into spaces to challenge the status quo and change historically dominant discourses.

Contents

Research Topic 6

Chapter 1: Introduction 6

Research Question 11

Chapter 2: Literature Review 14

- Black Twitter 14
- Black Twitter as a sub-culture 15
- Twitter as a platform for political engagement 16
- Black Twitter- A space for the youth 18
- South Africa's black middle-class 19
- The Networked Public Sphere 22
- Identity 24
- Political Identity: An expressive performative understanding 26
- Self-representation online 28
- Gender and Political Identity 29
- Intersectionality on Black Twitter 31

Chapter 3: Methodology 33

- Qualitative Content Analysis 33
- Interpretive Content Analysis 35
- Thematic Analysis 36
- Language as Theme 37
- Netnography 38

Sampling Method 41

- Purposive and Snowball Sampling Methods 41

Chapter 4: Findings 46

- Introduction 46
- Intergenerational gender tensions on Black Twitter 50
  - Backgorund 50
  - Interview on Talk Radio 702 51
  - Affinity in Identity 52
  - Intergenerational Tensions 53
- Race and Gender fluidity on Black Twitter- Kasi Mlungu 66

Race fluidity on Black Twitter 67
Race and Gender fluidity- The case of Sarah Langa 75
Hashtags for social change and political activism 82
Background 82
Hashtags for Social Change and a means of Political Activism 83
Depiction of self-identity 84
Education and access to labour 85
Land Reform 87
Interracial relations 89
Language and race problems 89
Violence prevalence 91
Locating women's issues in #IFApartheidDidntHappen 92
Chapter 5: Conclusion 97
Bibliography 100

Research Topic

Political identity in contemporary South Africa: A study looking into the construction and articulation of gender on the online phenomenon of Black Twitter.

Chapter 1: Introduction

For many, Twitter has provided a voice to groups that are often excluded from the mainstream media. Through the eruption of Black Twitter, groups of people have been able to reclaim and amplify their voices through participating and engaging with each other regarding issues as simple as everyday life, of health, emotions, language and culture as well as political and democratic discontentment. My wish was to study South African Black Twitter; in particular, not specifically its eruption but rather also how its participants use it. Moreover, the aim was to study identity formation, not holistically, but rather, gender identity and the articulation thereof on this platform. Specifically, my aim is to study how these users debate and position themselves in regards to gender issues. I believe this paper also contributes to the growing literature about the South African black middle and working-class and how they are reclaiming spaces which they were previously excluded from by virtue of political and economic injustices. I hope to do this by studying Black Twitter as a platform and how this young group of people are fearlessly moving into spaces and seek to change historically dominant discourses.

My intentions were to explore how Black Twitter is providing a voice to groups that were historically excluded from mainstream media discourse. I am not ignorant to the fact that Twitter within itself, needless to say, Black Twitter as well, are spaces that are newly created (post 1994). However, I approached my research with this logic: according to a study by Unicef (2012) on the *South African Mobile Generation,* "South Africa's history of apartheid impacted

the development and delivery of public and social services in the country". Specifically, telephone infrastructures and the access thereof was only put in affluent (white) residences which saw the rest of South Africa's population neglected from gaining access to information and communication technologies. The post-apartheid era then brought with it a rise in the development of infrastructure in previously disadvantaged areas. Despite the many improvements that have taken place in the country, the voices of the poor are still missing in the media and according to the study mentioned above, it is a result of the structural economic injustices of the past that are still affecting us today. Therefore, because such spaces historically would have not been accessible to black people, this research does not focus on the ongoing debate on the connection between race, class and consumption in the country per se, however, it contributes to it. Furthermore, the study of spaces such as Black Twitter allows one to potentially focus broadly on understanding the digital landscape in South Africa and how its development in post-apartheid is assuring in new discourses; it allows one to ask questions that aim to understand the consumption and use of such platforms among the black middle class youth. Similarly, at an even broader level, it deals with issues of how such platforms are becoming enablers and drivers of social and political developments.

It is important to elucidate a very clear assumption that I have based my study on. The assumption is, as has been perpetuated, that Black Twitter is formed and informed by the black middle-class and I use one in hope of exploring the other, interchangeably, for the simple reason that Twitter in itself, specifically in South Africa, is still very much a space for those who are considered economically better off. However, as with the case of Wanelisa Xaba, a key participant in this study, the lines between the black middle-class and working class are not always so clear. I briefly touch on this in chapters to follow.

My interest in studying Black Twitter draws from this assumption. Southall deems it important to study the black middle-class because "they have been, if not actually ignored, then largely pushed in analysis to the study of South African society" and its role in the making of the new democratic South Africa has been largely understated (Southall 2016). He argues that there have been numerous studies on the South African middle-class and little research that focuses distinctly on the black middle-class and what informs them. Seemingly, there is also currently little or no extensive, academic study on *South African* Black Twitter because it is a fairly new phenomenon and the research has predominantly been based on the African-American population although very similar in traits. For this reason, one of the goals for this study is to introduce to the reader the South-African Black Twitter group. Although the theme of the black middle-class is not dominant in this paper, however, it is one that is important and proved to be coming up a number of times when conducting this research; I therefore deemed it important to briefly share literature that would help contribute to these perhaps subordinate but important theme.

Pilane (2014) explains *South African* Black Twitter as "a group of thousands of black twitterers who are interested in issues of race, current news and pop culture and tweet a lot". She explains however, that in South Africa particularly, it is a place to engage on issues that matter and that are of interest to young black South Africans and these issues are not confined. This platform therefore potentially allows for a window in studying how they form identities and also, what informs this formed identity as the first generation of black middle class youth. When dealing with questions of political identity on Black Twitter, one has a wealth of directions which one can follow. Because of the limitless and endless topics which these users engage with, using scholarly analysis, one can research (among other things) how this particular group constructs and defines blackness,

how they form new racial assimilations and how they practice citizenry. Black Twitter potentially allows for an opportunity to trace the relationship between tweets and political elections, it allows for research regarding the correlation between online and real life self-representation. Like many other media platforms, Black Twitter also allows for further research focusing on globalization, the influence of American popular culture in the making of South African post-apartheid identity and can contribute to debates on cultural imperialism.

However, I do not wish to follow any of the directions mentioned above. The primary question of this study is to find out how Black Twitter users articulate and construct political identity on this platform. My aim specifically, is to center my research on the politics of identity formed on Black Twitter. Jamie Frueh (2003) when writing on political identity builds upon the constructivist theory in hope of tracing changes in identity that came along with the changing of social structures and institutions during and post the apartheid era. More profoundly, Frueh coveys the importance and complexities that come with analyzing identities formed through changing structures, both political and social structures. To better understand this, he employs the constructivist theory to look into social identities in South Africa. I hope to use his work as a lens through which I will analyze identities formed on this platform. The question of political identity will not be dealt with holistically, but rather, the aim is to look at the politics of identity around gender and how this particular group of Black Twitter users articulate and construct their identity in regards to issues of gender.

When attempting to deal with the question of gender specifically, in order to frame this part of my study, I drew on Judith Butler's (1990) theory of performativity and conducted the research with the idea that political identities can be understood as expressive discursive performances. The aim was to approach the study of Black Twitter users and their perception and apprehension

of gender in South Africa, which I believe is a performance compelled by existing and historical hegemonic heterosexist discourses. I consider it useful to study gender identity through Black Twitter as it allows me to go beyond the limits of gender as a performance of a particular time or historical event, but rather, because this precise group draws on the racial imbalances of the past and deal with everyday issues affecting them; it opens up a window through which one can consider the historical influences of gender relations in everyday life among blacks in the country yet also, interracial gender relations and self-representation online.

It is perhaps essential to elucidate that the issues and themes explored in this paper have in the past been largely explored by other researchers and authors, however, I believe it was particularly important to analyze these themes as discussed on this platform in hope of exploring how Black Twitter works as a public through which issues affecting young black people can be debated and navigated through. I explore issues of African spirituality, skin color and the associated hierarchies thereof, education, access to the labour market, language and land reform following specific themes titled "Intergeneration gender tensions on Black Twitter, Affinity in Identity, Race and Gender fluidity and depiction of self-identity on Black Twitter. These issues as has been noted are not necessarily original or under researched, however, these issues I believe take a slightly different stance and relevance when debated on this online public.

The purpose of this study was not only to make a contribution to the understanding of contemporary South Africa but also, to form an integrated picture of a small but steadily growing portion of black South African middle class and its existence online post 1994 by collecting comprehensive data and performing an analysis of the online phenomenon of Black Twitter.

Research Question

The aim of the research was to contribute to the study of the post-apartheid South African identities formed online by conducting an exploratory study of what Black Twitter is and what informs its users. The research was particularly aimed towards studying this online community and how identities are formed on this platform. At the core of this study is the question of political identity which I studied through analyzing how this group of Black Twitter users expresses issues of gender and interracial relations and how they self-represent themselves in connection to their post-apartheid identities. Clark (2014) believes that when dealing with Black Twitter as a research topic, because it is particularly an ethnographic research, that is, the study of people and cultures, the researcher needs to be "immersed in the field and to learn more about the community through performing fieldwork" (2014:32). Thus, the inception of the research is based on, but not limited to, my experiences of being an active participant of Black Twitter who is both 'middle-class' and is consciously aware of the historical effects of gender relations in contemporary South Africa. I approached this research with the following research questions:

Primary Questions:

1. How does the black youth construct and articulate issues of gender on the online phenomenon of Black Twitter?
2. What are some of the key issues of interest affecting Black Twitter users?

Secondary Questions:

1. What is South African Black Twitter?
2. How is Black Twitter an expressive and performative platform for gender identity?

3. How is the black middle class, using spaces such as Black Twitter, been able to construct political identity online post 1994?

In this research, I examined three twitter cases which led me to three fundamental themes and core debates. The first study was based on an active Black Twitter participant by the name of Wanelisa Xaba. As a self-identified active Black Twitter user, by studying the twitter profile of Wanelisa Xaba, it allowed me to firstly introduce to the reader, Black Twitter and mainly how its participants use. It also allowed to me to trace the key issues of debate that are of interest to this community and how they interact with each other in response to these issues. By studying Xaba and her use of Black Twitter, the key theme which came out of this study was around Intergenerational gender tension as well as affinity in identity among this group of users. In addition, Xaba has in other public spaces identified and prided herself as forming part of the "working-class" rather than the black middle-class. This therefore served as an opportunity to explore as per my secondary research question, if Black Twitter is really just formed by the black middle class and in so doing, allowed me to explore literature on what exactly constitutes black middle-class in post-apartheid South Africa.

The second study of this research was divided into two sections. First, it was based on the case of Kasi Mlungu, a white South African woman artist who has openly identified as being "black". Second part then focuses on Sarah Langa, a South African black woman model who claimed that she prefers not to be identified as a black person or even be made to classify as a specific race. I then compared and contrasted how both these individuals were received on Black Twitter. The key theme that arose from these two cases was around race and gender fluidity, specifically, I analyzed how black women and men respectively, took to either welcome or reject both these women in their attempt to practice race fluidity.

My third study was based, not particularly on a Black Twitter user, but rather, on a hashtag that was of particular significance to this Twitter group. Hashtag #IfApartheidDidNotHappen that was trending on the 13th of December 2016 was examined. At the core of the purpose of studying this trending hashtag, was to look into issues of importance to this group in regards to post-apartheid South Africa. A key theme that arose from studying this hashtag was the manner in which this group of users depicted their self-identity in post-apartheid South Africa. From this, came a number of sub-themes that informs and challenge the self-identity formation of this group of users. This particular study allowed me to get a holistic view of this group of Twitter users as I did not approach the study through the lens of a particular or specific user.

In all three studies, each of these offered a view regarding questions of post-apartheid identity, specifically in regards to the youth of the country, intersectionality, self-representation, online communities as a public sphere and how all these are expressively preformed on Black Twitter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Black Twitter

The concept of Black Twitter erupted specifically in America (Monjoo 2010). It is a hard term to conceptualize and understand for those who are not necessarily a part of it. In her article, Ramsey (2015) describes Black Twitter as "a large network of Black Twitter users and their loosely coordinated interactions, many of which accumulate into trending topics due to the network's size, interconnectedness, and unique activity". Black Twitter has also gained much prominence in academia, with many academics attempting to answer the question of 'What is Black Twitter'. Meredith Clark invested her time in completing a research with the specific goal of attempting to establish a theoretical framework for exploring American Black Twitter. In a discussion between Clark and Ramsey, Clark describes Black Twitter as the following (As documented by Ramsey):

> I define Black Twitter as a temporary linked group of connectors that share culture, language and interest in specific issues and talking about specific topics with a Black frame of reference. And when I say Black- that isn't just limited to the U.S Blacks, but Blacks throughout diaspora, and I think a lot of what we see reflects on Blacks just in the U.S., but I do want to make that distinction clear, that it is not just a matter if what we talk about here in the United States. (Ramsey 2015)

In her article, Ramsey describes Black Twitter as a sort of sub-cultural identification on Twitter. It can be described as Twitter social network focused on issues of interest to the Black community. More specifically, Black Twitter can be described as a cultural movement, a way in which Black people and those who stand for the Black community can voice their opinions (Ramsey 2015). It is a platform which has allowed middle class Blacks from different parts of

the world to interact with each other on Twitter regarding issues that affect them on a daily basis. It is also a platform which has allowed people of the Black community to voice their opinions on democracy, gender, race and even religion and it can be regarded as a special means of social activism. It is a platform which allows individuals to offer thoughts and commentaries regarding issues affecting black people. Peterson (2008:62-68) has outlined criteria's which one has to meet in order to be part of or at least feel as though one belongs to a community. In applying his outline to this phenomenon, Black Twitter must fulfill four dimensions, namely: "individuals must have a sense of belonging to the larger community (group membership); there must be a perception that the member's needs will be fulfilled by the community; the individual must believe he or she matters and/or has some influence within the community, and there must be an emotional connection with others in the community".

Black Twitter as a sub-culture

In writing on the phenomenon that is Black Twitter; one needs to briefly review literature on sub-culture. Hebdige (1979) writes about "subculture as that which implies the exertion of resistance through style, the distancing away from a person's 'other' or a false nature and the coming to the authentic expressive skill and authentic style". Božilović in his later work (2010:13) summarizes subculture as the following:

> Subcultures are salient constellations of norms and beliefs that are acknowledged and at some level agreed upon by interacting individuals; subcultures are manifested in social relations among individuals. Subcultures exist in relation to larger cultural and social phenomena and are understood in reference to them.

Subcultures can be considered as norms and beliefs that are agreed upon by interacting individual and can also be formed on internet based social spaces. The formation of black sub-

cultures in South Africa has a history dating back to the apartheid as a form of political resistance (Glaser 2000). Božilović maintains that a "special way of life is based on a specific cultural pattern – certain value system, ideas, norms and rules of behavior, symbol formation and their use, taste, fun, music, appearance and speech of particular social group…when it opposes the mainstream or dominant cultural model, this way of life gets transformed into a cultural style, that is subculture" (2009: 10−13). A subculture therefore can imply a place where a certain identity is formed outside of the norm or dominant cultural way of doing things. He also believes that subcultures very often come into being with no special or particular planning; that he deems them as having been spontaneously generated "while their activities are directed towards the goal which bases its raison d' être on the escape from anonymous everydayness imbued with boredom, spiritual emptiness and impersonality" (2009:11).

Twitter as a platform for political engagement

For many decades, the media has been used as a means to advance political agenda, this is because "media content, unlike other commodities, is also a political product that attracts the attention and interest of political authority and, depending on the nature of the content, the wrath of political power" (M'Bayo, 2000: 27). Over the years, social media developed into a powerful means for the mobilization of political engagement. Political engagement is an important pre-requisite component of democratic practice. Khamis and Vaughn argue that social media has acted as an effective tool for promoting civic engagement, through "supporting the capabilities of the democratic activists by allowing forums [and individuals] free speech and political networking opportunities" (2011:1). In 2010, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan joined social media, in a continent where Presidents are so inaccessible; this became the turning point for social media as a tool for political engagement. This resulted in him being the second most

popular president on social media after Barack Obama (Ogunlesi 2013). In many instances, Twitter has also been also used for mobilization and planning political discussions. Many politicians in South African have also taken to social media, specifically Twitter in hope of developing ongoing political engagement with South Africans. For example, Jacob Zuma has 391 657 followers and Julius Malema has 877 733 and Mmusi Maimane 198 155 followers on Twitter, with all three having a strong presence and engagement with their followers. The Democratic Alliance and ANC implemented their social media strategies in the 2014 elections (Wu 2014). Across the world, many "protesters [have] used Twitter to announce new initiatives, like marching to the parliament building, and to boost their collective morale with reports of other developments around the country" (Idle and Nunns 2011:20).

Social media is also being used as a means to mobilize the youth and other politically active citizens to engage in alternative political activity which can be described as digital activism. Malila (2013) cites research that found 70% of young people between 18 and 25 years regarded the internet as a source of valuable political information. Black Twitter as a sub-culture plays that role. It is ushering in a new and fresh perspective which has resulted in the democratization of access to information, and expression of opinion, and a challenge of the balance of power between those who lead and those that are led. In a study provided by Washington State University in 2012, it reveals that voting is higher among youth using social media to express their beliefs. In a study based in South African by University of the Witwatersrand in, The New Wave, it shows that, "a new group of internet users has emerged. They are young, black and from a low-income group. For now, they tend to use the internet in basic ways: for quick information and to socialize" (Wu 2013:1) further explaining that however, it is fast starting to change, that this 'new group' is starting to be more aware, engaged and politicized. Many have

argued differently in regards to South African Black Twitter specifically. Pilane (2015) and Sosibo (2015) both argue that it is a place for the middle-class, and also predominantly a place for intellectuals and those who are critical about social issues. By conducting this research, it granted me the opportunity to look into how this specific twitter community is engaging in socioeconomic issues of the country, and importantly, where they place gender and women's issues in regards to the topics that are of interest to them.

Black Twitter- A space for the youth

In dealing with this research topic, it is important to briefly review literature specifically relating to the history of South African youth. The National Youth Policy defines youth as anyone between the ages of 14 and 35 years, however, in the South African context, defining youth comes with a whole lot more complexity (Boyce 2010). Different, sometimes contradictory, terms have been used to describe its youth. Boyce mentions that some of the ways the South African youth have been described is through phrases such as the 'Young Lions' and 'Lost Generation' during the 1970s and 1980s (Boyce 2010). Malila (2013) cites Mattes (2011) who also suggests a broader historical typology: According to Malila, Mattes divides the electorate into five segments, the 'Pre-apartheid Generation' (those who reached their youth years before the then National Party came to power in 1948); the 'Early Apartheid Generation' (those who turned 16 between 1948 and 1960); 'the Grand Apartheid Generation' (going into their youth between 1960 and 1976 when apartheid was prominent throughout South African life); the 'Struggle Generation' (people who turned 16 between 1976 and 1986 during a time of rough political violence unsettlement). In the more recent years however, another term used to describe South African youth has surfaced: 'Born Frees'. It is a term used to describe those who entered adulthood and "came of age" politically after 1994, after South Africa's first democratic

elections (Malila 2013: 16). This shows the complexity, historical power relations and chronological considerations that exist when attempting to define 'youth'. For the purpose of this paper, I do not wish to explore all these different segments, but rather, one wishes to explore the emergence of this post 1994 black middle class youth and their online use of Black Twitter.

The subject of youth in itself has been an issue of interest to many South African and non-South African researchers. The most prominent and ongoing researches in South Africa that has to do with youth has for years now been centered around, in health, youth risk behaviours on HIV and pregnancy, in economics, growing/decreasing rates of unemployment in the country, in education, tracing the enrollment and drop out patterns, in sociology and psychology, youth and their prevalence to corruption and in media, the impact of American media in local youth to name a few (World Bank site 2016). This is not to say that there has been no other research done, but rather to indicate that the focus has been largely on the same issues when dealing with South African youth. As Southall (2014) asserts, research such as the black middle-class has been largely under researched. It is for not only this reason that I hope to get into this under researched field, but also because it is critical to study the black middle-class as they are direct participants of this subcultural group. The aim is to begin to think about this group in terms of its political reach, cultural identity and influence in shaping public opinion.

South Africa's black middle-class

There are two classic literatures used to analyze class. Both the writings of Karl Marx and Max Weber can be used when attempting to understand the emergence of the middle class. Having said that; the topic of middle-class has in recent decades gained prominence in various disciplines. Southall (2016) argues however, that although there has been a lot of work done on

the middle class, the issue of black middle class has gained little to no individual attention, that is, that often, there is little research that has to do with specifically the black middle-class but rather just the 'middle-class'. Even rarely documented, is the issue of black middle class youth. Similarly, Darbon and Toulabour (2011) as cited by South (2016) argue that only a few in-depth studies have been done on the emergence of the middle class in Africa, with South Africa as an exception as compared to the rest of Africa. Ngoma (2014) and Southall (2016) make it clear that when speaking of the black middle class, it is specifically directed towards black Africans, that is, excluding coloured, Indian and Chinese people, similarly, the same can be said when speaking of *South African* Black Twitter. I wish to discuss this further in pages that are to follow. In my study, I relied on the work of Roger Southall (2016) where he discusses the emergence of the black middle class in South Africa. He discusses at length, the importance of the study of the black middle class and asserts that it carries with it, the visible aspects of post-apartheid South Africa.

I conducted my study on the black middle class using Black Twitter because of the unprecedented influence that the media as a whole has had in the representation of what it means to be South African, black and middle class and the influence that black media has on the shaping of political identities. According to Southall, this group of people have been represented as lacking the prerequisites of being a 'proper bourgeoisie' and this has been perpetuated by terms such as 'black diamonds' and 'coconuts' which essentially shows the black middle class as being "shallow, parasitic, and lack[ing] the industrious and productive character which has traditionally been associated with its historical counterparts" (2016: xiv). Southall tackles this broadly and asserts that this is a one-dimensional reality.

Lentz (2015) discusses the importance of the middle class when aiming to achieve political stability in a state. Therborn (2012) equally argues for the importance of the middle class and calls the twenty first century 'the age of the global middle class' and maintains that the project of universal emancipation is no longer led by the proletariat but by the middle-class. South Africa has a number of studies that have been done on the middle class, however, Lentz (2015:18) maintains that the term 'middle-class' has been defined somewhat differently in South Africa than in other parts of the world; explaining that "those highly educated, professionally successful and relatively affluent men and women that in other parts of the world would be discussed as middle class, often continue to be categorized as elites".

In her study on black middle class professionals, Ngoma (2014) differentiates between the apartheid and post-apartheid black middle class and maintains that certainly, the latter group holds much more prestigious influence in society than the former.

Southall claims that often, class and political identity are linked; leaving aside the fact that people's political orientation can be shaped by a whole host of other factors.

Gates (2004) argues the complexities that come with being both black and middle-class as it further perpetuates white hegemony. He argues that the term middle-class within itself has been for decades been associated with what it means to be white:

> "By placing blacks within definitions of middle-class values, lifestyles and professions, they are made more familiar, identifiable and unthreatening. White hegemonic power thus occupies the middle-class and defines it as the ideal to which to aspire. The middle-class the becomes a space that cannot be redefined with specificity for black culture and meaning for the other; instead it can align the other with the mainstream" (2004:27)

How does one then begin to engage with issues of race and class when faced with such complexities? Black Twitter allows one to get to the heart of such research because of two reasons predominantly. First, that Black Twitter is a contemporary space that advocates for the assertion of one's blackness. Secondly, that it is formed in a space that historically would have not been formally and is still not accessible to many black people.

The Networked Public Sphere

The use of social media, specifically Black Twitter has provided a space for individuals to engage on a number of issues while influencing and driving social and political change. Black Twitter can therefore be considered as a public sphere through which young, black people, have the opportunity to have a voice after many decades of marginalization. Habermas (1989) theorized the notion of the "public sphere" as a space where individuals could debate issues of public and sometimes private significance. He continues to explain that such debates generate public opinion and attempt to articulate some of society's most important issues. The importance of the public sphere is that it is a space between the state and the private realm in which citizens could participate (Habermas 1989:108).

The principle theoretical framing of this treatise is based on the networked public sphere as described by Benkler (2006). Benkler explains that the public sphere refers to the set of "social spaces in which citizens set forth and develop opinions and points of view on political issues, eventually coalescing into what might be called public opinion" (2006:14). The public sphere can therefore be viewed as a common place or space where public opinion can be formed and encouraged. Benkler believes that the emergence of new media technologies is continuing to usher in an entirely new type of networked public sphere, with far-reaching implications. He

maintains that because these various networking platforms available for everyone at a low-cost, both to read and write on, allow for a bigger chance to interact.

Black Twitter can be regarded as an illustration of what Benkler (2006:14) lists as the two chief functions of the networked public sphere: “to offer a platform for engaged citizens to cooperate and provide observations and opinions and to serve as a watchdog over society on a peer-production model". In the specific case of Black Twitter, both of these functions may be broadly exercised. Perhaps for Black Twitter, the platform for engagement is the more prominent function of the two. However, Shirky (2008) argues similarly to Benkler with more emphasis put into the latter function, maintaining that, such platforms carry with them the potential of ushering in deep changes in the modern democratic process brought through by the increasing prominence of new media, and as a result, increasing of the watchdog function within such spaces. Shirky (2008) asserts that the watchdog function is essential in developing public opinion and policy alternatives, therefore also working as an encouragement for people in such spaces to take part in political engagements. This networked public sphere as a space for engaged citizens to provide observations and opinions, can arguably be regarded as the backbone of the existence of Black Twitter. It is the key function that allows for the discussion of everything affecting or of interest to the Black community. Therefore, in the words of Benkler in attempting to describe platforms such as Black Twitter in accordance to his theory, he maintains that

> “Communication in peer-produced media starts from an intrinsic motivation. Writing or commenting about what one cares about—it begins with the opposite of lowest common denominator. It begins with what irks you, the contributing peer and individual the most… [therefor creating a platform for] engaged citizens to cooperate

> and provide observations and opinions and to serve as a watchdog over society on a peer-production model." (Benkler 2005: 217)

The public sphere serves as both watchdog and a space where individuals can discuss issues of interest and of public importance.

Offering a critique to Habermas, Warner (1985) on *Publics and Counterpublics* describes the public sphere as "an ongoing space encounter" (90). In the same writings, he identifies seven distinctive claims (1958: 67-118) about how public spheres are formed which I believed are all relevant when attempting to understand Black Twitter. He believes that public spheres are self-organized and set by its participants who are most likely strangers and that interactions can be both personal and impersonal. Warner believed however, that the idea of public sphere is far more complex than simply reducing it to a conversation about two people but rather, it is an attempt to speak to many others whose potential differences shape the discourse. Even more relevant to the study of Black Twitter, unlike Habermas, Warner believes that not everyone has equal accessibility to this 'on going public' but rather, that the subordinate groups of people use the same tools to create 'counterpublics' and are aware of their subordinate status. I argue that this is the case with Black Twitter. That this group of people are aware of the injustices of the past and are in turn, reclaiming spaces to make it their own space, and also voicing out the existing subordinate status in society.

Identity

As has been discussed above, Black Twitter is a phenomenon that originates from the African-American population. In the recent years however, a population of Black Twitter has begun and is rapidly growing in South Africa as well. Clark believes that in order to form part of Black Twitter, one needs to have some sort of cultural identification with what it means to be

"African", despite the geographical location in which one is based. This has brought me to the question of who has a right to claiming the African identity but over and above that, how this African identity is defined. The idea of African identity has been one riddled with quite a lot of complexity for over several decades. Mamdani (1999:128) argues at length that the name African within itself is not African therefore explaining the complexity and possible contraditions of having to define African-ness and its origin. Chinua Achebe also speaks of the difficulties that come with defining the African identity and maintains that Africa is still in the making, that there isnt a final identity that is African. He further maintains that, at the same time, there is an identity coming into existance and that it has a certain context and meaning; that Africanness and blackness means something to some (Makgoba: 2005:13). It is suggested that in order to be a part of Black Twitter, one has to be African, that is, by virtue of skin colour or ones blackness, one can consider oneself as African. Therefore, this then means that the 'black' in Black Twitter may be interchangable with 'African'. This is said with the intention of affirming that Africa identity can not simply be reduced to geographical, socio-economic, ethnic or cultural definitions, but rather, more relevently to this paper, that "African [identity] should imply a positioning in discursive spaces and practices of power and knowledge relations which are fluid" (Makgoba:2005:14); yet also, to warn against the assumption that a shared skin complexion affirms racial solidarity, specifically between South African blacks and African-Americans and even between African blacks themselves. In other words, with Makgoba's logic therefore, it is difficult to assert what "black" means in regards to Black Twitter, but rather, that its meaning will emerge from the practice of Black Twitter. When writing on black identity, Reddick (n.d: 1) notes that "[in Ghana], we did not experience white domination like the Africans in Kenya, Zimbabwe or South Africa. We do not understand the whole concept of slavery, or its effect on

the attitude of a lot of African-Americans, mainly because we were not exposed to it. To read about racism and discrimination is one thing, but to experience it is something else". This is particularly the reason behind the distinct differences between American Black Twitter and South African Black Twitter; which is that despite having a shared skin complexion, there are deep rooted differences in how we define and articulate black identity. Clark (2015) maintains that in order to be part of Black Twitter, one has to have a certain level of black identity and cultural competency and that often, this "black identity and culture" stems from historical backgrounds of that particular geographical location. Generally however, for Black Twitter members both South African and American, the shared cultural competency comes from a shared blackness or African-ness, despite the geographical backgrounds.

I hope to come to this point; that by saying Black Twitter, one should not come to the assumption that all Black Twitter users are black or that all black people who tweet are part of Black Twitter. Surprisingly, one could find people who are not necessarily "African" or "Black" having a shared interest in issues affecting black people therefore constituting themselves as part of Black Twitter. Stadler (n.d) asserts that there is an emerging self-pride that is being formed among black youth and that it is apparent in "notions of authenticity, cultural purity and the entrenched perceptions of the alignment between race and class that are being challenged in contemporary cultural texts". This racial identity is manifesting itself through the creation of popular culture that is aimed at finding ways of "naming and labeling that both acknowledges and resist racial integration and assimilation to white commercial culture" (355).

Political Identity: An expressive performative understanding

Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 1994) draws on a number of historical sources including Foucault (1978) and Irigaray (1985) to argue notions of identity. Butler described modern identity as a

"set of ideals which people are expected to live up to" which subsequently turn into norms. Feintuch (2003) when writing on expressive culture notes that notions of identity and self-consciousness manifest themselves through performance. He writes that performance has different genres and more relevant to this paper, that these performance genres are intertexual fields where the politics of identity are negotiated. Performance is a means through which one can use to analyze where different types of social relationships converge. Both Butler and Feintuch argue that performance expresses itself in more complex ways than it is perceived. Performance can be a means of resistance. Feintuch (2003:133) captures this in the specific contexts of South Africa; he observes that "in situations where territory and its appropriations are contested, live and mediated performance genres become particularly charged with political import as polyphonic symbols of identity and power" and furthermore notes that "this is not to celebrate performance as a mode of liberation, however, the kind of performance we find in popular culture have become for the people involved more than ever, ways to preserve some self-respect in the face of constant humiliation, and to set the wealth of artistic creativity against an environment of utter poverty". Performance formed on spaces such as Black Twitter, can be considered to be contribute profoundly, in preserving and assuring in new discourses of what it means to be black, and through this, forms a sense of "consensus, feeling together, communitas and can be experienced in moments of transition and be seen as 'anti-structures'" (Feintuch 2003: 134). Like on Black Twitter, as noted by Feintuch, "performance is deliberate and can idealize unity and freedom where there has been discourses of oppression, it can work as a tool through which boundaries can be blurred and norms and authorities power can be put into question and possibly redefined". Feintuch emphasizes that performance is always an exchange of words, energy, emotion and material, performing our identities and longings.

Self-representation online

Nancy Thumim (2012) has noted that the concept of self-representation and digital culture can no longer be thought of as separated entities. Particularly, Thumim looks into how ordinary people practice self-representations in contemporary culture. She argues that in spaces such as Black Twitter or rather Twitter as a whole, while social networking may be the reason for participation online, but very often, self-representation is very often a condition of such participation (2012:137). Furthermore, she notes that the concept of self-representation online can prove to be both a condition of participation, but also, an opportunity for the user to represent themselves in a way that is satisfactory to their needs. Self-representation can therefore, be considered an everyday part of online participation. Thumim writes that "understanding self-representation...requires us to use concepts emphasizing the sense of process and movement between sites of production, text and reception" (2012:13). Thumim critically investigates how individuals engage with self-representation on three different sites, namely: broadcast platforms, museums, and online spaces. She importantly notes and demonstrates how cultural, institutional and textual mediations directly influence the construction of these self-representations. On another writing, Thumim (2012:89) writes on the importance of focusing on "the process of mediaton rather than on 'the media". The concept of mediation she notes "foregrounds the processes by which meanings are produced, emphasizing that meaning-making is negotiated, open-ended and ongoing and, that it involves institutions, technologies and people" (2012:50). I therefore approached my study of Black Twitter with the above in mind, that is, that this study does not particularly just focus on Black Twitter as the "media", but rather, recognizes that what is important to note about this platform is negotiated open-ended and ongoing participation of its participant. Using the "concept of mediation means starting with the

assumption that the production, circulation and reception of representations (or indeed the 'practice' of media), always take place in complex and specific contexts, and are processes where power is exercised and negotiated" (Thumim 2012:89).

Thumim makes an important distinction in regards to her use of the word self-representation rather than "performance" of self as I use it above. She notes that focusing on self-representation complements the work on "presentation and performance of self" and makes the following distinction:

> "We argue that it is important not to elide the differences between the notion of presentation and representation, but rather, in addition to the growing body of work that explores presentation of self online and offline and the relations between the two, we also need to think specifically about the notion of a representation in the context of online socializing because texts are being made, however ephemeral they may be. The notion of a self-representation focuses on the symbolic forms created and then circulating – linking it to the field of work on representation in media of, for example women, 'ordinary people', or the colonial subject." Thumim (2012:90).

Gender and Political Identity

In dealing with the question of political identity, I specifically looked into how this particular group engages debates and positions itself in regards to the question of gender in relation to their blackness when on this platform. My wish was to find out if on this platform there is a conscious awareness of ones gender when debating with everyday issues of blackness on this platform. It is apparent that all areas of identity may be seen to be interrelated or interconnected, be it age, race, class, sex or gender. Butler (1990) believed that gender specifically may be understood quite differently depending on the age or sexuality of the individual. Through the study of Black Twitter, I did not only study it with that in consideration, but also took it further by making the

assumption that perhaps will be proved or disproved, that is, that race, class or status may have a significant effect in the way individuals understand gender. To understand the role of Black Twitter in redefining gender and the level of power relations that exist around this issue, one has to review literature that aims to understand the psychosexual and political structures that have been created by the history of oppression in South Africa and how that has potentially influenced how South African black youth from a middle-class background have conceptualized their sexual identities and as a result, how they communicate around it. Butler (1990) argues that one cannot study gender without also looking into sexuality as the two may more likely than not, overlap or interconnect. Having said this, I did not study black feminism, black masculinity or black sexuality per se; however, my aim was to study, as I did, how this particular group confronts gender and how, given that it is a space to redefine and reinforce one's blackness, how their awareness of gender and blackness affects how they tweet or interact with each other.

Deyi (N.D) when writing on Black Consciousness and Black Masculinity, like many other writers including Stephen Biko's *We Blacks* acknowledges the effects that the oppression had on sexuality and gender in the country. Similar to Biko, Deyi puts forward that "black masculinity has been defined along the oppressor/oppressed binary of apartheid and patriarchy, characterized by dichotomies of inferiority and superiority, sub-ordination and power" (n.d:4) and have left black women at the top of the list as being the most oppressed as black men took on the role of being sub-oppressors. Consequently, Deyi argues that there has been the challenge to both male and female identities that is currently taking place through the empowerment of black women and the growing prominence of black feminism which has brought black men into "an existential crises of disempowered eunuchism". Both Deyi(n.d) and Ggola(n.d) write about sexuality with the hope of tracing how men and women are practicing feminism and masculinity respectively.

However, I do not take this direction. My hope was to trace if this group of people are interested in issues of gender, how they navigate around it and how and they are redefining themselves outside the dominant forms of masculinity "which depend on the oppressive mechanization of power, a power which derives its authority/ dominance from dependency and weakness of women" (Deyi n.d: 4). I employed the Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic 2000) in hope of examining the historical and contemporary components that come with being a black middle class youth in order to analyze their transition of being the first generation of youth living out of the apartheid era but raised by parents who were directly affected by this system and are also living under the aftermath of the apartheid system and if this has had an effect in their perception of gender. I looked specifically into how they are reclaiming spaces and investigated how they are active in regards to the question of political identity of gender. I looked at the terms of the debates around this or what debates spark issues of gender and also, their use of vernacular languages in defining their gender. Importantly as well, I also looked into the differences between how both black women and men respectively deal with and address issues of gender in relation to women issues.

Intersectionality on Black Twitter

Crenshaw (1991) observes that the embracing of identity politics has over decades, been welcomed with hostility and tension. Crenshaw's main objective in her paper was to explore the race and gender dimensions of violence against black women. She argues particularly "contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider intersectional identities" (1991:102). In order begin my analysis on Black Twitter and to really understand the struggles of black women, one cannot look at race and gender experiences separately but rather, has to look into the "frequently intersecting patterns of racism and sexism" (Crenshaw 1991:102).

Crenshaw's work offers a "critique of the limitations of a legal regime in which sex discrimination and race discrimination were two separate wrongs" (Gordon 2016: 341).

Crenshaw (1991:102) notes the "various ways in which gender and race intersect in shaping the structural, political and representational aspects of violence against women of " and observes three kinds of intersectionality that black women face, that is, structural, political and representational intersectionality. In my analyses, I looked into these three aspects that Crenshaw speaks of, specifically focusing on political and representational intersectionality on Black Twitter. As Gordon (2016:341) notes, "Crenshaw explores simultaneously race and gender dimensions of violence against black women in America and does this by specifically looking at responses to domestic violence and rape in order to draw attention to the way in which black women's experiences of violence are ignored, overlooked, misrepresented and largely silenced". In my findings, I explore race and gender dimensions in regards to everyday issues on Black Twitter. The aim was to locate black women's issues and matters of gender and equality in everyday mainstream topics that may be of interest to this black community, without necessarily focusing on issues that speak directly to the topic of black women.

The aim was to look into how Black Twitter participants are bringing into attention, the struggle and structural oppression that black women face. Gordon sees intersectionality as "a challenge to single-issue, single-factor analyses" (2016:340). Drawing from the strength of shared experience, analyzing this platform provided with a window to look into the possible embracing and redressing of black women's gender identity and how race-gender issues are treated in the mainstream discourse of this online community.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim here is to outline and discuss the research methodology I used during the process of compiling this treatise. The methodology covers the following: Qualitative Content Analysis with specific focus on Interpretive Content Analysis rather than the traditional content analysis method. Additionally, Thematic Analysis and Textual Analysis and Netnography methods will be adopted. Because this is essentially a study that will be written from the personal point of view of the researcher, the researcher will assume the Interpretive Content Analysis for the study as it allows for the validity of a single researcher's interpretation of a text. In other words, this methodology "rejects both the ability of the researcher to achieve objectivity as well as the reliability of intercoder reliability" (Williams 2008: 67) therefore allowing the researcher to interpret the content (tweets) found on Black Twitter according to the researchers standpoint. Furthermore, Thematic Analysis is both common and important in qualitative research. It will allow the researcher to pinpoint record and examine some on the common themes that reoccur on Black Twitter.

The study will solely use qualitative research. This is essentially because the research is aimed towards gaining knowledge of the emergence of Black Twitter, moreover, gathering an understanding of how black and economically emancipated group of people use spaces such as this. The data sources will include online news media articles as well as tweets and my own observations as an active participant of Black Twitter.

Qualitative Content Analysis

I applied the principles of Qualitative Content Analysis. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:108) have conceptualized content analysis as "a detailed and systematic examination of the content of a

particular material […] for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases with that material". This chosen methodology is important in identifying the sequence of events in order to be able to analyze the content that is specific to Black Twitter. Cooper and Schindle(2011) emphasis the importance of this methodology as it places an emphasis on an attempt to precisely measure something with the intent of labeling, explaining and foretelling the outcome of the research. The content that was studied in this research was the tweets that are connected and related to the use of Black Twitter.

Gongo (2007) states that "since [social] media content exists within a larger framework of a social context, it is important to analyze both the content and the institution that produces the content". He asserts that content is not created in a vacuum and neither is the social media platform. As cited on Gongo's work, Halloran also supports this statement and states that:

> "Ideally, the media should not be seen in isolation, but as one set of social institutions, interacting with other institutions within the wider social system. The failure to recognize the relevance of context and interaction between institutions has resulted in a neglect of the part played in the communication process by non-media institutions, and an underestimation of the importance of mediation, support factors, follow-up activities and the like. The other side of this coin is the problem of media centeredness. The media does not work in isolation, but in and through a nexus of mediating factors" (Gongo 2007:19).

According to the discussion above, Content Analysis entails a more objective evaluation of content. It is for this reason that in this instance, the researcher will apply mainly the

principles of Interpretive Content Analysis for this research as it fits more perfectly with the route the researcher has chosen to adopt.

Interpretive Content Analysis

The study of social media inevitably leads to a number of textual data. Content analysis in this research will be used as a means to analyze content on Black Twitter. Content analysis is a good methodological process for studying representation (Golding, et al, 1999). Because of the nature and the challenges of the topic of this paper, it is tricky to have a set method in which the tweets will have an open and inductive coding of measuring and analyzing the tweets. However, the researcher then hopes to adopt the qualitative sibling of content analysis as described by Strauss & Corbin (1998: 41) that is, taking an "interpretivist stance that sees the thematic coding process as a necessarily subjective exercise inextricable from the researcher's knowledge and experience".

In this instance, the research moved away from the traditional content analysis as described by Leedy and Ormrod (2005), instead, one will then apply the concept of interpretive content analysis. According to Williams (2003), interpretive content analysis rejects both the ability of the researcher to achieve objectivity as well as the reliability of intercoder reliability (67). Interpretive content analysis "uses the concept of public justifiability to contrast intercoder reliability and argues for the validity of a single researcher's interpretation of a text" (William 2003:67). Because of the nature of the topic, specifically that the topic is based on the analysis of a subculture, the use of interpretive content analysis is key as it focuses on analyzing the latent content of social texts for the purpose of understanding their connotative meanings within a contextual frame (William 2003: 67). This form of methodology fits in more ideally in analyzing text that is based on

ethnography, that is, it allows for a systematic study of people and cultures which then can allow for the researcher to explore the cultural phenomena that is Black Twitter. This is not said with the intention of implying that the researcher will apply ethnographic content analysis (see Altheide 1996), however, it is cited to show the similarities between the two methods of analysis. Also, because of the nature of Black Twitter within itself, developing a specific code that allows pre-defined concepts into which the data must be made to fit is almost impossible without the specific use of "#BlackTwitter". This is because issues affecting and of interest to the Black society are too vast to even attempt to document. In order to implement this methodology successfully within the constraints of this paper and the required number of pages, the researcher will have to analyze tweets, paying close attention to the topics held, the context within which things were as well as the various aspects of interaction within this space.

For the purpose of narrowing down the scope of this analysis, I focused on the following studies: Wanelisa Xaba, Kasi Mlungu and Sarah Langa and #IfApartheidDidNotHappen.

Thematic Analysis

The analysis of themes is very important when one hopes to base their study on analyzing text in qualitative research. It allowed the researcher to pinpoint, record and examine some of the common themes that reoccur on Black Twitter and this case, my hope was to attempt to track if gender is a common theme and how in the respective themes, gender roles play a role. Golding, et al (1999) describes thematic structure as an overall concept that runs throughout a media text. William (2008) asserts that themes tie together certain ideas, concepts and statements that are based on social knowledge and beliefs. He further believes that 'themes make media products easier to understand and give a lot of information about a media organization, such as general

beliefs within the organization on particular ideas and notions" (2008: 69). There is not just one theme on Black Twitter, but rather, a combination of themes that aim to reinforce the representation of Blackness. This study analyses some of the themes that are predominant on Black Twitter. By themes one means the issues, topics, events and participants that are specifically relevant to this market that may appear to reoccur more than some.

Neuendorf defines thematic analysis by citing that: "Thematic content analysis is the scoring of messages for content, style or both for the purpose of assessing the characteristics or experiences of persons, groups, or historical periods" (Neuendorf 2002: 98). Various themes that will be explored will be looked at below.

Language as Theme

Gongo (2007) agrees with Neuendorft (2002) and adds that themes manifest themselves in the form of language. It is for this reason that when analyzing themes, one often finds oneself having to analyze the use of language. Language works as a means of representation of the writer to the reader. Gongo explains representation as a process that connects meaning and language to culture and sees it as the "process through which society makes and circulates meaning". He maintains that this process equally includes the use of language, signs and image. The use of language in the selected texts is very important as it can give a critical idea as to the frame of mind the writer is in, however not necessarily used specifically for critical, academic and formal discourse use. Language not only allows one to express oneself, it also allows for the reader to share in the thoughts of the writer. Black Twitter positions itself as that that forms as a platform for Black people to discuss themes relevant and in connection to the Black community. The researcher explored the theme of language and its manifestations on the Black Twitter market. I

hope to specifically investigate if there is a trend in the use of vermicular language and gender identity.

Netnography

Netnography is a method used to analyze the self-presentation strategies that people use to construct a 'digital self' (Nelson 2005; Bowler 2010). It is an interdisciplinary method used to understand interactions online. Although the term netnography is a fairly new concept, there are many researches that have been made online across different academic disciplines outside of media studies (Nelson et al. 2004; Nelson and Otnes 2005; Cohn and Vaccaro 2006). Because of the fast growing mediated digital world netnography is gaining its reputation across different disciplines and allows for a unique and contemporary way of conducting research. Kozinets (2009:3) writes that among other this, "netnography helps as a use distinction between online life and the social worlds of real life" and consequently, social science researchers find themselves at the forefront of this new method in order to adequately understand facets of social and cultural life. He maintains that "there is no doubt that new research on the use of Internet and other information and communications technologies (or ICT) is adding significantly to the literature of cultural studies, sociology, economics, law, information science, business and management fields, communication studies, human geography, nursing and healthcare, and anthropology" Kozinets (2009:3) and believes that its prominence will only continue growing even rapidly in years to come. Furthermore, Kozinets believes that this method allows for research on digital platforms ranging from podcasts, social networking sites, blogs, photographic communities and chat forums and provides ways through which this can be achieved. As the name suggests, netnography is a branch of ethnography that is done online.

As cited on Kozinets (2009) similar to Christine Hine (2000) who termed her online community study 'virtual ethnography', I am aware that my research focuses on and only "signal an effort that is necessarily partial and inauthentic because it only focuses on the online aspect of the social experience, rather than the entire experience" (Kozinets 2009: 5) however, in my defense, this platform only exists online and conducting an online study should needless to say, be my point of departure. In conducting this research, I used the methological handbook for netnography titled *Netnography. Doing Ethnographic Research Online* as documented by Kazinets(2009). It is important to note that this handbook was merely used as a guideline through which would help me in starting to conduct my research. This research was mainly interested in real people and their online/offline continuity and focuses largely on content as opposed to the discourses produced.

My limitations during this study were as follows:

I. This research was conducted based on Twitter and only focused on Black Twitter and not Twitter as a whole.
II. It examined a fairly new concept therefore lacks the benefit of previous research conducted on the topic, particularly in South Africa.
III. 140 character limitation of Twitter
IV. Generally, there not a lot of people who are actually on Twitter and this caused a limitation to the data collected and subsequently the findings presented.
V. Generalizability: assuming every black person tweeting about issues affecting black people form part of Black Twitter; this is particularly because there is not an immediate identification to being a Black Twitter participant.

VI. There is no proper means of measuring Twitter except through hashtags, and in addition, Ttwitter archives only allowed me to access just a certain number of tweets, it therefore became difficult to give any sort of figures or proper quantitative research unless in cases where there was a Twitter poll done.

VII. Hashtags and case studies reviewed can cause as a limitation as they may only provide a narrow view of what Black Twitter is, therefore my research and findings therefore may be seen to be only specifically be referring to the users used on this paper only.

Sampling Method

Purposive and Snowball Sampling Methods

According to Palys (2008) "Purposive Sampling is also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling". It is a method of sampling which relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units. Unlike the "various sampling techniques that can be used, the goal of purposive sampling is not to randomly select units from a population to create a sample with the intention of making generalizations but rather, main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which will best enable you to answer your research questions" (Laerd n.d). There are a wide range of purposive sampling techniques that one can use (See Laerd n.d), but for the purpose of this research, the researcher used the critical case sampling. Palys (2008) explains the critical case sampling as a type of purposive sampling technique that is particularly useful in exploratory qualitative research. It is a method of research used when the researcher has limited resources as well as aims to use a single care or a number of small cases in order to explain interest in a particular phenomenon. As has been discussed earlier, small case studies are used in order to explain the phenomenon that is Black Twitter. According to Palys, this type of methodology allows the researcher to make logical generalizations.

In order to help me analyse Black Twitter, I divided my findings into three studies:

1. **Wanelisa Xaba- @blak_terrorist**

In order to do this, I followed Wanelisa Xaba (@blak_terrorist) who became a key user in this study. Specifically, I studied Wanelisa's online interaction following the interview she had with Nomboniso Gasa on the 26th of February 2016 on Talk Radio 702. I focused my attention more

on the interactions on Twitter following the interview and was subsequently led to the dominant theme that arose, that of intergenerational tensions on Black Twitter. Through this interaction, it also led me into a space of looking specifically into gender and intergenerational tensions and in addition, issues of affinity in identity. I studied closely Wanelisa's tweets dating from 25th February 2016 till the 28th of February 2016, specifically tweets that had to do with her interview with Nomboniso.

My relationship with Wanelisa was purely Twitter based until I began conducting this research, which saw me spend a lot of time in her profile and eventually, only recently, led me to follow her on Facebook as she is equally as active, if not more active, on that platform. I relied specifically on material that was accessed on public platforms and conducted no interviews with her or any of the respective participants of this research. In other words, I did not seek any consent or permission from her or any of the people who have been used on this study to collect data as the material used was publicly available.

2. @DuchAz and @SarahLanga

My second study focused Kasi Mlungu, whose real name is Anita Ronger. Anita Ronger is a commercial house DJ known as @DuchAz. What specifically interested me about this user was her claim that she identified as a black woman rather than a white woman. This brought about a lot of online debate that would see me gaining particular insights on race and gender fluidity and how this is negotiated on Black Twitter. I did not focus my attention particularly on Anita, but rather focused more on how Black Twitter received her and the terms through which they either rejected or accepted her in this community. I was then subsequently led into another dominant theme which arose, that is, the tensions between black men and women regarding Anita's claim

to blackness. There was indeed a noticeable difference in how the two groups received Anita on Black Twitter. In addition, under the same light, in hope of comparing and contrasting, the second half of my final study then focuses on Sarah Langa @SarahLanga, a well-known model that is perceived to be black, who was trending on 22 February 2017 for having claimed that she would rather not be referred to and categorized as black. This saw a big backlash by Black Twitter users which led me to analyzing how this community felt about her need not to be racially classified.

It is perhaps important to note that because I do not know any of the users used in this data collection personally, the criteria which I used to determine gender, in cases where I make a distinct comparison between data collected from different genders, was based on two things: the person's profile picture, that is, if the person appearing is male or female as well as the user's name. In cases where this could not be determined, that is, where profile picture were not that of a man or a woman and the name was either unisex or a character name, I did not use the tweet to determine my findings in regards to this specific theme. I am aware of my bias presumption and possible stereotypical prejudice in regards to reading gender according to appearances; however, because of the nature of the research, that is, that I did not get to meet or personally interact with any of the users personally, I deemed it as the only possible short hand towards using gender classification.

3. #IfApartheidDidNotHappen

Using the hashtag #IfApartheidDidntHappen, I became interested in and sought to analyze how black people in this space articulate and perceive their lived experiences and how Black Twitter has been used as a space to retell the lived experiences of black lives. Specifically, this hashtag

allowed for analyses into socioeconomic issues that black people face post 1994. Through this hashtag, as an active Black Twitter participant, considered a critical insider, that is, possessing special knowledge of the platform as I form part of it, but also critical enough to be able to analyze it, in regards to this hashtag, I did not participate and therefore served as a critical observer. For the purpose of this research however, in order not to confuse the reader, I refrained from using any tweets relating to the hashtag that in fact did not have the specified hashtag. In addition, because of the nature of Twitter and how its participants use it, that is, tweeting hundreds of tweets very quickly, I limited my data collection to the day that this hashtag was trending, that is, on the 13th of December 2016 only, although this hashtag continued days after. This helped me narrow down firstly, the data that was reviewed but also, I believe, helped me get a more solid idea of the issues Black Twitter deemed important in regards to this hashtag.

According to Murthy (2013), "Twitter has the ability to connect people who may or may not have an online relationship through the asynchronous conversations formed via tweets". Because of the design of Twitter, it allows anyone with internet access to watch and track these conversations, either by searching through Twitter feeds (a running post of tweets), or by searching for a specific hashtagged phrase (Clark 2014). A hashtag, which may be connected to a single word or phrase, group tweets, allow users to use a keyword-search style approach to finding tweets about a specific topic (Small 2011). Hashtags have been an important part of Twitter as it is able to coin specific topics which people are tweeting about. For the Black Twitter users, this is no different. Through the use of hashtags, it makes it easier for users to label and find messages with a specific theme. Furthermore, Black Twitter users do not simply use the hashtags "Black and Twitter" in order to identify themselves as a movement, however, the hashtags are related to specific themes and topics which are of interest to the Black

community. These topics range from matters regarding everyday life, health, emotions, language and culture, to political and democratic discontentment. However, South African Black Twitter became more prominent through hashtags that were used for social activism. Hashtags such as #IfApartheidDidNotHappen works towards turning struggle into performativity by incorporating and normalizing blackness in contemporary South Africa.

It is important to note that this study does not represent the entirety of Black Twitter, but rather just a portion of the experiences by a specific group of participants in this community. The accounts and hashtags chosen for this study were for the purpose of helping me gain perspective of being a young black South African today. I analysed the accounts of Wanelisa Xaba and Anita Ronger not specifically for the people who run them but rather, because of the debates which these accounts raised which I believe would help me gain perspective of this online community and its larger participants. It was important to choose an account and theme that attracted a lot of participation from users in order to gain wider understanding and context of Black Twitter.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter aims to present the findings of the three studies undertaken, with the specific aim of addressing the research questions of this thesis. The data collection and findings thereof have in some instances, reflected "iterative moments" (see Clark 2014) which addressed more than one research question at a time. Using selected tweets, and in some cases interviews and articles that either came as a result of or resulted in those tweets, this chapter exhibits the data found in all of the studies in order to present to the reader, a complementary picture or insight into what is Black Twitter and more importantly, into a community of feminists located within this group of people. Important to note that the research questions of this this paper will not necessarily be presented in the order that they were initially presented above, but rather, the manner in which the research questions were addressed was determined by the data collected and the findings drawn from the data. As my research questions have suggested, my research aims to present the social ties that form from spaces such as Black Twitter and the prerequisites that allow one to be part of such. But also, as will be seen below, my research questions and most importantly the kind of data that was collected, also allows one a window into and possibly offers rich description of the lived experiences of some of the participants chosen for this study.

In this research, as will be seen through my findings, my argument is that Black Twitter has provided a space for individuals to express what it means for them to be black in post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, I argue that there seems to be existing tensions about how these young users regard their blackness to be and subsequently, how one then performs this black identity. I argue and show that there is a real interest in regards to socioeconomic issues by these Black Twitter users and in connection to this however, I make another clear argument, that is, that there is a lack of emphasis if any, on issues of gender and women, specifically by black men

in this group. These show further the existing problems in regards to the location of black women issues in mainstream problems that our country is facing.

My research did not only aim to introduce to the reader the phenomenon that is Black Twitter, but it also looked to go a step further by researching different identities and communities that form within this particular group of people. This saw me have a particular interest in those who claim to be, identify as or have an interest in black queer and feminist lives. As a result, in order to work within the scope described above, this saw me deliberately and purposefully choosing particular participants and hashtags to follow that I felt would open up a window of research into my topic and research questions posed. My findings therefore describe how the chosen participants of this study, have created and continue to contribute to digital activism that is both generally black centered but also, black women centered and how these particular participants define, exalt and protect the identity of this group.

In gathering the content for this research, I could not rely on searching for words or phrases that may be related to the Black Twitter phenomenon or even black women as a whole. The keywords, phrases and hashtags such as 'Black', 'Black Twitter' or 'Black Issues" could not be a starting point as it would prove to be immensely limiting to my research and would prove to provide the me with a narrow and limited view of Black Twitter as well as the lives of the women who belong to this group. Limiting in that, many of the users do not use hashtags related to the group they form part of such as #BlackTwitter, but rather, use hashtags according to the topic or keyword in reference to the specific topic that might be trending in that group at the particular time.

It can be unquestionably noted that people who belong to this community, unless specifically talking about Black Twitter specifically, engage on various topics without necessarily

hashtagging “Black Twitter”. The general observation as a critical insider researcher shows that people on Twitter, even those outside of Black Twitter, would rather hashtag the keyword of the topic at hand rather than the community which the topic represents but also, that a predominant number of Black Twitter users end up not using the prescribed hashtags when engaging on topics because of the word limitations that Twitter has. Therefore, I saw it fitting to deviate from using merely “Black Twitter” or “Black women” as keywords to gathering data as it would limit the desired scope of content sought for to address my stipulated research questions.

It was for this reason that using the Purposive and Snawball sampling methods, I undertook studies that helped me address my research questions. This chapter therefore has taken a three-fold presentation. Firstly, I came to follow Wanelisa Xaba (@black_terrorist) who subsequently became a key user in my research. Secondly, although not part of my initial proposal, I came to follow and study a fairly new white woman user who goes by the name of Kasi Mlungu~~i~~ (@TheDuchAz) whose aim has been to form part of the Black community physically as well as online. Lastly, I also closely followed the hashtag #IfApartheidDidntHappen. I studied these two women and the hashtag as stipulated above with the hope that they would provide an insight into the what Black Twitter is, the formulation of radical women’s politics in the country and how it has manifested itself through digital activism, to provide me with insight into interracial gender relations in such spaces and also, an understanding into the location of black women issues in post-apartheid South Africa, respectively. In some instances in the different studies undertaken, I was led into subordinate hashtags and themes such as #MenAreTrash which has been quite popular in South African Black Twitter. While recognizing that Black Twitter does not represent the entirety of Black opinion online, this study as will be seen in my findings, was driven by a

need to understand if there is a significant concern for black lives and for black women's lives and how the politics thereof are navigated.

It is important to note again, that the findings in here do not necessarily represent the entirety of young people in society or even on Black Twitter, but it certainly contributes towards describing a portion of the experiences of these Black Twitter participants as per my own observation and analysis. It provides insight into "Black-centric digital activism that defines, elevates, and protects the out group's social identity" (Clark 2014:52).

Through the study of the above listed users and hashtags, I was led to three dominant themes that I have analyzed below. Intergeneration gender tensions on Black Twitter, Affinity in Identity, Race and Gender fluidity and depiction of self-identity on Black Twitter. All of these themes allowed me to look into firstly, what Black Twitter is, and allowed me to introduce to the reader the South African Black Twitter market and what is of interest to this group of users and how they form their identity online. It also allowed me to highlight the interest that these users have in socioeconomic issues of South Africa and how there is not seemingly, enough emphasis on gender issues in this regard.

Intergenerational gender tensions on Black Twitter

Backgorund

Study 1 initially focused specifically on the online (Twitter) presence of Wanelisa Xaba who goes by the online name of Black Terrorist and openly identifies as a Black feminist who is passionate about the lived experiences of Black queer women's lives. I first came to know of Wanelisa during the 2015 Rhodes Must Fall (#RMF) protest at the University of Cape Town. She is one of the leaders and social commentators of the movement which saw her gain a number of followers and a heavy online presence. Wanelisa has studied Gender Studies and Political Science and is currently completing her Masters in Social Development at UCT and her research is focused around how Black identities are negotiated and navigated in historically white universities. I however, first followed Wanelisa in 2016 and as an active participant of Black Twitter myself, she followed me back and we subsequently developed a reciprocal follower relationship.

I began studying the online presence of Wanelisa archived from late 2015. Because of the nature of Twitter as well as Wanelisa's presence online, this saw me having to go through a large number of tweets and subsequently, resulted in having to identify and select key themes or specific incidences which were significant or could help in answering my primary and secondary research questions. For this reason, my study on Wanelisa took a dual lens. Firstly, I studied the interaction she had on Twitter following the interview she had with Nomboniso Gasa on Talk Radio 702 on the 26th February 2016 and from this, drew into dominant themes that arose from this interview on the radio and subsequently continued on Black Twitter. My findings therefore do not focus much on the radio interview per se, but rather, focuses on the Black Twitter interactions that followed subsequent to the interview. In my findings, I was led to a conversation that was not only produced by Wanelisa, but through the snowballing sampling

method, I was led to other Black Twitter users, both male and female who contributed to the topic online.

Interview on Talk Radio 702

On the 26th of February 2016, Wanelisa was invited to Talk Radio 702 during the #FridayStandIn show that Nomboniso Gasa had been invited to as a presenter for that programme. In this interview, Nomboniso was to interview Wanelisa on her ideology on "Fallism" specifically focusing around the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall movements. The 36 minute long interview was cut short following a moment when, as Nomboniso indicated, Wanelisa made a 'historical error'. Wanelisa was speaking on the ANC leadership which has "killed" black people in Marikana for wanting a better life for themselves. This led her to make the statement that in fact, "the ANC had hijacked the narrative of the PAC and Black Consciousness movement" when they were in contrary, supporting the multiracialism narrative. This then saw Nomboniso interrupting Wanelisa and exclaimed "listen", repeating it 5 times, "what you cannot do is distort other movements". Nomboniso continued to explain that "the ANC did not hijack the PAC. Just read the basic timeline of those organizations. The ANC has never advocated for multiracialism but rather, for antiracism moving towards nonracialism". After Nomboniso had attempted to correct this error, Wanelisa went in to ask how she was distorting the movement, which again saw Nomboniso jumping in and exclaiming "no" for a number of times in order to make another point. Following Nomboniso's explanation, Wanelisa then told her that "first of all, I am going to need us to have a basic respect for each other. I really do not appreciate the tone and the way you are speaking to me". Nomboniso replied with arguably, what shocked most listeners and caused most of the stir online. She screamed out the word "listen" 14 times, and told Wanelisa that "I am hosting this programme and I can kill this programme right now. You are not going to blackmail me into not interrupting you when you are

making a serious historical error". Subsequently, this indeed saw Nomboniso cutting Wanelisa off and explained that she could not have a conversation with her any further. This breakdown in communication led to the spillover of the topic on Twitter as well as what was left of the rest of the show largely focusing around the manner in which Wanelisa and Nomboniso interacted during this interview, rather than the ideological issue of non-racialism versus multiracialism or even about the fallist ideology as was what was supposed to have been at the core of the interview[1].

Affinity in Identity

What seemed to have perhaps caused feelings of disquiet among both the listeners on radio and on Twitter, was the expectation that the two would relate better given the affinity in identity, that is, given the fact that they were both black, well-educated, self-identified as black feminists and advocates of black lives. Nomboniso's Twitter biography, describes herself as a "researcher, analyst and public speaker on gender politics, leadership and cultural issues" and Wanelisa, on her blog profile has described herself as "a decolonial Black feminist writer and thinker, who is passionate about knowledge production that centers Black queer Womxns' lived experiences and studied African Gender Studies and Political Science". The two profiles practically speak to each other and can be seen to be resonating with the other. Wanelisa's Twitter biography however, writes that "Dear white supremacist hetero-normative capitalist patriarchy. Meet the terrorist." In hind-sight, Wanelisa's profile depicts a deeply rooted hatred for structures that have been set by whiteness and upon analysis however, this profile may also reveal a number of things about Wanelisa and her political identity online. Through her biographic description, Wanelisa concurrently speaks to issues of gender and patriarchy, issues of racial inequalities and also

[1] The source of the narrative of the radio interview comes from the recording accessed on soundclound.com titled "What is the RhodesMustFall Movement" accessed 12 November 2016. http://storify.com/TalkRadio/nomboniso-gasa-is-the-friday-stand-in-26-02-16

speaks into and perpetuates the “angry black woman” narrative by her use of the work “terrorist”. Her profile description is infact, not so far removed from the themes of discussion your will find on her Twitter timeline as well as on Nomboniso’s timeline. Nomboniso has in the past, specifically dedicated a thread of tweets towards the “angry black woman” (see Nomboniso’s profile dated 08 October 2014) narrative, that is, exactly what Wanelisa aims to depict herself as, as a form of resistance and performance of black feminism. Nomboniso wrote on that day that “@nombonisogasa "Angry woman", "angry black woman", "ball crusher" ...All these are part of patriarchy, misogyny, racism - all oppressive systems”. This shows the issues of interest that Wanelisa and Nomboniso share. The interview that took place between the two however, reveals the problematic relations which exist between the two despite having what one can deem as similarities.

Intergenerational Tensions

Interestingly, when Nomboniso “killed” the conversation on the radio, she did mention that she would be ready and available to continue the conversation on Twitter which subsequently saw the hashtag #FridayStandIn, the name of the radio show, trending on that particular day. Because of the nature of the topic that they were scheduled to have discussed, the key participants’ demographics and academic background, it attracted users who share more or less the same background as them. In addition however, both Nomboniso and Wanelisa took to both their Twitter timelines to announce this interview, and because of the amount of followers they both have, saw a lot of people expressing how keen they were to listen to the interview. Wanelisa’s followers particularly, were very keen, even taking to their own timelines to announce that “@JacquiThePoet You guhs!!! Wanelisa Xaba... Aka one of the respondents accused by De Klerk...Aka @blak_terrorist will be on 702 soon! TUNE IN! ☺”, “@JacquiThePoet Aka the one who gave u #blocked :) She is repping the Must Fallists...I hope @blak_terrorist announces the

plan of action against UFS!", "Jacqui The Poet @JacquiThePoet @blak_terrorist slay us with black feminism later!". Once Wanelisa got on air, her followers took to her timeline to share that they were listening: "@Letho_Malinga 26 Feb 2016 @blak_terrorist I'm tuned in!" and "@LindiweMl #FridayStandIn @blak_terrorist talking to @nombonisogasa now! Expecting fireworks!". Many of them also went on to quote some of the things that resonated with them or stood out to them:

@panashechig Fallist movements go beyond universities - it is about the structure of the entire world - @blak_terrorist

@panashechig When things fall, there is a reconstruction of (black) humanity -@blak_terrorist

@Refi_loe_ I am invested in black love - Ms @blak_terrorist ! Yasss!

@_BabyStar8 "I am a firm believer in black love." - @blak_terrorist

When the heated argument between the two began, one follower expressed that "@_BabyStar8 "I am firm believer in black love", yet all Mama Nomboniso heard was a historical error".

Both Nomboniso and Wanelisa's follower's responses online brought up a number of themes, but perhaps the most central theme that came both during the interview and on Twitter was paternalism.

As Clark (2014: 58) has pointed out, to be part of Black Twitter, one has to understand and share the lived experiences of being Black in South Africa and the same can be said for gaining the rights or membership into the community of Black feminists in this space. She notes that "in order to form collective identity via shared system of mental representation, a common connotation of blackness must be at work among the individual who self-identify as part of Black Twitter". I approached my analysis with a dual lens: culture and community. By both culture and community, I did not approach my analysis thereof with an essentialist way of

thinking. My hope was to undertake my study by assessing how Black Twitter defines, supports or challenges normative ways of what can otherwise be defined as "black culture" and at the same time, how these Black Twitter participants were setting parameters of this online community.

As has been shown and discussed above, both Nomboniso and Wanelisa can be said to share almost the same sociopolitical ideologies with both of them having publicly self-identified as "black feminists" who are interested in African politics and gender studies. But what this section aims to show, is the deeper issues that exist because of generational differences despite having some other commonalities.

I pointed out earlier that Nomboniso maintained numerous times during the interview that she was "hosting [the show] and [could] kill the conversation right now". To that, she also added that she would be willing to carry on the conversation on Twitter. I then decided that this was a good starting point to examine why Nomboniso saw this Twitter community as a good starting and ending point for her to voice out what she could have settled right there and then. Personally, I have never followed Nomboniso Gasa until recently when I began this study. It is perhaps important to mention that Nomboniso currently has 43 000 followers and follows 1094 people and that she is very active in terms of daily tweets. On her Twitter biography, she describes herself as a "researcher, analyst and public speaker on gender politics, leadership and cultural issues". Although like many Black Twitter participants, she has not necessarily verbally claimed to be part of Black Twitter, but has gained the rights to this community given firstly the description of her Twitter profile that somewhat reflects her sociopolitical identity, her skin colour, but most importantly, her deliberate and purposeful use of the platform made up of ongoing, everyday cultural and political conversations and engagements that are often trending

on Black Twitter. Given the number of followers Nomboniso has, as well as the number of tweets (73 800) she has, it can be said that, as outlined by (Peterson 2008), Nomboniso believes that in this platform she matters and believes that she has some influence within the community and I saw this as a key reason to having moved her conversation to Twitter.

The question then is around the fact that given that both spaces allow for engagement and for one's voice to be heard, why did Nomboniso choose one platform over the other to engage people. On radio, as can be noted with the callers that called to respond to the interview between the two, the host does not have much control over the opinions of people who call in, that is, callers could have been supporting either one of them and she would have had to subsequently reply or give an account to those callers. With a platform such as Twitter however, although you are essentially still in a public platform, what you write mainly is addressed towards your followers and because of this, one can find oneself of having the benefit of getting replies and opinions that are more aligned to your opinions. In addition, because of the nature of Twitter, one also has the ability to ignore the opinions of those that are not aligned to ones opinions or offends them. The use of Twitter therefore, is fundamentally reciprocal, especially with those one chooses to reciprocate with, that is, not just about holding an opinion, but also about the support that one might receive from their followers through approval of thought. The above can be seen in the number of tweets that Nomboniso retweeted after the debate between the two:

"@LadyMaMvemve I absolutely loved @nombonisogasa especially when she refused to be intimidated by the UCT student. She must do another show!!"

"@lynnbarbour @nombonisogasa My dear friend, I hear you did a marvellous job on @Radio702 @CapeTalk this morning! I'm hoping there are podcasts!"

“@F62Forbes @nombonisogasa @RhodesMustFall Very well done, someone needed to engage with them at this level which excluded well-rehearsed slogans.”

“@PeterTerry3 @nombonisogasa @hushpuppysa @RhodesMustFall Don't confuse the poor lambs with abstract concepts.”

“@PSchlebusc @nombonisogasa @blak_terrorist @Anele_Nzimande @Radio702 I enjoyed your adult debate , unfortunately I can't say the same for your guest”

“@MauritzPreller @nombonisogasa @RhodesMustFall ^Don't be silly Nomboniso. There must be someone to blame. (^ indicates cynisism, joke, irony)”

“@EMahosi @nombonisogasa @Didintle70 Your rich knowledge of history was too sharp for your guest. She made things worse by not knowing her story.”

“@RobMac082 @nombonisogasa Good effort this morning Nomboniso, pity about the insolent Rhodes must fall caller who hasnt learnt the art of listening.”

Most of what can be seen on Nomboniso’s profile that day, are tweets such as the above, those that either support the manner in which Nomboniso replied as well as those who would rather, like Nomboniso, concentrate on the historical error rather than the manner in which the two related. Notebly, Nomboniso cut off two black women callers who called in to support Wanelisa. Two other callers, who were white, called in who were in support of Nomboniso and she did not cut them off. One follower took notice of this and noted that “@Busisiwe_MK sis @nombonisogasa whom we hail cut off THREE black women & gave whites airtime. Problematic af!”. Upon close analyses, even with the tweets that are shown above, Nomboniso received and broadcasted an overwhelming number of tweets from white supporters instead of black.

The Status of Age

"I must credit Xaba for greeting Gasa with, "Hi mama," and acknowledging Gasa as her senior, deserving of the respect our culture makes available between young and old." Rithuli Orleyn (2016).

Wanelisa began her interview by greeting Nomboniso by addressing her as "Mama" which many on Twitter felt it was a sign of respect as prescribed by black culture between the young and the old. This also saw some of Wanelisa's followers referring to her as "Mama/Mme/Sisi Nomboniso". The interview was going fairly well until Wanelisa made what Nomboniso deemed an error in retelling history. To which after Nomboniso articulated her understanding of that piece of history, Wanelisa noted that she did not appreciate the tone in which Nomboniso was addressing her and subsequently accused her of being paternalistic. This then saw Nomboniso cutting the conversation as she had been threatening to do. There is a noticeable difference however, in the engagement that each of them had on their Twitter timelines. It is important to note that indeed, Nomboniso did take to Twitter to give an account of what had happened during the programme to which her first tweet was that "Let's get historical #facts right, Mzants. Then we can agree or disagree on interpretation. @Radio702 #FridayStandIn", which was followed by giving a link to qualify her correction on Wanelisa's historical fact error. She also through a thread of tweets, made it public knowledge that Wanelisa was in fact not the person she wanted to interview and made it clear that "1.I did NOT invite @blak_terrorist. FYI. I said "I do NOT want to debate a 'straw person'" to which a number of participants like @SnaloMbombo replied that "@nombonisogasa whether you personally invited @blak_terrorist or @Radio702 did, the manner in which you handled that interview was wrong". The same user also took to Twitter to express what turned to be a recurring theme for at least three days following the interview, that is, that "Snalo@SnaloMbombo: In certain spaces we have to engage as equals,

not as though we are dealing with toddlers @nombonisogasa Check yourself, please." @NdlwanaNomfundo wrote that "Just listened to this podcast. I'm in agreement. @nombonisogasa failed not @blak_terrorist. Platform abused" and views expressed by Collen Mpho that "@nombonisogasa Open intergenerational dialogue is crucial but patronizing the youth and/or their intellect is unacceptable". What was on Nomboniso's profile as shown above, was not necessarily the dominant opinion that participants had. An overwhelming number of participants expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the way in which Nomboniso engaged with Wanelisa, with @JacquiThePoet expressing that "this age intersection needs to be explored further. The older demand respect without giving it!", @NgwenyaPage "The ageist dismissive nature of @nombonisogasa on accomplished black young women" and @panashechig who affirmed that "@nombonisogasa ...the interview went to bad! The intergenerational prejudice kicked in here." More followers expressed that:

"@_sifisomthembu Was listening 2 da interview between @nombonisogasa n @blak_terrorist I belive tht she was bais with parent approach @RhodesMustFall"

"@Thipapedi @nombonisogasa ...you are beginning to sound like my mother! Take a chill pill. This is only a studio bathong..."

"@Thipapedi terrorist ...microcosm of South Africa right here @nombonisogasa is killing our children voices!"

"@I_A_MRoyalty Or maybe she could have allowed @blak_terrorist to speak without any interruptions from her rude "Listen" everytime."

"@simphiwedana Let's keep ageism, respectability and condescending tones out of intellectual discourse. It is counter productive."

“@mndyoko Be very glad u didn't tune in to the @RediTlhabi show today. It was painful 2 listen 2. Arrogant, dismissive..@nombonisogasa”

“@mohmedsbu This old people who only live to demand respect are taking us backward.”

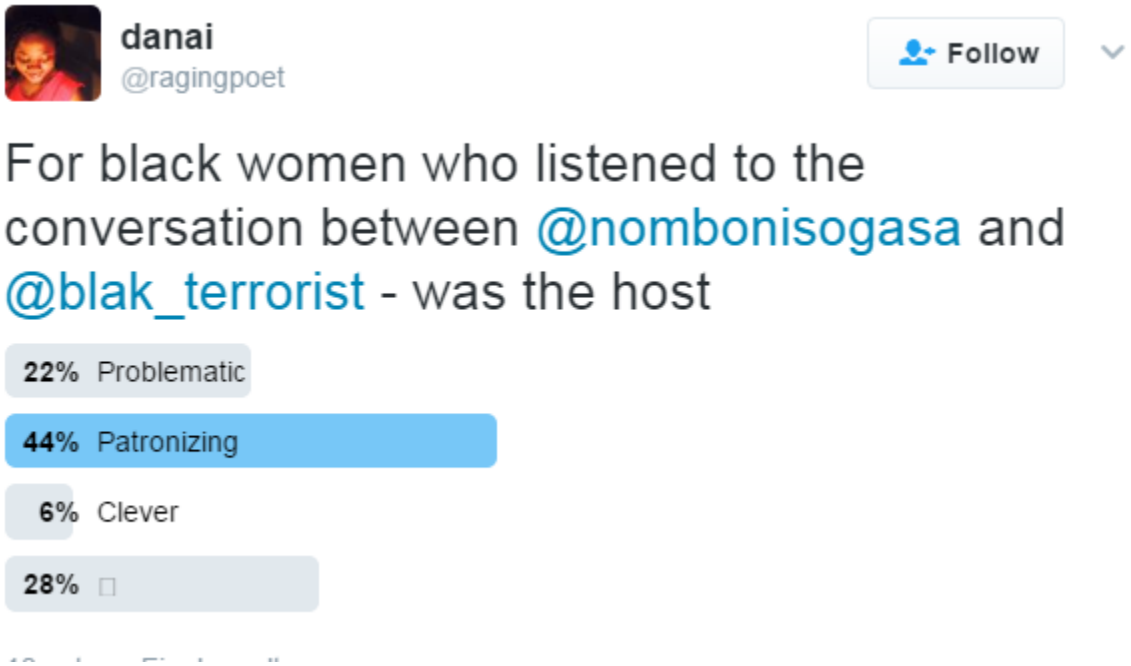
“@MaksMolomo Adults like @nombonisogasa are the gatekeepers. This country shall burn to ashes and we shall free ourselves without them. They don't listen”

“@WagaMoleke @Radio702 @nombonisogasa ,let be professional and let people have their say and not cutoff people with different views”

“@Akhido_Blaque as a facilitator for this dabate I think @nombonisogasa has already taken a stand and which suppresses the dialogue.”

“@azolaanele @Radio702 @nombonisogasa wants to have a conversation by herself. She definately is looking for a particular view. Kunzima.”

One follower ran a poll to find out how people felt about the interview and from the feedback, only 6% gave a positive reply.



Interestingly however, it is also as important to draw on the point that, contrary to Nomboniso, Wanelisa did not take to Twitter to personally discuss any details on the interview except through one tweet stating that "Black Sfeborrist @blak_terrorist perhaps the most hurtful of all things, white people on my Twitter mentions congratulating a black woman for humiliating another black woman". These tweets reveals a number of issues. Firstly, that despite the overwhelming number of support that Wanelisa received both online and on radio, she viewed the dispute from the lens of the white gaze. This tweets and the lens it reveals, I believe, perpetuates the ideas that Wanlisa speaks of in the opening parts of her interview with Nomboniso, that is, that whiteness still represents undertones and sometimes blatant tones of racism and in addition, highlights the problems that exist between blacks, the lack of black unity, specifically, black women solidarity. As self-identified Black feminists, this may also highlight the difference in Black Feminism ideology that exist between the two and how they are performed in public spaces which for Wanelisa seems to be informed by black women solidarity. Although Wanelisa did not reply to the Twitter threads that Nomboniso had dedicated to the topic (to be discussed below), the @RhodesMustFall (I am not aware who is specifically behind the account) movement Twitter account took to defend Wanelisa stating that "@RhodesMustFall @nombonisogasa if u have any integrity at all, u would apologize to @blak_terrorist for the violent authoritarian fuckery u exposed her to". Furthermore, they later tweeted a thread of seven points penned in one document, detailing replies which were, noticeably written in first person form, that is, using words such as "I", "myself" and "me" which led me to believe that the account is run or administered by Wanelisa herself or at least that during this heated online debate, the @RhodesMustFall Twitter account was tweeting for her. There are three points discussed in the thread that I wish to focus on. In the thread, firstly, it

is noted that the thread is addressed towards “older black intellectuals”. Point number four states that “can we also come to an understanding that if my age for some reason, give you the right to humiliate me in a public platform that you are mediating and have far greater power than a nobody like myself, I reserve the right to get lit” and point number six then points out that “particularly black women, can we not humiliate each other because one said multiculturism instead of non-racialism which essentially are the same liberal fuckery” @RhodesMustFall (2016). Wanelisa in this thread appeals to the parts of Nomboniso that they seemingly have in common, that is, that of being a black woman intellectual but however, they do not seem to be in agreement besides the shared profile. Perhaps what this thread points out is that a shared profile does not imply a shared way of thinking.

Both Wanelisa and Nomboniso have openly self-identified as advocates of women’s rights and @RhodesMustFall points out in their thread that Nomboniso Gasa stands for and protects an organisation that it deeply anti-women and anti-equality. This statement derives from the way in which Nomboniso took to correct Wanelisa when she made a historical error about the ANC. This also became a recurring theme on Twitter with followers expressing that:

“@_BabyStar8 Wow. This interview is so tense □□□ this lady is defending the ANC and so touched by @blak_terrorist's unapologetic and radical stance.”

“@tebohomalekele @Radio702 @blak_terrorist @nombonisogasa The host is out of order she's an ANC blind loyalist.”

“@Thipapedi @Radio702 @nombonisogasa...best you don't defend the #ANC give @blak_terrorist a chance. You do sound condescending... #FridayStandIn”

One user points out that “sometimes the very people calling for the respect for women’s agency are the ones who bellittle its efforts”.

Subsequently, following the above thread by @RhodesMustFall, Nomboniso replied to them in a series of three tweets: @nombonisogasa notes that:

1. Dear #Fallists of different permutations, when real lessons of being in ur movement hit home-in your life experiences home-we'll be here

2. We'll listen to your real disappointments & sense of betrayal. Then we'll compare notes & life experiences. @RhodesMustFall #Fallists

3. Dear @RhodesMustFall & other #Fallists, what will you do when you discover that the issue is not #intergenerational but #ethical?

Nomboniso’s tweets as stated above, although very much open to interpretation, may be seen to be echoing Nomboniso perceived support for the ANC and also, a lack of support for the student movement. She notes that “we’ll listen to your real disappointments and sense of betrayal”, by this, she makes reference to what essentially caused the argument between herself and Wanelisa. This was when Wanelisa noted that the ANC and its leadership had disappointed black South Africans and that they had accumulated generational wealth and left the rest of black South Africans behind. By “real disappointments and sense of betrayal, she is suggesting that the ANC did not disappoint its supporters, but rather, that movements such as the Rhodes Must Fall, will prove to be the real disappointments in future.

What her thread of tweets further reveal, is Nomboniso’s lack of comprehension regarding the issues of intergenerational tensions that people picked up during the interview between the two. She notes that “@nombonisogasa I never claimed to be an #Elder. I never asked for #Respect. I am me. I am not responsible for your fantasies of me. @RhodesMustFall”. Issues of generational

tensions cannot be simply be reduced to one's claim to being an elder or blatantly asking for respect, but rather, as can be noted with the interview and the feedback received online, intergenerational issues can be seen through how elders interact with young people through either explicit of subliminal use of language, tone and beliefs expressed. @panashechig writes "On Mme Nomboniso's correction of @blak_terrorist", "young black people have learnt that, when a statement begins with "when we were" or "in 1976", we are not going to be presented with a genuine opportunity for engagement and learning but instead an opportunity for our "youthful" perspectives to be delegitimized and dismissed".

Nomboniso's reply to the @RhodesMustFall movement I believe also perpetuates the very idea and theme that has been reiterated throughout the discussion both on radio and online, that is, that Nomboniso delegitimizes the arguments or the lived experiences of the young people who are part of this movement. In her first point, the use of the phrase "real lessons" and real "disappointments" suggests that all that they are currently learning or think they have learnt as well as the disappointments they have experienced are in fact, not real at all. She is able to make that claim using her subtle but clear stance she takes as an "older" intellectual who is well experienced. Her use of the phrase "we'll be here" also takes a parent-child relationship which is often the case is situations where parents have tried to guide but the children refused to listen, that which @LuckySehlabelo noted to be "mentality of I know better than u" and maintains that Nomboniso is a "bad Talk Show host". The interaction above may suggest a problematic ageist dismissive nature that is apparent in older intellectual women towards young black women which furthermore reveals a struggle in power relations between black women that suggests a change in patriarchy that sees women dominate other women through their agency as women themselves.

The above shows I believe, what is of interest to the Black Twitter in respect to what makes this group of users react and participate. It also, gives the reader insight in regards to the manner in which these users interact with one another and also the potential tensions between black older genderations and the younger generation and how a shared profile of "blackness" does not necessarily mean a shared agreement of issues. Seemingly as well, it also shows that a shared sense of "black feminism" does not necessarily equate to a shared "unity", that is, that in the case of Wanelisa and Nomboniso, the two may identify as forming part of black feminist movement, but have different ways of showing this. This theme also touches on the question of class and relations thereof. That is, because Wanelisa has identified as working-class, is Black Twitter really a space of the black middle-class and in the same light, what therefore constitutes as the black middle-class. Black Twitter in this regard, can be a space where blackness is being debated and negotiated. I explore this further in my next theme.

Race and Gender fluidity on Black Twitter- Kasi Mlungu

The first part of this study focuses on Kasi Mlungu, whose real name is Anita Ronge is a commercial house music DJ, known as DJ DuchAz. She first started becoming popular on Twitter after she tweeted on the 23rd of January 2017 that "@TheDuchAz I get rejected for not being "black enough" and being "too black" to be white... I'm #KasiMlungu & I'm proud." This was followed by pictures of herself in African traditional clothes and this ultimately saw her trending on Black Twitter under the hashtag #KasiMlungu. For the purposes of this chapter, and to ensure that there is no confusion for the reader, I will refer to the key participant either by her real name, Anita, or in cases where I am quoting her tweets, refer to her by her Twitter handle which is @TheDuchAz.

The second part then focuses on Sarah Langa who is a South African model who was trending on the 22 February 2017 following her tweet stating that "@sarahlanga I dont knw where ppl get the right to be labeling other people black, white or coloured," following another that said "@sarahlanga Since you guys are so smart, tell me what race am I". This then saw her receiving a lot of reaction from Black Twitter users who took to debate race and gender fluidity.

I did not focus my attention particularly on Anita or Sarah per se, but rather, focused more on the how Black Twitter received both of them in Anita's attempt to be part of the black community online and outside and seemingly, in Sarah's attempt to not be associated with blackness. Particularly, a dominant theme that came up that I have explored below were the different ways in which both Anita and Sarah were accepted online by Black women and men respectively.

Race fluidity on Black Twitter

The hashtag #KasiMlungu took off as a means through which, created by the they key participant, could get herself and her brand trending online but also, a means through which she could appeal to the black online market. The word “kasi” is a word meaning “township” used mainly by people in the townships and “mlungu” is a Zulu word meaning white. Kasi Mlungu would therefore mean “Township white”. In the weeks following Anita’s tweet as quoted above, hashtag, #KasiMlungu had gained popularity online which ultimately also got attention in mainstream media. During her interview on Talk Radio 702 with Eusebius McKaiser, she told the listeners that she identifies with being black more, furthermore, that she does not believe that she has white privilege. Many followers have since compared Anita to the case of Rachel Dolezal who not only identified as black but physically changed herself into a black woman. @Cthulhucachoo wrote “So this Kasi Mlungu chick is basically Rachel Dolezal meets Igloo Australia?”

The black men’s sentiments seems to be that a white woman should not be crucified for essentially doing what black women have been so desperately trying to do, that is, liberate themselves by choosing who and what they want to be without being bound by gender and racial constrains. Followers like @PRmudau23 expressed that, "#KasiMlungu you guys are out here bleaching, twenging and putting weaves trying to be white and when a white girl tryn be black you angry” and seemingly, this was the narative that most black men held:

@Ongiwe #kasimlungu you all speak English more than your vernacs, put fake lashes and nails sonu can look like Mlungu but you reject #kasimlungu

@Jozee25 Black people complaining about a white person stealing their culture while sipping Glenmorangie and wearing YSL #kasimlungu

@siphoyau Leave #Kasimlungu alone. Some of yal are coconuts mos. We all have choices in life, that's her choice. Yal wanna be 'deep' about everything

@Bartmalm what I see is that you are beautiful with thise zpjeje qha, qhubeka nongquza ilungelo lelakho.#kasimlungu (replying to Anita's picture of her in African traditional beads- What I see is that you are beautiful with this attire thats all, carry on practicing your rights)

@cece67 Dont understand the fuss abt Kasi Mlungu when our sisters are trying so hard to be mlungus. They're even laugh at your broken english

Perhaps what the above tweets reveal more, is the tensions that exist between black women's need to liberate themselves by expressing themselves how they want, through their use of weaves and fake nails, and a claim that black women are in fact, through this, trying to be white. One follower that "@mmxo35 Y'all should stop wearing white peoples hair and clothes & go back to your traditional attire before complaining about Kasi Mlungu, just saying", therefore alluding that black women should not be crying cultural appropriation, ie "@DailyNthabi That #kasimlungu girl is fucking pissing on our culture and appropriating it.The audacity!!!", for a culture they have seemingly let go of. These tweets reveal that for men, woman's claim and practice of feminism that comes through beauty is essentially trying to be white. @kizobantu suggested that if Kasi Mlungu cannot be accepted to use black regalia, then surely "Indian people should start a trend demanding their hair back if Kasi Mlungu can't wear beads and drink umxombothi".

User @naledimashishi's tweet which expressed that "Of course black men would be the first to jump to Kasi Mlungu's defense by attacking black women. You guys are so tiring", triggered my need to analyze whether there was a distinct difference in the way in which black women and

black men, respectively, took to Anita's sentiments about her identity. That tweet within itself, just by the use of the word "of course", meaning that it was expected, highlights the long existing tensions between black men and black women which seemingly, have manifested in a space that should be uniting the two by virtue of being black and having almost similar experiences of racial oppression. But instead, what this platform and particularly in regards to #KasiMlungu highlights is that, there is a deeper sense of oppression that black women are experiencing that black men still do not seem to comprehend fully. It was therefore important to begin by gathering the data that would allow for one to get a solid sense of what was expressed by black men online that triggered the above tweet.

One follower also expressed that in fact, this was overdue and was the right thing to happen. He writes that "@Star7Siya #KasiMlungu is long overdue. These are results of intergration. Must we only be accepted in "white" spaces bt nt accept others in our spaces". There seems to be a suggestion of the idea of a rainbow nation, that is, that Kasi Mlungu should be accepted into black spaces just as black people were accepted into white spaces. In the same light, there is for some men, the idea that what Kasi Mlungu is doing is in fact not cultural apppropriation but rather, a means through which she is trying to normalize and embrace black culture, which is contrary to what most white South African would typically do. @ntsikimazwai seemed to suggest that this Kasi Mlungu trend would actually be normal if South Africa did not have an apartheid history. "Kasi Mlungu does not surprise me. if SA was normal...MOST whites would have an African swag. Its just that our whites r too 'special'"

These users also wrote:

@MasogaMj “mny blcks hv bn actng "white"4a lng tme n stil do. n nw1 #kasiMlungu embraces th blck stret culture n we are shockd.ras keya eng vele??“

“@TheeHero They are racist, we complain. They try to immerse themselves in our culture, we still complain. Hu ae Black Twitter is tiring. #KasiMlungu”

The most common notions that is being expressed throughout these tweets is that black women have been at the forefront of white cultural appropriation and that they have been doing so freely without as much criticism as Anita has faced in her attempt to be part of the black community. Users make reference to the much debated issue of black hair politics as well as issues of colourism- which are predominately issues that have been at the forefront of the debate about black women’s liberation in recent years. What is interesting to note then, is that in this case, black men are advocating and directly cheering for the “liberation” and freedom of expression of a white women, with some followers expressing that, “@barnjammin @TheDuchAz People who open minded like me and you must support her "Kasi Mlungu" cause she will make an impact in our society”, that is, suggesting that behavior such as this, is what is needed to unite our country. Some went to the extent of accusing black women of abusing this white woman; “@AmBlujay Black Twitter, mainly you girls, is abusing that Kasi Mlungu white girl”.

However, black women took to Twitter to express totally different opinions in regards to #KasiMlungu. Many of the women were raising issues of cultural appropriation as the black men were, but had expressed different thoughts on it. One follower pointed out the contradiction that Anita is, interestingly noting that identifying as black but still referring to yourself as “Mlungu-

white" is within itself a contradiction; "@IAmQueenOctober #KasiMlungu is still white. She still calls herself MLUNGU!??".

The contradiction in tweets also revealed that there seems to be a difference or contrast between black women and men regarding what blackness means for them. Many of the women were speaking against reducing ones blackness to the clothes and the attire one has, that blackness is not just about choosing whether or not one is black. This user notes that "@Tshepol_That Kasi Mlungu woman. Does she think being black is a state of mind? That one decides to be black or not?" and that "@Tshepol_ Being white and knowing tsotsi taal or wearing all starts or "black culture" regalia is not a qualifier for being hood/black. Nooit". Similarly, @nobuhlemzotho also notes that "this white girl 'Kasi Mlungu' eats a "sqeda" and suddenly feels black hhae sisi, doesn't work like that".

What the above users highlight is the fundamental of what blackness means that forms the foundation of Black Twitter. This is a deep sense of self-identity and self-awareness that goes beyond "black culture" regalia or just "a feeling of" as Anita has presented. This also shows that as the much debated topic of weaves has sometimes suggested, that black women wearing weaves or seeming to appropriate "white culture" has not removed them from their blackness. If for black women culture cannot and should not be reduced to regalia or material things, then surely it means that for these black women, the use of these "white" material symbols do not give them a claim into whiteness.

Black women also point blatantly pointed out the offense they took towards how black men were in fact encouraging #KasiMlungu. @ItsMbasa said she "found it patronizing to see that *some* black men were vouching for that #kasimlungu girl #yhuabelungu #menaretrash" and

“@SheAint_Lou who says she “Can't believe there are still black men that are defending Kasi mlungu #Menaretrash”. “@Pumpkin_Remy I want black women to be defended by black men the same way black men defend kasi mlungu #menaretrash”. Black Twitter since its inception has been characterized by hashtags used as a form of symbolic resistance or cultural artefact. The above tweet highlights an array of issues, specifically through the use of the three hashtags. #KasiMlungu, #YhuAbelungu and #MenAreTrash. The two latter hashtags have been quite popular on Black Twitter and have trended for a number of times for different reasons. #YhuAbelungu has been used to express historical and contemporary white violence to black people in South Africa. It is violence not only limited to physical violence, but also violence that manifests itself through socio-economic inequalities, specifically white privilege. #YhuAbelungu which can be loosely translated to “Yoh these white people”, is a form of expressing how “tired” black people are of white violence.

Men are trash, is hashtag that originally started on Black Twitter, but because of its popularity on this platform, subsequently gained as much popularity on other social networking sites such as Facebook but also, became a phrase often used in physical conversations among black women. Initially, when this hashtag began trending, the natural means of retaliation was to reply that #womenaretrash because “[they were] being dramatically unnecessary because all women were focusing on was the experience of terrible relationships” (@Mzlee 2016). This hashtag however went above just the constraints of terrible romantic relationships with men, but rather, focused holistically on “structural oppression, and the multiple ways in which patriarchy has forced women into so much of a corner that they don’t feel safe around men at all” (@Mzlee 2016).

The combination of all three hashtags underlined a diversity of issues that this user felt that in this case, were directly connected. That is, that Anita, #KasiMlungu, was exercising a form of

white violence towards black people and that by saying that she does not believe that she is a product of and still experiences white privilege through her ability to "pick and choose" which race she wants to identify with, highlighted the level of ignorance towards white privilege that white bodies represent. Moreover, the use of the hashtag #MenAreTrash in this tweet, emphasized once again, that black men were, through their support of #KasiMlungu, were at the foreground of oppressing black women by choosing the side of a white woman. User @Q_tyana writes that she got "chest pains when a black man called in [to 702] to ask #KasiMlungu whether she felt safe simply living her life, and being in 'the kasi'" to which one replied and said "@ZandyM_E Yes we love the same races that oppress, and dehumanize us before our own,#selfhate,the divide &concur rule is still prevailing #kasimlungu". This tweet shows however, that perhaps black men are aware of how violent black communities or "kasi's" are violent to black women, so much so that one would take to ask a white woman if she feels safe in a black area. @Q_tyana Safe to say I've never experienced this kind of concern. Instead I'm harassed and humiliated by BM [black men] just for simply BEING a black woman #KasiMlungu"

The issue of "self-hate" as specified by the user above resonated further with her. She highlights the problems that exist in this country regarding black on black hate that comes from xenophonia. She notes that, seemingly, people are more welcoming of Kasi Mlungu's claim to blackness than they would be of a foreigner who identified as Xhosa or Zulu. She asked "@ZandyM_E Would a Nigerian dj be embraced if she said she felt Zulu/Xhosa?We are struggling to love each other but other races R welcomed #KasiMlungu". She also makes reference to our own tribal issues as a country and says that "@ZandyM_E If a venda embraced

isizulu,they'd,be told to be proud of who they are but a white is welcome to appropriate any tribe #selfhate #KasiMlungu”

At the core of what black women expressed however, were issues that were inclusive of both black women and men. @dlakza who received 190 retweets and 104 likes through this tweet, expressed that “ The fact that Kasi Mlungu is making money off pretending to be black that real black people aren't getting for being themselves disgusts me”. She does not focus on and appeal to Anita as a white woman and the money she is making that real black women cannot make for being black.

Throughout the data that I reviewed during this study, I came across one white woman who had this to say about #KasiMlungu:

@THATninahastie: I'm white. I'm an English speaking South African of Serbian descent that is learning how to celebrate cultural integration. It's a trip

@THATninahastie: I'm sure that at some point I also fell into this trap of "you're so black, Nina" as a term of endearment and acceptance. But it's not ok.

@THATninahastie: Just say that you are a South African. A culturally curious and involved South African. Don't call yourself black. That's just weird.

@THATninahastie: So, as a white person you cannot say you are black because it diminishes the hundreds of years of suffering and oppression of black people

@THATninahastie: The point is: if you are white, no matter how much you culturally integrate you will never understand what it is to be black #KasiMlungu

When the above user wrote that thread, many of the Black Twitter users showed agreement through retweeting and liking her tweets. One of her tweets received a 120 retweets and various replies, with one user writing that "@LindieKay @THATninahastie thanks for this hey....nothing but the truth, I'm glad it came from u. #KasiMlungu" and user @Ethel_Malebye showing clapping hands as a reflection of agreement. What the above user has in common with Anita though, is that they both have a clear interest in Black Culture, but however, this then brought me to the question of why one is being more accepted by the group than the other. The difference between the two is that the one seems to acknowledge ones whiteness and point of privilege than the other and recognizes that a shared interest does not mean a shared identity.

The case of Kasi Mlungu as discussed above highlights a number of things; the problems or tensions that exist between black women and men regarding issues with direct effect to black women. It highlights too potentially, how black women are less accepting of race fluidity and how black men might be more accommodating in this regard. It emphasizes interracial tensions that exist between black women and white women and how it is important for black women to have be the gatekeepers of this black identity. In the below case however, black women and men seemed to be more in agreement and I examine why.

Race and Gender fluidity- The case of Sarah Langa

1. "I dont knw where ppl get the right to be labeling other people black, white or coloured. It's none of ur business boo! And anyway who cares?" - Sarah Langa Mackay (@sarahlanga) February 22, 2017
2. "Im black really? I have no time for ppl who know absolutely nothing about me tell me what racial category I fall under!" -Sarah Langa Mackay (@sarahlanga) February 22, 2017

3. “There is no racial catagory for us and that's exactly my point, I can't have ppl that know nothing about my race tell me what I am. - Sarah Langa Mackay (@sarahlanga) February 22, 2017”
4. “Since you guys are so smart, tell me what race am I? Or should I host a meet and greet so that you can all stick pencils in my hair?” - Sarah Langa Mackay (@sarahlanga) February 22, 2017

The above tweets, dated February 2017, were posted by Sarah Langa in order to express her dissatisfaction with people referring or addressing her as black. This was subsequently met by outrage from Black Twitter users. Sarah Langa, who is typically, according to South African standards, is classified as “coloured” and therefore black, felt that she did not appreciate being called black and was seen to be separating herself from being classified as such.

This then brought about discussion around racial fluidity in that, what right did Sarah possess to be able to pick and choose, during any given time, what race she belongs to or does not belong to.

Previously, Sarah had been publicly known to be self-identifying with being black as she had previously tweeted so. A few months ago when True Love magazine was trending for “hating black people”, Sarah took to Twitter to express how she had had a different experience with the publication. However, in one of her tweets, she blatantly identified as black and writes that “It is not true [that True Love hates black people]. I am back and they dressed me for the whole event and treated me like a read VIP guest, world class”. (Sarah Langa 2015). Even more recently, Sarah expressed on Twitter, her perceived ideas of daily things that black people do by writing that “ why do us black people like posing next to: trees, cars, poles, statues, escalators, designer stores. Why can’t it just be us in a photo” (Sarah Langa 2016). She also tweeted once that “white

folk be like Wakaberry is the best creation Eva! Pssh, us black folk have been eating frozen yogurt we just called it mayo".

Sarah Langa also makes reference to the pencil test that was prevalent during the apartheid era to validate ones blackness. This I believe brings into attention the hair politics surrounding black women and by this, inexplicitly separates herself from being black. But also, it delegitimizes the struggles and the pain that which this test represented for black people and chooses to be identified as non-black by virtue of having soft straight hair. Users took offence by this which saw users quoting this tweet: "@tina_blackrose @sarahlanga "Stick pencils in my hair" you wilding neh".

But also, and perhaps more interesting, is the many followers took to Twitter to post photographs of Sarah Langa's wedding where she wore a traditional Swati dress in order to question her actual roots. Danai Mupotsa (2015:183) writes that "the wedding day is read as a staging of the achievement of desire and love, articulated through the use of space, objects and artefacts to project a vision of the self". Followers questioned why she wore a traditional dress to her wedding and later claimed not to be black, which noticeably, was the opposite opinion when Kasi Mlungu wore a traditional attire, which many expressed and questioned why a white woman would wear a traditional attire and think that allows her rights into blackness. To many of the followers, as Mupotsa also would note, how she chose to dress on her wedding day and subsequently the photographs she took, form part of her "self-image and self-possession" and "it reflects the desire for inclusion within the narrative" (Mupotsa 2015:183) it's ought to represent, "given that rituals [even in the sense of attire] have become an important means of staging or claiming a sense of belonging" (185). Mupotsa also writes on black women who have both

modern and traditional weddings such as the one Sarah was seen to have. She notes that there is a “peculiar doubling that [can be read] as the result of a contestation in representation” (186).

@phume22 concluded that “Sarah Langa is the type that identifies with a race only when it's beneficial for her at that specific time”, receiving 138 retweets of this sentiment. Many other Black Twitter users expressed dissatisfaction mainly at how Sarah could easily claim the rights into blackness and comment upon it then later, choose not to be classified or addressed as such which many felt that it was a privilege black people did not have. Users took to express that:

@Kim_Khandashisa Sarah Langa is enjoying being rich and the privilege to pick and choose what race she wants to identify as. So nice

@SillaDulaze Sarah Langa is a former Black person. Case closed. You will also get your turn to leave Blackness. Wait.

@CamaguMayeye_ When Sarah Langa decides to be black again she must not expect us to welcome her back with open arms ke.

@caseywaves Sarah Langa is lucky. does she know that most of us have to black all the time?

@Zulu_Admiral It is safe to say that Sarah Langa is a "former black".

The above tweets raise interesting questions on the problems that exist in this country regarding the terms which are used to classify one as “black”. Furthermore, like the below tweet will suggest, it highlights the much debated issue of privilege and once more shows the socioeconomic issues that exist in our country and the levels of inequality even in amoung races that are “politically” classified as black or historically “none-black”. @thabisot_ wrote that “This Sarah Langa lady confirmed what I said earlier, Coloureds and Indians only want to be identified as black when benefiting from BEE”.

@Kim_Khandashisa expressed that “Langa is enjoying being rich and the privilege to pick and choose what race she wants to identify as. So nice”. She followed this tweeted by another say “that is what privilege is, picking and choosing” in order to highlight once again, the racial inequalities that exist and most importantly, as the above tweets also do, raising a the issues of skin colour and privilege can manifest itself through skin tone, that is either being lighter or darker even when essentially classified as ‘black”.

@NthabiWabi, who was the only user who explicitly expressed these sentiments among the data gathered, wrote that “This "transracialism" only comes up when Black womanhood is made optional: Rachel Dolezal, "Kasi Mlungu", Sarah Langa. What's up”. She continues and says that:

@NthabiWabi "Transracialism" works for when people want to be Black for this reason or the other? It doesn't work for Black people wanting to be other?

@NthabiWabi I obviously don't understand where you guys are going with racial fluidity if it only means it's for people dipping into Blackness.

@NthabiWabi Also I'm very concerned about what you understand being transgender as when you can just equate it to people playing Black for benefit.

NthabiWabi The same people calling "transracialism" a "great debate" call Black people that twang "coconuts". But race is "fluid", apparently.

This user raises a number of issues which transcend through both my studies on Kasi Mlungu and Sarah Langa. She makes explicit the issue of black womanhood and how easily it has become for other races to have a claim over this womanhood. She also highlights the difficulties and criticism that black women face by, not actually making an explicit claim to another culture such as Sarah and Anita have done, but simply through speaking well, only to be classified as “coconuts”. By noting that issues of racial fluidity only come up when Black womanhood is

made optional shows the gender tensions that exist in how easily other raises can have a claim in black womanhood but not so much in black manhood. She highlights too how, for a black person, it is much more difficult to navigate through the world than it is for other races by observing that racial fluidity has only really been used and referred to as means for other people dipping into blackness and not visa-versa. What this shows then, is the importance and the significance of online communities, specifically, communities such as Black Twitter which potentially allow for the embracing of racial identity but specifically, a place that can allow for one to explore, question and engage issues of race and gender and how the two intersect. As Crenshaw has noted, it is important to look into the "frequently intersecting patterns of racism and sexism" (Crenshaw 1991:102).

In addition, and perhaps more importantly, what this thread reveals and many other tweets that have been used in this regard, is that, black people have used Black Twitter as a place to protect and defend one's blackness, moreover, it shows the extent to which blackness is up for debate and

One follower however, had different sentiments than expressed above. @Mtamerri wrote that "If Sarah Langa chooses not to identify with any race, that's her business... not yours" of which another user then replied and said "@Tshepol_ If this is the case then Kasi Mlungu can identify as being black and not previliged and that is her business... not ours." In reply to the same tweet, NotYetUhuru wrote that, "@NotYetUhuru_ So we can't identify for Sarah Langa but we just denied Kasi Mlungu's application? What an interesting week". "@Dona_la_dona Funny how we saying Sarah Langa can identify as any race she wants but we denied Kasi Mlungu to identify as black"

@Sbongiseni_G dedicated a thread towards the debate around who gets to set the terms for fluidity and how it is determined:

"@Sbongiseni_G Gender is fluid but race isn't? Who decides which category is fixed and which isn't? Sarah Langa has provoked a great debate"

@Sbongiseni_G Could transracialism be a thing? Why are we more accepting of fluidity when it comes to gender and not race?

@Sbongiseni_ Identity politics are incredibly complex and honestly I don't think anyone has the answers

This resulted in many replied and engagement, but what is common that came through with regards Sarah and Anita's case was that, some users felt that when racial fluidity is used in order to gain or make a profit, then it is problematic and insulting to those who belong to that race.

"@Ayeezy05@Sbongiseni_G @JadeKaayWilson Sarah profits off being black because that's what she presents herself as. For her to deny it is insulting".

@literockstar @Sbongiseni_G it is an insult that she is profiting off a culture she's expropriated

@literockstar @Sbongiseni_G in this case it feels like she is making a mockery of blackness and also benefiting from the exploitation of the blackness.

What the brings into attention is how Black Twitter is a space which can potentially highlight a rift between Black men and Black women and/or alternatively, a space cohesive enough to include and accommodate individuals who might be split in socio-economic and political ideologies. As has been written by Warner, counterpublics such as Black Twitter, allow for more than just a conversation about two people, but also, tha it allows them to speak to many other differences that shape contemporary discourser. It highlights the deeply troubling lack of understanding and inclusion of intersectionality that Crenshaw speaks in mainstream discussions.

Crenshaw (1991:101) notes that "the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend differences, but rather, the opposite- that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences". I wish to explore this further below.

Hashtags for social change and political activism

Background

On the 13th of December 2016, a new hashtag was trending on Twitter. #IfApartheidDidntHappen/#IfApartheidDidNotHappen. South African took to Twitter to share their socio-economic realities regarding the idea of a rainbow nation that they were promised. This hashtag was one of Black Twitter's ways of retelling the realities of being Black in South Africa, but perhaps more importantly, a means through which black South Africans could, through digital media, retell their lived experiences online, but also, perhaps highlight how far we have come as a country. Because of the nature of Twitter archives as has been explained in the methodology, it only allows me to access a specific number of tweets, because of this, I could not trace back where and who exactly began this hashtag and what its initial purpose was.

The apartheid era is very important part of our history and which saw massive damage in the lives of many Black South Africans. It is because of this reason that although there has been many other socially and politically important hashtags that have been created on Black Twitter, I chose this one specifically as it could potentially cover an array of the parts of Black South African lives that were affected during the apartheid era and more importantly, it allowed me a window into the perception of what young South Africans think about how far we have come as a nation post 1994. Ndongeni (2016) notes that as much as this is a very serious hashtag, Black Twitter "for the most part, turned it into a joke, while some were left nostalgic whilst reminiscing about the horrible effects it has had on their lives". The most important thing to note however, is

that Black Twitter has provided an alternative platform to engage on matters of interest to the young, Black South African. The jokey nature through which they tweet, should not suggest that young, Black South Africans on Black Twitter have no real interest in matters of social and political engagement and citizenship. It is particularly true in that, most of the tweets were humorous and were subsequently turned into jokes, however, I believe that those tweets, humorous as they have turned in some instances, allows for a closer look in what is of interest to young South Africans, what affects then and what they deem important. Humor can reveal a lot about a community and its culture and the boundaries thereof. It also allows for analysis regarding the nature of sociopolitical conversations online. The study also looks largely into gender-race intersections on Black Twitter through the lens of this hashtag.

Hashtags for Social Change and a means of Political Activism

Hashtags have been an important part of Twitter as it is able to coin specific topics which people are tweeting about. For the Black Twitter users, this is no different. Hashtags such as #IfApartheidDidNotHappen works towards turning struggle into performativity by incorporating and normalizing blackness in contemporary South Africa.

A vast number of tweets that were tweeted through this hashtag, were dealing with current issues that are very relevant and of critical importance in South Africa. Important to note as well as that, as will be seen below, users who focused on through this hashtag were tweeting issues that had to do with purposefully, defining, elevating and protecting blackness, but also highlighting the damage that black people faced in regards to the perception they have of themselves as black people.

Depiction of self-identity

Politics of skin tone

@ntokozo_mabaso1 tweeted that "#IfApartheiddidnthappen black people would appreciate themselves in every shade" and another user tweets, almost expressing the same sentiments as the last that "@FIGHTER_TEBZER #IfApartheidDidntHappen skin bleaching would be another type of drug abuse", "@Queen_B_107 #IfApartheidDidNotHappen we wouldn't have yellow bones with darker necks and hands", @Lndzabe Ladies wouldn't be bleaching themselves to look light in compl., and the word "yellowbones" wouldn't be existing #IfApartheidDidNotHappen largely highlighting the politics of skin colour and skin tone among black people and the constant need to be lighter so as to fit into whiteness. This highlights the problems of self-loathing that has come with apartheid that has made black South Africans to need to change themselves in order to fit into the mainstream, more acceptable race of whiteness. This self-identity also aims to do away with the pathologizing of oneself towards oneself but also the pathologizing of black people by other races. The above tweet looks into the painful issue of colorism and the historical discussion that has to do with slavery and colonization in South Africa which subsequently continued during the apartheid era. The tweets highlight the problems regarding how colorism and the politics of skin tone leads to discrimination and how many black people, specifically black women have taken to bleach their skin in hope of fitting in.

African spirituality and culture

If apartheid did not happen @Tsietsi_Mohale notes, "#IfApartheidDidNotHappen we would stil be appreciating our cultures and practicing our ancestral religion and not the western way of living" , "@Sini_ziwe #IfApartheidDidNotHappen me believing in my ancestors would nt be considered as being "ungodly"" , observes the extent through which black identity has been pathologized and been made to seem unholy and many times, scary. These tweets also emphasis

the idea that many black South Africans, have lost the the "true identity" of what it means to be black. @_KaraboMotaung wrote that "#IfApartheidDidNotHappen we would know what it means to be African", "@tshepo_segodi #IfApartheidDidNotHappen every blacks would know their culture and Ubuntu", "@zamani_nka #IfApartheidDidNotHappen South Africa would have an African name". These tweets also brings ideas of how black peoples self-identity has been largely influenced and directly linked to apartheid and slavery, but also, and perhaps more importantly, that these group of users are aware of the problems that exist surrounding their self-identity and that through the use of such hashtags, not only makes them conscious of these problems, but also, provides a foundation through which they may begin to change and rewrite their history. The tweets underline the long standing issues of African spirituality and aim to do away with the idea that African ancestral spirituality is a form of demonic practice. Biko describes African-ness and the consiousness thereof as a means of seeking to give positivity in the outlook of the African people (2013:33). Africanisation in essense can therefore be explained as Africans exploring their civic identity but most importantly, the reclaiming and assertiveness of ones African identity and that can be seen through the tweets above, that is, that there is a call for South Africans to retreat back towards being "true" Africans and find their true identity.

Education and access to labour

An overwhelming number of users, using the hashtag, also tweeted on the unavoidable issue of education in South Africa. They drew upon the problematic nature of our current education system and how it has failed black South Africans, with one also pointing out that, the liberation we were promised back in 1994 has indeed on been achieved and that can be seen through the poor education system that black people are still very much subjected to. These inequalities were historically strengthened by the Bantu Education Act No 47 of 1953 which legitimized the separation of black South Africans from well-resourced education system as compared to their

white counterparts. This system ensured that the curriculum was suited to the “nature and requirement of the black people”. The point of this system was to ensure that although education was somewhat available to black people, however, the quality, level of accessibility and the implementation of this educational system was to ensure that black people would not aspire or think as far as being in professions that would get them out of the poverty line or above their white counterparts. Because of our history, we adopted an education system that was influenced by the socio-economic and political inequalities of race and class.@Tando_Sinqe tweets that “All equal access 2education would have removed much of the current "liberation-before-education"palaver we face now #IfApartheidDidntHappen”.

“@Kthabatha There would not have colonized education and townships #IfApartheidDidNotHappen”

“@tumi_kgasi #IfApartheidDidNotHappen Blacks wudnt be under so much DEBT for their basic rights education & living”

“@AsandaBikitsha My mom wuld be a retired proffessional nurse, that was her dream job #IfApartheidDidNotHappen”

“@candytabata #ifapartheiddidnothappen my dad would've been educated instead of quitting school to support he's siblings”

The above tweets reveal the deep problems that South Africans are still facing in regards to education and how subsequently, this has had a long lasting effect on their lives. As can be seen above, users speak about both their parents and themselves to highlight the problems that exist around issues of education. This again highlights that the idea of post-apatheid South Africa has not brought about much change in the lives of young South Africans.

Tied to this, was the issue of labour and the kind of jobs that black people still occupy, but also, the missed job opportunities missed due to a lack of proper education largely relating to the fact that the kind of education they are receiving, do not allow them to be in better jobs. Expressing the inequalities and injustices that black people still face in job markers, @rqvhura writes that "#ifapartheiddidnthappen we would have a white taxi driver" and @xolile_jody highlighting the salary inequalities between blacks and whites by noting that "#IfApartheidDidntHappen no company would have the guts to offer anyone R4320 as their salary before deductions."

What the above also emphasizes is the urgent need for young South Africans to get affordable quality education for black people. These users recognize and acknowledge that education is not only tied to many socioeconomic problems that South Africa faces, but most importantly, as the World Bank and many other organizations have suggested, that improved quality education may be the answer to our sociopolitical challenges and that education enhances the chances of earning potential by offering opportunities for growth and employment.

Land Reform

Users also expectedly so, touched on the currently largely protested and debated issue of land reform noting that "@SliqSinistah #IfApartheidDidntHappen we wouldn't have to discuss the land issue and that as @FatimaSithole put it, "#IfApartheidDidntHappen we wuld be owning our land". Users also highlighted too that #IfAparheidDidntHappen, the geo-spatial realities of this country would be different in that "@MadamSpeaker1 We would have grown up in the suburbs #IfApartheidDidntHappen". The issue of land in South Africa has gained much prominence over recent years and has been at the core of discussions around radical economic transformation. Close analysis regarding issues of land allow us to acknowledge that in fact issues of labour as has been discussed above are also closely tied to issues of land and are

exceptionally important when approaching the discussion of economic development and accumulation for black people. Although not originating specifically in South Africa, racial discrimination in the county was heavily reliant on the migrant labour system. This system, in coherence with the Land Act, was aimed at controlling the movement of black South Africans through 'homelands' using the notorious system of pass laws. The migrant labour system saw black men moving across the country in order to work and therefore ensure that black South Africans were treated as foreigners if found outside of their defined areas of residence for any reason either than work (See Turrel 1986). For this reason, the issue of land and land distribution has caused a lot of debate as white people still occupy suburban areas and black are based in rural areas and township.

@BuyiswaBingwa We would not be buying land #IfApartheidDidNotHappen

@DevAmukie We wouldn't be buying land that belongs to us.. #IfApartheidDidNotHappen

@KgosiYaMoAfrika #IfApartheidDidNotHappen My royal background wouldn't be questioned , I would have/own my great great grandfather land

@SMhlongoEFF #IfApartheidDidNotHappen I could be sitting like this in my farm

@Shabba_LJ #IfApartheidDidNotHappen Black people wouldn't have been violently dispossessed, by whites, of their LAND, HUMANITY and DIGNITY

@Shabba_LJ #IfApartheidDidNotHappen townships such as Soweto and Langa wouldn't exist.

@CashMofokengb #IfApartheidDidNotHappen wudn't have whites on tour buses looking at blacks in townships like they are zoo animals

@Vice_Gambin #IfApartheidDidNotHappen we wouldn't have countries in a country

The use of this hashtag, specifically around the issue of land reform, allows for these group of users, to express their dissatisfaction of this issue, additionally, it unfolds to the reader the lived realities of this group and allows for a kind of protest again matters that affect them.

Interracial relations

At the top of the list of issues that were highlighted through this hashtag, were interracial relations and the struggles thereof that still exist in this country. @Tr_Rick1 tweeted that "#IfApartheidDidntHappen white people would not see black people as (inserted a picture of a monkey". To this, "@Junbugstone #IfApartheidDidNotHappen dear white people and black people this would be us but u fucked it all up (inserts a video of a black man marrying a white woman". This also highlights the extend in which even after the apartheid laws that were demolished post 1994, such as the land act and interracial laws in the country, the reality is that, not much has changed.

Language and race problems

At the core of interracial issues, was the issue of language use in South Africa and how, because of the apartheid history, black indegenous languages were not used as often as it should be and that the use of English had subsequently become a measure of ones intelligence. South Africa as a multi-lingual country has some exceptional language problems because of its policy of apartheid. There are notably tensions between the two official language groups, Afrikaans and English. And equally so, there are linguistic tensions in regards to English and the black majority (who speak indegenous languages), mostly in regard to language instruction in schools. Because English has been the main language ofinstruction in both schools and higher education, the language has among black communities mostlu, been seen to be the measure upon ones intelligence is measured. @GeraldMatimu also highlights the politics of

language in the country by noting that “#IfApartheidDidNotHappen All those Black kids who speak English with a white accent will never be considered "cool".

“@kimo_swazzie #IfApartheidDidNotHappen The stupid crooked mentality of laughing at someone with "broken english" wouldn't exist”

“@jnovworld2015 Coloureds would not think thy are better than blacks just because thy speak the Boer language #ifapartheiddidnothappen”

“@candytabata We wouldn't judge each other's intelligence based on how fluent we speak English. #ifapartheiddidnothappen”

“@Tumi_Hlakud Nkabe re bolela Sepedi go se nee bothata, nw we hv 2 learn English #IfApartheidDidNotHappen (we would have been speaking Sepedi and it wouldn’t be a problem)”

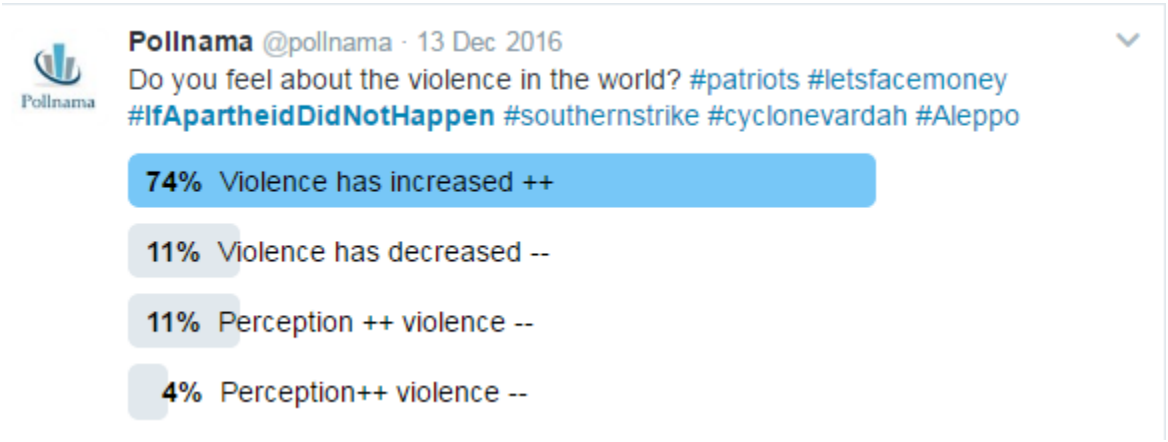
“@MjakesJack #IfApartheidDidNotHappen We would be speaking our own languages”

The above documentation of the issues of language emphasizes the call and need for decolonisation in language use in South Africa as many express the problems of speaking English and subsequently deserting our own languages. The education policy which saw black people taught exclusively in Afrikaans has resulted in a number of problems in the coutyr. On another level, the above tweets also show the existing tensions between two official language groups, Afrikaans and English.

The tweets also show that participants of this hashtag also did not shy away from being critical of themselves and how through ones use of English, can ridicule another black person for not being well spoken. Furthermore, these black users also took to point out that perhaps if

apartheid did not happen, "@tebogo_bello #IfApartheidDidntHappen Black ppl would have to face their own flaws unable to blame whites for being lazy and violent". Users also took to this hashtag to criticize our current president saying that "@TheeKing7#IfApartheidDidNotHappen Zuma would have not be a President!" to which @LM_Mangope replied saying that "And he would've went to school! #IfApartheidDidNtHAppen". One user even took to express dissatisfaction saying that "#IfApartheidDidntHappen maybe we wouldn't have had Hlaudi?"

Violence prevalence



Following this hashtag, Pollnama released a poll on Twitter to get an idea of how people perceived violence in the country. According to the results here, people seem to perceive that violence has increased. This subsequently draws a very bleak picture of post-apartheid South Africa and perhaps highlights how far people perceive that we have come as a country.

In 2013, Wu noted that in South Africa, "a new group of internet users [have] emerged. They are young, Black and from a low-income group. For now, they tend to use the internet in basic ways: for quick information and to socialize" however, it is fast starting to change, this 'new group' is starting to be more aware, engaged and politicized (Wu 2013). From the engagement as shown above, through hashtags such as these, black people are not only able to relive, retell their lived

experiences, but also, they are able to demonstrate a kind of identity and community maintenance. This also highlights one of the community scale as outline by Peterson (2013) that in order to form part of, and maintain a relationship with such communities, one has to feel a sense of emotional connectedness to the group as well as a sense that your needs are fulfilled through sharing and interacting with other members of the group. Bosch (n.d) cited that research has shown that there is a declining involvement of young people in sociopolitical engagement, particularly since democratic elections in 1994. However, Black Twitter, through such hashtags and interactions, is able to show that there is a particularly different group of people that are in fact young, black and interested in sociopolitical change in the country and that they are cognitively aware of the change that needs to happen. The above emphasizes that "a performance of positive [and socially aware] black social and self-identity is at the foundation of Black Twitter structure" (Clark 2014:20).

Locating women's issues in #IFApartheidDidntHappen

When the hashtag #YouOKSis trended on Twitter in July 2014, it signaled a particular moment in which women, Black women, insist on using Twitter to assert the validity of their experiences and at the same time, proclaim their existence in a world whose system continually denies them such agency through exclusion and erasure. Through this hashtag, Black women confronted street harassment.

This was made apparent when Nwabisa Ncukana was stripped naked in the middle of a busy Johannesburg taxi rank in 2008 (see Williams, 2008). In addition, because of the imbalances of the past, Black women use taxi's much more than any other race in South Africa, therefore are more likely to face street harassment than any other. Moving on, the hashtag #YouOkSis then became the leading hashtag when it came to issues facing South African Black women. The

hashtag was used and is still used to tell the experiences of black women regarding street harassment, inequalities, issues of intersectionality and relational issues between themselves and between black women and men. South African Black Twitter now uses this hashtag to not only tell stories of street harassment, but also to tell stories of domestic violence, feminism and gender equality. I make mention of this to make the reader aware that in the past, there have been hashtags that directly speak to gender issues and woman violence in society. However, my aim particularly, was to locate where society locates women in mainstream issues of society and politics. I set out to analyze if women's issues arise in matters that do not necessarily have to do with women directly, that is, if not consciously done through hashtags like #YouOkSis, do users take consideration of issues affecting women in that space.

Upon observation, many of the tweets that were shared spoke about socioeconomic issues affecting black people as a race regardless of gender. Many of the users spoke of opportunities of equality such as @CandiceGMC who notes that "your name and skin colour would not determine a salary increase, job interview and promotion #IfApartheidDidNotHappen" but does not include or recognize "gender" as a means through which one can be discriminated against. Seemingly, even in instances where the inequalities of the kind of jobs that black people work, only those mainly occupied by black men were highlighted. Tweets such as "@rqvhura #ifapartheiddidnthappen we would have a white taxi driver" and @Tr_Rick1 "#IfApartheidDidntHappen there would be a lot of black foreman at the mines" that highlight black men occupations that needs liberation rather than those that black women occupy. It is worth mentioning that through all the tweets that were reviewed regarding #IfApartheidDidntHappen dated on the 13th of December 2016, there was no specific reference to jobs that were predominantly occupied by black women as needing change. Also,

interestingly, various positions of power were mentioned in hope of highlighting the change that needs to happen in managerial positions. However, those positions were hypothetically replaced with black men and none with black women. @CHANDIZGP tweeted that "Prof Sobukwe would be Vice Chancellor of Wits #ifapartheiddidnthappen". One user correctly tweeted that "@garth_vader18 The #IfApartheidDidntHappen tweets shows us just how much still needs to be done with regards to addressing the past injustices" but also, what this hashtag shows, is how much still needs to be done regarding addressing past injustices that also brought about issues of intersectionality. What was also worth noting is that, may struggle heroes were mentioned in the hashtag #IfApartheidDidntHappen and noticaly, none were black women who contributed to the liberation of South Africa. Many of the users made mention of Robert Sobukwe, Stephen Biko and current leaders like Julius Malema and the contribution they continue to play in the liberation of black South African, with none of the tweets making any mention of any black prominent woman. @abulele_ab argued that "#IfApartheidDidNotHappen Chris Hani would still be alive", "@Mnotho2015 Robert Sobukwe would have died better #IfApartheidDidNotHappen, @NkatekoNdhima Mandela could have been a lawyer, @Mnotho2015 @abulele_ab Robert Sobukwe would have died better #IfApartheidDidNotHappen", are just some of the sentiments that users expressed.

Perhaps the above highlights the problematic nature that speaks into the manner in which states are inherently very masculine and are built on masculinity norms and shows how hashtags such as this can be untethered to masculinity yet connected to it. Wendy Brown (1995:174) has noted that "state power is surely and problematically gendered, as such, it gives a specifically masculinity spin to the generic problematic of the high tension and incompatibility between prospects for radical democracy and the growing powers of state". The above also highlight that

women need to be involved in mainstream politics in order to bring feminine and gender equal view to this masculine spaces. My findings above and the analyses therefore can suggest that political structures, political opinion and sociopolitical issues continue to be male dominated because traditionally, men have held the power and been more audible and involved in these matters which have made women even more subservient. The answer to gender inequality therefore and to break away from patriarchy would be to change our societal and social structures and the terms used to negotiate around these structures. Gender inequality can therefore be solved by more female representation within sociopolitical institutions.

Desiree Lewis (2008) wrote on the *Discursive Challenges for African Feminism* and in there notes the problems that South Africa faces in regards to women's rights discourses. She asserts that "South Africa has come to be viewed as one of the most gender-sensitive countries in the world because of the centrality of women's rights and gender equity to an official narrative of nation-buidling" (Lewis 2008: 315) but she continues to note that it be precisely because of this mainstreaming that "progressively dilutes gender activism" (315). Through the hashtag #IfApartheidDidNotHappen, the tweets reviewed reveal that there is indeed a general agreement about issues of concern as well as how far these users think the country has come post 1994. However, what us also apparent is the sense of sidelining critical women's rights and gender equality issues into prevalent matters among this group of users.

The above study has opened a window into what Black Twitter is through engaging with dominant themes that arose through one of its most trending hashtags in 2016. Particularly, it showed the issues of interest to post 1994 South Africa and how far they think we have come since then. I argue above that these dominate themes that have been analyzed, show the level of community and unity amoung this group of people. Furthermore, I argue that indeed, women's

issues are still very much ignored in regards to digital activism that has to do with mainstream socioeconomic issues, that is, that there is not enough integration of intersectionality in these dominant debates.

Makgobe (1999) argues that we are today, still living in the aftermath of apartheid and that it will take decades, if ever, for black people to fully recover from the socio-economic rife of apartheid. Through hashtags such as this, one is able to explore themselves through the eyes of themselves and another black people in this community. It is believed that true liberation can only be achieved through the care of the self. Mphahlele (2002:91) maintains that it is through knowing who we are and where we come from and what has happened to us as a result of the dominant discourse that determines our lives and as a result, will help us map out our cultural and hopefully socioeconomic destiny.

I believe that the theory developed throughout this dissertation and the findings both contribute to the advancement of digital activism among black people but also, contributes to theories that have been developed throughout this paper that deal with social and community identity as well gender and political identity.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research firstly sets out to introduce to the reader the concept of Black Twitter. More specifically, because Black Twitter is a phenomenon originating from America, its particular purpose therefore, was to then introduce to the reader the South African Black Twitter market. This paper particularly is on this group of black middle class Black Twitter users and their reclaiming of spaces that were previously excluded from by virtue of economic and political history of the apartheid era. It looked into how this group of people influence and form their political identity though creating counterpublic communities as a means of digital activism. This analysis was done by looking at some of the prominent content that has come out of Black Twitter and from there on track and analyse ways in which the Black Twitter engaged around issues of gender.

Firstly, in order to introduce to the reader the Black Twitter market, I analysed the Twitter presence of Wanelisa Xaba who has self-identified as forming part of Black Twitter. Through this particular study, I was lead into the theme of intergenerational gender tensions as well affinity in identity that exist on this platform. It drew to the reader not only the intergenerational tensions that exist on this platform, but the problems identity politics in that, a shared sense of identity of belonging, does not necessarily mean a shared sense of unity or understanding.

I then moved towards looking studying the cases of Kasi Mlungu and Sarah Langa. Kasi Mlungu as has been discussed, is a white South African who has claimed to identify as being black and subsequently, Sarah Langa, a black woman who has claimed not to prefer to be classified as being black or any other race. Through these two cases, my study then focused on gender and race fluidity on this online platform. Particularly, I was then led into a need to analyze the

different ways through which these two women respectively, were either embraced or rejected by black men and women respectively on Black Twitter.

The third study was focused not particularly on an individual, but rather, a trending topic under the hashtag #IfApartheidDidNotHappen. This allowed me further insight into the Black Twitter community, issues of interest and what informs this group. It provided insights into the opinions of young South Africans in regards to how far they think we have come in post-apartheid South Africa. It also allowed for a look into the location of women's issues in mainstream debates about post-apartheid South Africa.

What all of the above studies revealed, was that Black Twitter, not particularly the platform, but importantly, its users, have created a new platform or counterpublic which focuses on debating and negotiating what it means for them to be black. It is a space that does not have a set, specific meaning of blackness, but rather, a space that allows for the definition and contestation of what blackness means to individuals. Having said that however, these users through the use of Black Twitter reject the historical constraints that have been set for them through reclaiming and redefining what it is they feel blackness means to them. It can be noted is that there is clearly no set meaning of blackness, but what can also be noted, is the shared sense of having a claim to this blackness, whatever one defines it as. On this platform, there is a deep sense that Blackness is a practice as much as it is an existence and therefore manifests itself as a self-representative performance.

The space also shows existing tensions and also lack of significance that is placed on issues relating to women. It also shows however, that black women are beginning to be more and more vocal about the historical tensions and dissatisfaction that exist between black women and black

men. It shows a lack of intersectionality that exists on this online community. Having said that as well, Black Twitter can be considered a space which can potentially highlight a rift between Black men and Black women or alternatively, a space cohesive enough to include and accommodate individuals who might be split in socio-economic and political ideologies.

Be that what it may, Black Twitter is playing an important role in providing a space for black people to engage and debate blackness. I consider it a space that can allow an insight into the personal lived experiences of this particular group of people. This platform and its users allow for further research into black digital activism.

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