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The Psychology of the Value of Human Life: Contingent Moralities in Enactments of Violence in South Africa

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May 2020

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Community-based Counselling Psychology

Declaration of Originality

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work, except where otherwise acknowledged. It is being submitted in the Faculty of Humanities for the degree of Master of Arts in Community-based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university

Signed this 4th day of May 2020



Amina Mwaikambo

Student Number: 328149

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Abstract

When people have power and status, their lives are noticeable, they become relevant, and their lives tend to appear more valuable than others. In a country like South Africa that has been plagued by violence and competition for power, socio-political development has afforded some lives more access to resources and privilege, thus making those human positions more appealing than others. When violence happens to affluent individuals, society is more likely to be informed, make meaning of, or consider such violence as a tragedy. This research study intended to explore the judgments that tend to be made about the value of human life in South African society's violent contexts. Drawing from psychological theory, and extracts from focus group discussions, thematic content analysis was conducted. Despite discourses of equality, it was concluded that some lives attract more attention and compassion in violent situations than others. In both everyday life, and in crisis situations, there are some human subjects that are deemed more important than others. These lives are the lives that are noticed, that evoke empathy, and are grieved when harm begets them. Analysis of the participants' discussions highlighted how identities along the intersectionalities of gender, sexuality, age, class, race, and ability were key to determining the value of a person's life. One's positionality in society was analysed as a proxy through which human life was measured. It was concluded that the manner in which these identities intersect in each human body served as a contributor to how that particular life was perceived. It was also inferred that violence is enacted differently according to the statuses of people involved, and this ascertained whether the acts of violence were considered to be worthy of social outrage.

Key words: Violence, Human life, Morality, Gender, Race, Sexuality, Class, Power, Identity

List of Abbreviations

FGD	:	Focus Group Discussion
LGBTIQ+	:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

"Whereas the violence of the oppressors prevents the oppressed from being fully human, the response of the latter to this violence is grounded in the desire to pursue the right to be human. As the oppressors dehumanise others and violate their rights, they themselves also become dehumanised. As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors' power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression" (Freire, 2005, p. 56).

Paulo Freire aptly encapsulates the contestations that persist between human beings. He provides a snapshot of society as an uneven terrain where violence meanders precariously, negotiating its way within people and between spaces. Freire (2005) highlights the power that exists in the mind to create hierarchies and demarcations of human value. He brings foresight to the notion that violence originates in the oppressor, the one who fails to acknowledge other people as human beings worthy of human rights. The oppressor is the one who produces violence through acts of exclusion. The oppressed is the one who is excluded, and holds the burden of reifying their humanness (Freire, 2005). This prompts one to acknowledge that the complexities of violence that are experienced in modern day society were all engineered in the human mind.

The purpose of the above extract is to compel readers to reflect on their own thoughts as sites of violence. The thoughts of the ordinary, everyday person are acted out in society, and feed into the culture and practises that influence communities, states, and the world at large. The oppressor is the person who is unable to see the full human being, and remains fixated on the identities which the human embodies. Paulo Freire's words are fitting to introduce this study which ultimately aims to prompt the readers to think about their own thoughts and prejudices, and their roles as agents in global society. The judgments that ordinary people make about themselves and others, collectively contribute to the development of systemic and institutional structures which govern, and often violate human life.

Valuing human life from a psychological perspective is a complex phenomenon that is embedded in the relationships between human actors and their positionality in society. There is a historical trend of identifying features in people and either accepting or rejecting them. This has ultimately resulted in the classification of human beings in a constellation of identities that are either valued or devalued. This value or worth can be conceptualised through the analysis of the thoughts, emotions, and actions that are evoked when a human life is oppressed, or placed in a violent situation. These responses are influenced by the social perceptions that have been constructed around the identities which that person embodies.

It can be said that the manner in which people respond to others is an indication of their perceptions of themselves, and how society has constructed frames of identity which the "other" is subject to (Heider, 1958). It is in these responses and interactions that we attach value to the parts of the "other" that have solicited attention from us. Where there are no parts that are valuable, we do not notice people, or we intentionally ignore them. It is not enough to be human, and if it were, society would not be battling with human inequality.

Despite that all human beings are meant to be equal, in active society, this is not so. In violent situations, people will be acknowledged differently. Some deaths will be labelled a tragedy, others may feed into a system for statistical purposes, and others will go unnoticed. This "acknowledgement" may not be a measure of human life, however, it provides insight into which lives have been ascribed value, and which lives are not even grieveable.

1.2. Background

The nation of South Africa has a tragic history of extensive violence which has transcended into present day socio-political landscapes (Marks & Andersson, 2016). The centuries of violent activity have caused immeasurable impact on the people who have been oppressed and violated by both people and institutions. This sits as a collective trauma as the people of South Africa navigate their way around a wounded nation. However, the way in which violence is experienced by individuals is unique, and typically related to demographic information and identities which they embody (WHO, 2002; WHO, 2014). Furthermore, the places and contexts in which people reside also tend to influence the types of violence to which they are exposed.

The human experience is not equal, with every life journey having a different story. The manner in which we interact with one another is influenced by socially ascribed descriptors or identities. Through time, descriptors have evolved to acquire different levels of value where some are considered to be more prominent or superior to others. Furthermore, international systems of governance have been instrumental in propagating inequality amongst populations (Fanon, 1963; Agamben, 1998; Bosteels, 2016). As globalisation has augmented people's ability to access multiple spaces, it appears that some people have more access to space and resources than others (Bourdieu, 1987).

Psychologists have been studying the human mind and behaviour, yet remain imbalanced about how inequality has been perpetuated through different policies (Bourdieu, 1987; Agamben, 1998; Butler, 2004; Hamby, 2011). At the foundation of this study is the notion that some lives are more valuable than others. As an analogy, consider how you treat different people; what their presence (real or virtual) evokes within you will help you to make meaning of how different lives are ascribed different levels of value.

The level of influence that we have depends on how favourable our identifying (demographic) characteristics are viewed in society. These characteristics include race, culture, religion, class, gender, and other socially framed constructs (Bourdieu, 1987; Agamben, 1998; Butler, 2004). In light of modern day disparities in equality and social justice, it is imperative that we interrogate the processes that have contributed to these differences in value, in order to facilitate a society that is more aware of the need for equality of human lives. This involves the acknowledgment that some policies that exist in society are oppressive and dehumanising (Freire, 2005; Butler, 2004; Butler, 2009). It also includes the reflection of how patriarchy has served as the overarching ideology under which identities have been framed and value ascribed.

In retrospect, modern day society may be more inclusive and progressive, however, it is still a reflection of the trends and systems that have operated in the past. Historically, slavery was justified as a means of ensuring productivity – there was work to do, and it required labourers. A consequence of this was that the affairs of some were prioritised over the needs or rights of others (Agamben, Fabbri, & Fay, 2009; Bourdieu, 1987). Ownership of slaves (people) was also justified from a capitalist perspective (Fanon, 1963; Bosteels, 2016). Despite that slavery has been abolished in many parts of the world, capitalism has not, and the hierarchies of class still exist.

These class systems are influenced by the government of the day that dictates which people are afforded power over others (Bourdieu, 1987; Agamben, 1998).

Considering that power is not evenly distributed, people do not receive the same treatment when a violent incident occurs. Diversity is valuable, however some identity descriptors perpetuate stereotypes, and the people who are involved in the interactions become subjects of those generalisations. Hence, the context in which violence takes place influences how it is viewed. Ecological philosophy (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and Fanonian literature on psychopolitics (Hook, 2014b) postulate that contexts are not value free. They are experienced today based on the history of the land and the people who inhabited it. These merge together and shape how people think about both perpetrator and victim when violence is enacted.

As a universally accepted definition, the World Health Organisation defines violence as:

> "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Krug et al., 2002).

Violence is often investigated in relation to criminal activity, however, it exists as a social actor, and an entity with its own unique characteristics (Schinkel, 2004; Hamby, 2011; Bowman et al., 2015). Schinkel (2004) describes violence as a force that holds a governing function in human society. There are times when violence is used by people as a form of communication, or a means to obtain a resource. Violence also acts as a system of governance to subjugate people who are considered to have less power, and to keep them within manageable parameters (Butler, 2004). In order to adequately address violence, there is a need to conceptualise how it works, where it works, and why it works (Hamby, 2011; Kazdin, 2011; Bowman et al., 2015). The underpinnings and expressions of violence are complex and are not always classifiable through a distinct cause-effect binary (Schinkel, 2004; Bowman et al., 2015). Furthermore, investigating violence from one paradigm or sector of government tends to provide a somewhat elusive account of how people are being affected by threatening and harmful activity in their geographical, psychosocial and virtual communities (Fanon, 1963; Butler, 2004). It has been posited that violence is not as simple as a response or a motivation to inflict harm on another individual or group (Fanon, 1963; Schinkel,

2004). Violence also exists within social structures and processes that are expected to facilitate the governing of society (Fanon, 1963; Butler, 2004; Stevens, 2016).

Media platforms broadcast information about the atrocities that are inflicted on people. With each violent enactment viewers rely on their morals and experiences to construct impressions about the perpetrator, victim, and act of violence (Butler, 2005; Stevens, 2016). Violence is enacted on various human bodies – gendered, raced, disabled, aged, etc. and members of society respond uniquely to incidents of violence in different contexts (Stevens, 2016). The exploration of moral economies provides insight into when judgments are made about which human bodies "should" be susceptible to the various violent enactments (Butler, 2004; Butler, 2009; Stevens, 2016).

Violence is performed in behaviour that is motivated by an existing or anticipated power over others (Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Butler, 2004; Gergen & Gergen, 2008). The differences in identity ("the other") can be located through gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age (and various other identities), which intersect to give rise to sociocultural hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1987; Crenshaw, 1991; Segalo, 2015; Rosenthal, 2016). These hierarchies exert their power, reinforcing oppression in institutional structures and social landscapes, often cultivating a state of violence through exclusion of certain identities (Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Agamben, Fabbri, & Fay, 2009; Bourdieu, 1987). This violent othering impacts people physically, psychologically and socioeconomically, thus fragmenting individuals and communities (Fanon, 1963; Prilleltensky, 2008; Hook, 2014; Stevens, 2016). An example of violent othering in the South African context is the education system during the apartheid era (Abrahams, 2001; Laher & Cockroft, 2014). These racialised power dynamics have been sustained as an integral part of contemporary society (Freire, 2005; Mbembe, 2015).

Where societal structures may have limitations in facilitating equality, research about the value of human life may inform a more just approach to managing violence against humans. In practicality power dynamics resonate precariously within acts of violence (Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Butler, 2009; Fanon, 1963). Not all violent situations are afforded the same scrutiny and resolution as legislated by the "powers that be" (Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Butler, 2009; Fanon, 1963). Considering how international organisations like the United Nations have responded to rape culture, vigilantism, ethnic war, child abuse etc. it can be deduced that responses to violence bare

only a semblance of equality and they are not consistent with policy (Fanon, 1963; Butler, 2009; Langa et al., 2018).

This study explored the judgments that people made about human life in violent contexts, and which moral contingencies emerged in similar yet contextually diverse situations (Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Mullen & Skitka, 2006). The researcher aimed to conceptualise how participants made meaning of violent behaviour, life and death, and how they ascribed value to human life within different demographic groups and subjectivities. Which lives matter more than others? Under which circumstances do we acknowledge or dismiss acts of violence on victims in South Africa? When do we consider violence to be an acceptable force to use to manage people?

1.3. Research Aims

a. To investigate how judgments are made about violence, as either a legitimate or illegitimate act, on the human body.
b. To conceptualise the value that contemporary South African society has placed on various human subject's bodies.
c. To theoretically explore the moral contingencies underpinning the value of human life in the South African context.

1.4. Rationale

Globally, more than 1.3 million people die annually as a result of some form of violence. This number is representative of 2.5 per cent of annual mortality (WHO, 2014). Based upon the South African Police Service (SAPS) (2015) report, South Africa was identified as one of the most violent countries in the world. Violent behaviour can be self-directed, it takes place between individuals or as a collective, and it is deeply rooted in historical, psychological and political praxis (StatsSA, 2016). According to StatsSA (2016) there was a higher percentage of deaths in 2016 due to assault than there were deaths due to transport accidents. This is indicative of the higher prevalence of intentional harm inflicted by perpetrators on people than the circumstantial harm that occurs with road accidents.

This study aimed to explore the nature of violence as an endemic to everyday life (Schinkel, 2004; Kazdin, 2011; Stevens, 2016). The objective was to conceptualise violence and its effects on human life by engaging with theories and experiences which have contributed to how the South African people interact with violence subjectively (Bowman et al., 2015; Stevens, 2016). It is these beliefs which may facilitate the understanding of how and when violence is legitimised or delegitimised (Butler, 2004; Stevens, 2016). It is within the contexts of violence and the types of people involved, that we identify whether violence is heinous or acceptable (Kazdin, 2011). Through conversations about enactments of violence, one can make assumptions about which human identities are more relatable with, who tends to draw more empathy, and which people are recognised to be more valuable than others (Butler, 2009). These attributions are not always covert, but are identifiable by the manner in which a community ethos is articulated.

It sounds rational that when violence is inflicted on a body, this evokes a response among spectators (physical or virtual). The paradox is that we live in a society plagued with inequality and diversity, hence our responses to violent enactments tend to be influenced by the cultural and social capital of those involved (Bourdieu, 1987; Butler, 2009). The value that we attach to the people in those contexts determines the empathy we afford them (Agamben, 1998; Butler, 2009; Stevens, 2016). The value determines whether or not we choose to advocate for justice for them (Butler, 2009). The value we place in violent situations determines whether we decide that the violence was just, and the victim(s) deserved that which was inflicted upon them (Bourdieu, 1987; Butler, 2004; Butler, 2009). This research study endeavoured to critically analyse participants' responses to violence, and how moral judgments were made to either justify or denigrate various forms of violence in South Africa's diverse population (Doris & Cushman, 2010; Butler, 2004).

This study provides a rich, qualitative perspective about people and violent actors in different communities in South Africa. The subjective interpretation of enactments of violence in private and public spaces tells us about how violence is conceptualised, when the human body involved represents various social or demographic groups that are susceptible to violence. These meanings were generated during a data collection process where participants discussed various types of violence. The discussions yielded themes pertaining to perceptions about perpetrators and victims in violent contexts. Participants shared the impressions that they had about gender, race, class, age, disability and power in violent incidents. Participants made attributions about which

types of people were more vulnerable, and which tend to be associated with violent behaviour. This exploratory research aimed to contribute to an understanding about the value of human life.

This study was located in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, which is a site that boasts its wealth in diversity (Mbembe, 2008). It serves as an emerging society and a site of gentrification. It provides an illustration of differences in social development, and the everyday interactions of identity groups as they negotiate their positionality in the various sectors within Braamfontein (Wittenbaum & Moreland, 2008). This geographical setting was considered to be ideal for exploring violence and its effects on our perceptions of human life – and the differential values of human life ascribed. It can be said that different identities hold a unique value and voice in the city, and therefore their experiences hold distinctive meanings (Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Mbembe, 2008).

As people negotiate their space in Braamfontein, violence tends to emerge through the various actions of the people and the institutional structures that govern those spaces (Segalo, 2015). Based on one's cultural capital, some forms of violence are considered acceptable, whereas others are frowned upon (Bourdieu, 1987; Stevens, 2016). To illustrate the diversity, an example of legitimate violence would be the legal removal of homeless people from abandoned and dilapidated buildings in inner city Johannesburg. The violence does not only exist in the confiscation or altercations during the process. The removal of individuals from a place where they have cultivated shelter and protection impacts their livelihood and safety, and is therefore violence in itself (Fanon, 1963). These are normal occurrences in Braamfontein, where human life is a melting pot of governance by legal actors and the ability of those who dwell there to survive (Burocco, 2013).

From a different scope, Braamfontein is in transition, with people from diverse cultures and identities occupying corporate spaces (Mbembe, 2008; Burocco, 2013). Abandoned and dilapidated buildings are being purchased and renovated for purposes of economic development. Various institutions and middle to upper class lifestyle establishments are capitalising on the process of gentrification. There are students, vendors, foreign nationals, the corporate working class and tourists all embedded in Braamfontein's perimeter (Burocco, 2014; Peyroux, 2006). The infrastructure reflects the presence of both rural and urban architecture due to population density, economic activity and the presence of basic amenities. Disparity brews tension, which offers that

violence can always erupt, impacting the people within the Braamfontein space to differing extents. Participants of the focus group discussions were identified through their active registration at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. This informs that they have all interacted with Braamfontein in one form or other.

1.5. Scope of the Study

This study aimed to conceptualise the value that contemporary South African society has placed on the lives of various human beings. This was conducted through the exploration of violence as a medium and prominent feature in the country (Bowman et al., 2015; Stevens, 2016). The study explored the psychological and behavioural impact that violence has had on people who reside in South Africa. This was achieved through extrapolating focus group discussions and drawing insight from how participants make sense of their own identities in a violent society. Further discussion investigated how participants make meaning of violence when it is experienced by other people, taking into consideration the intersected identities that seemed more prominent. The research critically engaged with theory in order to explore the moral contingencies underpinning the value of human life when violence is enacted on various human bodies.

As South Africa is a country that often utilises vigilantism as a remedy for community instability, this study examined the impressions that people from diverse backgrounds had about collective violence. Emphasis was laid on when people are considered to be perpetrators or victims of systems that were perceived to not fulfil their protective and judicial roles.

The research was also purposed to investigate how judgments are made about violence, as either a legitimate or illegitimate act on the human body. In situations where people are less frequently affected by direct violence – when there are security measures in place – it was established that their perceptions of violent actors was significantly different from some of the participants who were more familiar with geographical spaces which were more prone to violent activity. This provided a rich discussion about the life journeys of people with varying identities in the South African terrain. The study further explored these intersections providing insight into the nature in which violence has physically, psychologically and systematically influenced members of South African society over time.

It is vital to note that the sample was not large enough to serve as a representation of the broader South African population, however, it provided insight into the experiences of various identities in violent spaces and when they were perceived to be valuable, and when they were not. All submissions by participants were considered to be true.

1.6. Chapter Organisation

This research report is comprised of five chapters. This section of the first chapter provides an overview of the work that is contained in the project. The first chapter introduces the study – an exploration of the psychology of the value of human life, the background of the topic and the aims of the study. The rationale is also included in this chapter to bring to the fore the value that this study holds in contributing to the knowledge economy. It also contains a brief synopsis of the scope of the work that was covered in order to portray how the researcher framed the study.

In the second chapter, the researcher provides the literature review. It has aimed to cover as detailed and concise a synopsis of the theoretical and contextual elements that relate to the study. The topical areas have all been considered in relation to South Africa's socio-political journey over time. Theoretical and philosophical works that have been reviewed include literature on the psychological underpinnings that inform how the positionality and intersectionality of identities influence how human lives are experienced. Important literature pertaining to morality and the complex meaning of being human are reviewed, placed through the lens of violence as a currency that is both managed and manipulated by power.

The third chapter is a methods chapter which outlines the paradigmatic approach to exploring the subject matter, and for purposes of answering the research questions. This includes a description of social constructionism, as an apt paradigmatic stance from which human beings can be explored as subjects of society's systemic structures and processes. It further contains the research design, data collection methods and procedures that were embarked on in order to ensure that the study was in compliance with research expectations at a master's degree level. A description of the participants is accompanied by the sampling methods. The thematic content analysis process of analysing data is discussed, and a detailed outline of the ethical considerations

is documented. The chapter is concluded by a section highlighting the researcher's reflexive journey while conducting and interrogating the thematic outcomes.

The fourth chapter provides the findings and a discussion of the data. It contains the themes that were considered to be most prominent in the discussions between participants, and the interpretations thereof. It is imperative that it is emphasised that these themes do not cover the entire scope of the topics discussed. There had to be limitations in order for the study to be thorough yet succinct and comprehensible.

Chapter five of this report provides the conclusion. This includes a synthesis of the research aims and the outcomes, limitations of the study, and recommendations. It further outlines possible areas that may be pursued for future development of knowledge and literature on the intricacies of the value of human life.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents some of the central theories and philosophies which were engaged with and applied as a theoretical framework for this study. These include an overview of South Africa's socio-political landscape, social and community psychological theory, morality and the nature of human identities, and violence. The literature that is presented below has been selected in accordance with the ontological and epistemological aims of interpreting the data. The objective was to employ a critical social constructionist lens through which the narratives provided in participants' talk were interpreted and conceptualised.

Psychology is a science which investigates human thought and behaviour. The impact, however, that complementary disciplines like sociology, philosophy, and political science have on the ordinary human is pivotal. The nature of human identities for the purpose of this research will therefore not be studied in a vacuum. Hence the literature that is presented herewith may appear to deviate from what is considered to be traditional psychological theory. The endeavour was to review various collections of theory that would adequately inform the researcher, and subscribe to the method of inquiry.

2.2. The South African Psycho-social and Psycho-political Terrain

South Africa was initially colonised in 1652. For almost three centuries the British and Dutch fought for ownership of the South African people and their territory (Bond, 2000). Finally in 1948, the National Party came into government despite that there was still influence from British colonialists. In 1961, South Africa officially gained independence and went under the complete rule of the white minority National Party, where the cycle of violent oppression persisted through the apartheid government. The National Party fostered a system of racial segregation which restricted non-whites from accessing basic resources. South Africa eventually became a democratic nation state in 1994. To date, South Africa still experiences conflict in the aftermath of apartheid, and has been identified as a site for extensive xenophobic and afrophobic violence (Bond, 2000).

South Africa's most recent bone of contention is centred on the radical beliefs that 1994 paved the way for South Africa's political and economic freedom. The disparities in equality have facilitated a rift among South African political parties, as democratic policy has had a limited impact on South Africa's economic state, particularly in the lower income and disadvantaged communities. The extensive xenophobic and afrophobic violence currently displayed in South Africa is viewed by some as a national outcry for economic imbalances to be reviewed.

Violence is not only a domestic issue but is also a global issue (WHO, 2014) and an integral characteristic of South Africa's history (Kaldine, 2012b; Bowman et al., 2015). Violence in South Africa dates back to colonialism, through to apartheid and has continued to transition into democratic society. It presents itself in systemic, institutional violence, and violent criminal behaviour (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Bowman et al., 2015; Kaldine, 2012). Where violence is experienced, there is threat to human life. Hence, it is beneficial to explore how human life is valued in South Africa through the process of analysing the human being that is exposed to enactments of violence.

Expounding upon South Africa's tumultuous history, the country can be explored through the psychological, social, and political elements that contribute to its current landscape. Violence can be conceptualised as a psychosocial and psycho-political phenomenon, which permeates South African society's systems and structures of human governance and development (Stevens, 2016). South Africa can be described as a psycho-political terrain as the manifestos of the government of the day direct the political climate, and therefore impact the social and psychological wellbeing of the people. The policies and articles that are documented in the constitution are aimed to direct human conduct in a manner that promotes South Africa's democratic values and human rights. These include human dignity, equality and security (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). As human society continues to be plagued by instability and conflict, violence is experienced in different measures by the people who have been exposed to it.

According to statistics provided by SAPS (2018) for the year 2017/2018 there were 601,366 reported contact crimes (inclusive of 50,108 sexual offences) and 30,858 drug related crimes in South Africa. Currently, South Africa is considered to be a country with one of the highest crime rates in the world (SAPS, 2018). Violence is emerging in spaces faster and more intensely than it can be managed and reports from residents of South Africa have indicated a

decreased sense of security in communities nationwide (StatsSA, 2019). According to the World Health Organisation (2014), in 2013 the homicide rate was highest in the adolescent to emerging adult demographic group (15-29 years old) with 43.5 deaths per 100 000. Statistics further depicted that in 2013 the homicide rate for males was 43.4 deaths per 100 000 which was considerably higher than the rate for females which was 9.6 deaths per 100 000 (WHO, 2014). However, data further informed that between the year 2000 and 2013, homicide rates dropped from 43.0 deaths per 100 000 to 26.2 deaths per 100 000 (WHO, 2014).

It is posited that contributors to the decrease in homicides include various interventions that have been introduced on a global scale for the management and prevention of violence at national level (WHO, 2014). Government, humanitarian and social movements have worked within the mandate of South Africa's democratic constitution to develop violence prevention programs with a non-discriminatory function to promote liberation and enhance social equality in the post-apartheid era. Affirmative action is an example of a key political venture which has endeavoured to eliminate racial and capitalist hierarchies and promote equality (Kaldine, 2012b; Ratele, 2012).

The aim of violence prevention initiatives is to establish interventions that are able to contain the tensions that instigate violent behaviour. It is important to engage with key stakeholders who are able to identify the sectors of society that perpetuate violence in its various forms (WHO, 2009; Gcabo & Moleko, 2012; WHO, 2014). Dialogue about violence prevention and violence (or crime) eradication (as two unique processes) provide information that apprise effective interventions in diverse contexts (Naidoo & Van Wyk, 2003). Due to the complexities of South Africa's socio-political terrain, there is a need to interrogate the intricacies of violent culture in order to then map out which entities require interventions that will forge barriers against violence and violent activity (Long, 2012; Stevens, 2016; WHO, 2009).

In South African society, identifying violence-free spaces (for prevention initiatives) is onerous. History has fuelled inequality, and perpetuated oppressive sociocultural norms which stifle liberation movements (Prilleltensky, 2003; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Stevens et al., 2013). Violence is not limited to the exertion of physical force on another. It is also experienced in platforms where people have become accustomed to oppression and feelings of despondency, people are traumatised, and uncertain of their human rights (Prilleltensky, 2008; Reid, 2008;

Langa, 2012; Stevens, 2016). Violence transitions across townships, communities, urban areas, and cities, occupying space and enforcing laws where systems of governance offer no other resolve (Langa, 2012; Long, 2013; Stevens, 2016).

During the apartheid regime, violence against people of colour was not considered to be a crime, and for many South Africans, conceptualising the extent of racialised oppression is an abstract process (Stevens et al., 2013). It was (and still is) a system that was used to manage civil society for many decades (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Stevens et al., 2013). That system of governance did not fall away with democratisation. Through adopting principles of coloniality, apartheid merely changed form and filtered into the new democratic system. It manifests in present day society in different forms of violent oppression (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Long, 2013).

The education system is one such site where violence has been enacted for decades in South Africa (Nzimande, 1995). This is in the form of inequality and restriction of educational resources to certain populations on the basis of their skin colour. This was a prominent theme of the apartheid regime (Nzimande, 1995; Stevens et al., 2013). In an endeavour to comply with international human rights standards, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was introduced to provide an alternative to mainstream education, further affording the South African Government the power to constitutionally control and limit the education of people of colour in South Africa (Nzimande, 1995; Laher & Cockroft, 2014). This ensured that tertiary education was also impossible to access. This further perpetuated vocational inequality (with obvious socioeconomic ramifications), and a system of othering that continues to facilitate the disenfranchisement of people of colour (Fanon, 1963; Freire, 2005; Hook, 2014b). This form of political oppression has been instrumental in limiting the development of liberatory processes that are expected to be consistent with democracy and a new life cycle of ideas (Agamben, 1998; Freire, 2005; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Hook, 2014b). The thread of educational exclusion persists in democratic society with restrictions on tertiary education to people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Where students access tertiary education, they often struggle with accommodation, access to food, technology, or language to fulfil the requirements of the diplomas or degrees that they have qualified to embark on (Mbembe, 2015).

Bowman et al, (2015) discuss the second wave conceptualisation of violence which has extrapolated violence as more than just a physical action aimed at acquiring a commodity.

Violence is also linked to human subjectivity, and can be experienced when people are deprived of essential resources by socioeconomic systems. Inaccessibility to resources compromises the holistic functioning and productivity of any individual or group (Fanon, 1963; Bourdieu, 1987; Agamben, 1998; Fanon, 2005; Bufacchi, 2009; Hook, 2014b). Hence, human beings as psychological subjects are moulded by the violence that they, and their communities have experienced trans-historically. As people are continuously excluded from accessing resources, their psychological wellbeing becomes a reflection of their lived experiences. These experiences of marginalisation create a frame of the identities that one should aspire to embody in order to access a more optimal quality of life. This experience of oppression and being othered is akin to a neurosis, and detrimental to psychological health as one's development across the lifespan is steered by an unconscious need to discard oneself in order to occupy other positions in society (Hook, 2014b). This broader conceptualisation of violence through othering provides insight into the psychoanalytic pathways that legitimise and delegitimise violence upon and within race, gender, age, disability and social class across South African history (Agamben, 1998; Stevens et al., 2003; Hook, 2014a).

The apartheid regime was actively violent against non-white people, dictating whiteness as superior and sovereign for effective governance of human subjects in South Africa. These narratives still permeate in the privilege that generations of white people embody. They are glaring in undertones when inequality is negated and people "do not see colour" and race (Bowman, 2013; Straker, 2013). The post-apartheid (and ongoing) transition into a democratic nation-state has not been seamless. Exclusion and oppression persist in institutional spaces through restrictions and inaccessibility to basic resources and constitutional rights based on race, gender, class, age, culture or disability (Long, 2013; Stevens et al., 2013).

In the Rainbow Nation, it is vital that unfiltered conversations are ongoing to facilitate the decolonisation process. These conversations allow various groups to share their lived experiences, and illustrate how different people share different realities in one country (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Many white South Africans have portions of land and title deeds which were acquired during the apartheid regime. They are still benefiting to date as they are able to contribute to broader communities and societal platforms than many people of colour. Comparatively, they have acquired more cultural capital due to the inequalities that history has propagated. This level of

affluence typically makes people more attractive, and essentially more valuable (Bourdieu, 1987). The violent nature of South Africa's history hovers over present day society. Those who have benefitted in the past are still benefitting through the privilege of knowledge, accrued material resources, and the aesthetics of a comfortable lifestyle. Others who have been previously disadvantaged or discriminated against are also still reaping from the disenfranchisement caused by a violent culture. Their lived experiences comprise of looking to another human classification as the prototype for a valuable life. This narrative is often validated by a society that has a strong history of perpetuating inequality through policy.

2.3. Violence as a Currency

Violence has been labelled one of the most complex features of society. It has persisted throughout time in precarious ways and has social, psychological, political and historical dimensions. Experienced through the actions of individuals, communities, or states, violence holds multiple functions which include intimidation, administration, and governance (Butler, 2004; Fanon, 1963). It is an entity that reproduces itself in multiple ways in the lives of both the oppressed and the oppressor, depending on the context in which it is localised.

Oftentimes, violence is perceived to be the aggressive and criminal incidents in which it is experienced. When unpacking violence, it is important that violence is considered as a form of currency for purchasing socio-political capital. It holds a significant role in modern society due to the manner in which power and violence are interrelated. Where power is unable to uphold social order, violence is inevitable (Foucault, 1980). It can be used in order to acquire power by removing or overthrowing a person (or people) from a particular space or position. Power can also be manipulated in order for one to act violently against a person (or people) for purposes of fulfilling a need. Whether it is interpersonal violence, or systemic violence, the enactments tend to be orchestrated by those who hold power, or aspire to do so (Freire, 2005; Hook, 2014a; Stevens, 2016).

Expanding on the WHO (2014) definition, violence can be conceptualised as a construct that exists across South African society, holding multiple functions (Schinkel, 2004; Hamby, 2011; Mbembe, 2015; Bowman et al., 2015; Stevens, 2016). Amongst the functions of violence include

the acquisition of power or territory (Prilleltensky, 2003; Stevens, 2008; Butler, 2009). This takes place through a myriad of forms of physical assaults, political and economic exclusion, and psychological manipulation where community members and entrepreneurs are in pursuit of social capital (Bourdieu, 1987; Stevens, 2008; Hook, 2014a; Hook 2014b). When exploring the relationship between human behaviour and power, it is important to acknowledge that enactments of violence have psychological, historical and/or socio-political underpinnings. They do not "just happen" (Hamby, 2011; Stevens, 2016).

It is imperative that violence is explored in context as it presents itself in unique ways, depending on contributing factors, and the task that it aims to accomplish. These functions can be explored through in-depth inquiry of the community under review (Fassin, 2008; Canham, 2017; Burr, 1995). Researchers and community psychology practitioners lay emphasis on the importance of decolonising spaces by exploring their intricacies on multiple theoretical and epistemological levels (Canham, 2017; Carolissen et al, 2010). This process is particularly useful in countries like South Africa which have a rich sense of diversity and multiculturalism. This provides insight into the nuances of violent culture that need to be deconstructed in order for people to experience a sense of safety and equality, and to understand how and why violence persists (Stevens et al., 2003; Bowman et al., 2015; Mbembe, 2015).

Due to society evolving from a patriarchal foundation, oftentimes violence is experienced as co-constructed toxic masculinities in conflict (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes & Morrell, 2017). The patriarchal demands of men and boys to exert their dominance is indicative of bodies which have been given power across the life span, and require that the power is maintained (Foucault, 1980; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Stevens, 2008; Ratele, 2014). However, equally problematic contributors to violence in South African communities are related to socially constructed differences in socioeconomic status, gender and sexual orientation, race, and ability (Crenshaw, 1991; Marecek, 2016). The forceful rigidity of identity categorisation tends to fuel power dynamics which perpetuate hierarchies, inequality and sites for violent culture to become validated and reinforced (Bourdieu, 1987; WHO, 2009; Rosenthal, 2016).

Drawing from this perspective, South Africa exists as a melting pot of various identities, experiences, and ways of conceptualising the world (Rosenthal, 2016; Stevens, 2016). Hence, violence does not exist in isolation, nor is it as simplified as the actions that people eventually

encounter, which can be classified as crime (Schinkel, 2004; Hamby, 2011). Canham (2017) explicates about Black rage, discussing the difficulties that many communities experience due to shortages of basic services (clinics, schools, sanitation, etc.). During protests, many community members vandalise or burn infrastructure due to frustration, and the collective experience that the government is not responding to their desperation. In a bid to express the sense of oppression and neglect, people have often found their voice in the liberating, yet physical acts that gain the attention of broader society (Canham, 2017). Crime is the action (the burning of public resources) that is considered to be illegal, and is managed by the criminal justice system (SAPS, 2018). However, violence exists as a feature of human evolution, embedded in the experiences of various identities as subjects of global society and colonial power (Fanon, 2005; Manganyi, 2011). Violence subsists in the neglect and oppression that community members feel when a school is built, and there are no job prospects for matriculants (Canham, 2017). This violence is revolutionary and symbolic of the resistance against centuries of inequality (Fanon, 2005).

There is a tendency of community development interventions to attend to violence from a criminal perspective. Violence is not limited to criminal activity, despite that it serves as a dominant contributing factor (Bowman et al., 2015; Stevens, 2016). In the quest to explore how violence is utilised as a form of currency and power, academics have emphasised the need to investigate the underlying contributors to violent enactments (Jewkes & Morrell, 2017; Foucault, 1980). These include social categories, economic inequality, and ethnic differences. Furthermore, it is known that as long as a constitution has not declared a form of violence as criminal behaviour, and enforced it as a rule of law, it tends to remain unchallenged in society (Freire, 2005). This is how apartheid was sustained. Social actors legitimised the use of violent measures as a form of governance, and a currency with which they purchased social order – often to the detriment of those who were located within those spaces (Bourdieu, 1987; Agamben, Fabbri & Fay, 2009; Butler, 2009). Multitudes of people were harmed, and it went unnoticed. It was not alarming because the people or organisations which were acting violently may have been acting within their hierarchical power to stop or mute people who were considered to be inferior to them. These social hierarchies still persist in institutions and systems to date.

This study was conducted at the University of the Witwatersrand in Braamfontein, Johannesburg where violence can be experienced through the academic structures that are still

undergoing the process of decolonisation. Group discussions were held with students who formed part of the commercial and upper class university community. The students came from different backgrounds and socioeconomic brackets. Despite that they had all accessed the university community for purposes of acquiring tertiary education, their qualities of life were different, and their living conditions ranged from upper class homes, to homelessness. This type of inequality is representative of symbolic violence, where hierarchies exist due to identity categories that differ and access the same space. It is not overtly aggressive, yet it emerges where class, race, gender, or ability are positioned to provide an added advantage over others while completing the same tasks.

Braamfontein presents with similar socioeconomic disparities as industrialised spaces like the farming and mining sectors. Over the decades, the working class and migrants have traversed into central Johannesburg finding residence in low cost housing or dilapidated buildings for purposes of occupying 'urban space' and forming part of the modern population. As a result, the value of Johannesburg CBD and Braamfontein decreased, and it was identified as a site in need of gentrification. Mbembe (2008) argued that the perceived degradation of this urban area was attributed to the lower class "value" of the people who inhabited it. This was further supported by the influx of upper class infrastructure and activity which has now created an aesthetic demarcation between places like Maboneng and Hillbrow (Burocco, 2013). The introduction of the middle- to upper- class populace has shifted the rules of engagement in parts of Braamfontein rendering them safer, and more palatable to those who can access them. Today there is more social awareness of Braamfontein's market value as it develops (Mbembe, 2008). Comparatively, this gives rise to the understanding of the value of the unwanted class, the embodiment of poverty, the 'other' that is both violent and the result of violence (Freire, 2005; Fanon, 1963; Jensen, 2011).

According to Fanon (1961) and theories of biopolitics, violence is not merely the act of exerting force onto another to cause immediate pain or death. Violence exists in the intersections of the human body, political power, social order and systems of governance. The ability and power to force a person into a space which increases the chances of their harm and/or death is a level of violence in itself (Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Butler, 2004; von Holdt, 2013). Being relocated or deployed to a violent geographical place, or being coerced by people in your virtual community to harm yourself or others can also be construed as violence. This informs that people have the power to exert violence on others even without physical contact. This violence on the body is what then

creates a platform for discussions about the differential value of human life (Bufacchi, 2007; Butler, 2004; Butler, 2005).

When incidents of violence happen to people, they reroute the life journey of the person on whom it was exerted. Violence also exists in the manner in which people acknowledge these incidents. Society tends to legitimise violent acts based on the perceptions that have been formed about both the violent enactment and the subject's body (Stevens, 2008; Butler, 2009). Fanon (1967) speaks about the dominator who freely exerts force that has been adorned to them by the state. The dominator's conscience is clear, harbouring no moral or ethical conflict because they have been authorised by state organs to act violently. This forceful or aggressive nature is legitimised even when it is morally unacceptable. This violence through dominance is often experienced by commercial sex workers in South Africa. They are often violated by police, security and other state or institutional personnel because their profession has not been legalised. Furthermore, the assumption is that since they provide sexual services, their bodies are available and can be violated (Bonthuys, 2012; Manoek, 2012; Scheibe et al., 2016).

Rape is a complex type of violence on the human body. It involves sexual intercourse with another person without their consent (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Du Mont et al., 2003). The narratives around how rape takes place in society are diverse, and typically involve the cultural acceptance of sexual coercion, victim blaming, intimate partner conflicts, substance abuse, and issues of power and dominance (Armstrong, 1994; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Du Mont et al., 2003; Jewkes et al, 2005). Rape has been normalised in South Africa, where the high prevalence of reported cases are presumed to be an under-representation of the actual pandemic. In their study, Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) reported on how often rape incidents were unreported, and the negative impact that corruption and bribery have on the legal processing of rape cases. This is a result of institutions and law enforcement agents not honouring the responsibility of upholding the law.

Jewkes, et al. (2005) further extrapolate on the sense of entitlement that underpins the rape of young girls by older men in their community. Sexual violence and violating the body of another person requires power. The violation rewards the perpetrator with the knowledge that they have power over the body of the victim (Card, 1996; Kramer, 2019). This further communicates to the victim that they are inferior to the perpetrator because they have been stripped off the power to

own their own body. It is for this reason that many areas where political instability is prevalent, rape is used as a weapon of oppression, and to communicate the ability to both violate and "own" another person's will (Card, 1996; McMahon, 2011). In these sexual violations, the value of the victim's life is being forcefully degraded by the perpetrator. Expounding on this further, and reflecting on South Africa's interactions with gender-based violence, femicide and corrective rape, it can be posited that it is not all victims of violence who society responds to with empathy or a call for justice.

With regards to gendered violence, it is often thought that the woman is the victim and the man is the perpetrator. Reflecting on gender based violence in South Africa, this may be the norm, but it is not an absolute or accurate depiction. Kramer (2015) presents some of the narratives that emerge about sexual abuse that is perpetrated by women, where society still grapples with the idea of females as perpetrators of sexual violence. Gear (2007) also provides insight into the physical and psychological difficulties that are incumbent in cases of sexual violation performed on men by men in South African prisons. These include stigma, shame and issues of navigating the masculine identity as a participant (or victim) of male-to-male sexual intercourse and homophobic violence. Gender dominance is often attributed to men, who have occupied spaces that have "entitled" them to the bodies of women, and transgender people (Brown, 2012; Moolman, 2013).

The positionality of either the perpetrator or the victim serve as key determinants of how society responds to violent enactments, if at all. It also determines the value that is subsequently placed on the human lives (Biko, 1981; Butler, 2009; Stevens, 2016). When the victim or the perpetrator is able to captivate the attention of the media or onlookers, it can be deduced that they hold some value in society because they are noticeable, and they yield compassion. It is at this point of compassion and recognition that human life is deemed to hold more value than the violence that has been exerted. In other instances, society is desensitised to violence in certain contexts, or violence is dismissed as a necessary evil to manage the lives of those who society considers to be ungovernable.

2.4. The Psychology behind the Value of Human Life

Pertinent to this study is an understanding of how human beings in society make meaning of different lives. Social and community psychological theory provide the background for understanding human thought processing and behavioural patterns in individual, group and collective spaces. These branches of psychology investigate the socio-political elements that influence the way that people think and behave. They provide insight into how human identities (and therefore human lives) are perceived and experienced in different contexts. They further inform the attributions and justifications that society makes about human lives when violence is enacted – where some lives are deemed to be vulnerable and valuable, and others are considered to be unnoticeable, undesirable and therefore reprehensible.

2.4.1. Social Psychology: Just World Hypothesis and Attribution Theory

This branch of psychology is founded upon sociology, psychology, and political science traditions (Ratele, 2003). Social Psychology aims to explore how individuals' thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by their environments (groups and places). It further conceptualises how attitudes and impressions are formed and maintained within various contexts (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). From a political backdrop, social psychology also serves to provide an understanding of issues of inequality and social justice (Ratele, 2003). It is from this point of departure that this study explores the thought processing that human beings engage in when forming perceptions about people in violent situations. These social perceptions are indicators of how various people are considered to be deserving or undeserving of the violence that they experience or are exposed to (Heider, 1958).

Allport (1968) posited that the spaces within which individuals experience others is complex. These spaces could be real, virtual, or derived from perceptions of their own positionality in the world. This implies that social spaces and social identities are constantly shifting, despite that they are such crucial contributors to human interactions and experiences. The manner in which one makes sense of social identities tends to determine how one values the human beings who embody them. This theoretical viewpoint then provides insight into how individuals make meaning of identities, and impute different value to human life across society.

Human beings are social creatures. In order to understand the experiences of people in the South African context, it is crucial that one explores social interactions in the South African psychopolitical and psychosocial space. Only then is one able to explore the development of social identities and how they are attributed status (Ratele, 2003). Two crucial tenets for purposes of conceptualising the value that people in society place on others' lives are explored adequately through attribution theory and the just world hypothesis. They provide a framework that outlines how society constructs moral behaviour, and makes meaning of why both good and bad events happen to people (Heider, 1958; Myers & Twenge, 2018).

According to attribution theory, people make inferences about behaviour based on their own experiences and the judgments that have been made about other people's intentions, beliefs, needs, and desires (Heider, 1958). These judgments are derived from social perceptions about the identities that individuals embody, and the situations within which individuals are being observed (Heider, 1958; Myers & Twenge, 2018). It is posited that personal causality delineates intention and desire, and is therefore a critical contributor to how people behave (Heider, 1958; Malle, 2011). Dispositional attributions make reference to one's character or personality as a determinant of their behaviour, and thereafter a contributor to events (positive and negative) that happen to people. Hence, the observed behaviour of an individual determines how they are experienced, perceived, and judged. This provides insight into how ordinary people make meaning of everyday experiences, like violence in society. It has been hypothesised that the tendency is to attribute an individual's behaviour to their personality traits or another form of demographic categorisation, more than one would attribute behaviour as a response to situational factors (Ross et al., 1977; Myers & Twenge, 2018). This tendency may be due to one's own personality, conceptualisation of social roles and beliefs about identity, and the information that is available about the identities, behaviours and experiences of others (Ross & Sicoly, 1979).

Situational attribution expounds for a broader understanding and sympathy for people, by exploring the contextual factors that could be influencing motivation and behaviour (Myers & Twenge, 2018). During these processes an observer of a situation may project their beliefs and emotions onto the individual(s) involved in the situation in an attempt to make sense of what could be taking place (Myers & Twenge, 2018). In violent interactions, the situational attributions would be drawn from the context, and how the environment contributed to the performativity of the violence.

History, culture and identity are key contributors to attribution biases (Heider, 1958; Barker, 2012; Myers & Twenge, 2018). It is through the lens which one experiences their own life that they make attributions about the intentions and behaviours of others in everyday life. This is key for understanding how value is ascribed to human lives based upon an individual's actions. When the actions of an individual are considered to be violent, reckless, ignorant, or malicious, perceptions about their role and productive space in society tends to diminish (Butler, 2005; Butler, 2009; Myers & Twenge, 2018).

In support of this theory, the just-world hypothesis advances an interpretation of the world from the viewpoint that those who are evil should be punished and those who are altruistic should be positively reinforced (Lerner, 1980; Baron & Branscombe, 2014; Myers & Twenge, 2018). This hypothesis is rooted in humankind's desire for a world which can be controlled and predicted (Lerner, 1980). In an endeavour to make meaning of a chaotic world, a default perspective is that the world is a just place for those who are in good moral standing as per social expectations (Lerner, 1980; Myers & Twenge, 2018). This approach to making meaning of one's external world also tends to facilitate victim blaming (Ryan, 1998), which entails the re-victimisation of individuals and groups who may be subject to violent spaces and histories of marginalisation and disenfranchisement (Lerner & Miller, 1978; Ryan 1998). It is often considered that a negative (harmful, fatal, etc.) consequence is acceptable if the victim has a deviant or sociopathic nature, regardless of whether their actions contributed to their involvement in the violent altercation.

Applying the abovementioned theories to 21st century South African society, it appears that violence has a propensity to recur in certain spaces and social groups. More often than not, various types of violent activity are stereotyped to be associated with certain types of people and places (Marks & Andersson, 2016). When one thinks of certain areas like "locations" and hostels, the notion that violence is common in these areas often desensitises broader society from reacting when an incident occurs. Hence, exploring how society expresses emotion through empathic, indifferent or dismissive responses to violent scenarios is beneficial for understanding how human value is being attributed when people are being violated. Through adopting social psychological theory, the researcher is able to dissect participant's talk about forms of violence and deduce where the attributions lie and how justice is conceptualised when presented with a victim-perpetrator incident.

By identifying dispositional attributions in participants' talk, it is possible to infer which lives are given more attention, and how they are positioned as victim or perpetrator (or both). Dispositional attributions tend to emerge from generalisations about behaviour that is attributed to human subjects (Heider, 1958; Lerner, 1980; Myers & Twenge, 2018). Depending on an individual's cultural capital or social presence, one may justify violence as a consequence of an individual's character, implying that this human life is somewhat deserving of the violation (Agamben, Fabbri, & Fay, 2009; Wykes & Welsh, 2009). These conversations are not always held explicitly, however, they are apparent in the production of narratives about people who are exposed to, or engage in violent activity. Gear (2007) presents this malady in relation to South African prisons, where men are often raped. It is often thought that the identities of victim and criminal are mutually exclusive, and the infusing of these roles into one person appears blasphemous.

The social construction of one's dominant identity impacts whether one is perceived to be guilty or innocent even when they are the perpetrator of violence (Lerner, 1980). Attribution biases (dispositional and situational) work in collaboration with the just-world hypothesis in South Africa's socio-political terrain to explore how ordinary people attribute value or devalue human life in violent contexts. From a social psychology perspective, the social perceptions that emerge when exploring violent enactments provide insight into the character, intentions and behaviour of people in society. It provides a synopsis of how members of class, race, gender, age, and other identity groups are conceptualised and when or how they are considered to be deserving of the violence that they are exposed to. Social psychological theory also provides insight into how groupings of "typical" violent actors are framed in society, and the process through which attributions are ascribed to people who become victims or perpetrators of violence.

2.4.2. Community Psychology: Understanding Human Beings in Context

There is no single scale to measure the value of human life, as a human being has physiological, psychological, and social properties. People have political and economic components, they hold intellectual, ethnic and cultural value. They are generational and relational, linked to various contexts and the intersections of their multiple identities. These descriptors of the various qualities of human existence are not exhaustive. They merely provide an illustration of how people are diverse, and the life of a human being cannot be easily quantified. Hence, the social

identities that one embodies, and their positionality in their various communities impacts how they are framed as vulnerable, victims, or perpetrators of violence.

Adopting an understanding of the psychological impacts of historical and socio-political activity on people from a community perspective is vital for conceptualising the collective life experiences of modern South African society (Naidoo, 2000; Ratele, 2003; Visser, 2012). Communities exist everywhere – they are reservoirs of identity, experience and ideology, and can be located in geographic or virtual spaces (Gusfield, 1975; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). As communities are not unilateral and do not develop in a linear fashion, neither do the people who exist within them (Gusfield, 1975).

Principles of community psychology have been adopted for this study as community psychology aims to critically and qualitatively explore social dynamics and human cognitions through a collectivist and ecological approach (Visser, 2007; Visser, 2012; Suffla & Seedat, 2015). Community psychology as a theoretical framework for understanding the psycho-political and psychosocial components of human nature explores various contexts to establish how members of communities experience wellness or oppression (Stevens, 2007). Amongst the strengths of community psychology is its anchor in intersectionality and social transformation (Rappaport, 2005; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Suffla & Seedat, 2015; Rosenthal, 2016). The importance of an intersectional lens lies in the complexity of human nature (Crenshaw, 1991; Rosenthal, 2016). This lens of conceptualising human experience awards people the platform to be explored from multiple identifying descriptors, yet still appreciating the individuality of lived experiences. These descriptors range, but are not limited to race, gender, ethnicity, ability, class, religion, culture and age.

Community psychology does not merely conduct research and interventions into communities which have been socially defined, but further delves into an understanding of the value of diversity (Trickett, 1996; Rappaport, 2005; Dutta, 2016). People exist in many communities, but may not feel attuned to them. Acknowledging that a sense of community is critical to how members of society experience themselves in group spaces assists in further establishing when and where cohesion and conflict take place (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sonn & Fischer, 1996). This enhances the ability of community psychologists to conceptualise how and when individuals construct their identities within their communities, and how this is used as a tool

for integration and the acquisition of social capital. This is critical in the South African context due to issues of identity discrimination, matters of diversity and social transformation (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sonn & Fischer, 1996; Perkins, Hughey & Speer, 2002).

Community as a unit of analysis is key to understanding how systems of governance have been able to both oppress and promote various identities as prominent or vulnerable in South Africa. Considering the power of coloniality, and the historical muscle upon which it has thrived, the role of community psychologists serves to promote mental health research and interventions that enhance wellness for broader populations. This involves critically engaging with key stakeholders in systems of governance, and advocating for decolonisation of social orders that have facilitated the ongoing physical, social, psychological and structural oppression of previously disenfranchised groups. It is within the discourse of community psychology that investigations can be conducted to explore inequality and how society places value on human life.

The parameters through which the value of human life can be approached from a community psychology perspective are endless. However, it has been decided that violence is a useful lens for conceptualising human life due to its historical role from colonisation into present day South African contexts, which still contain remnants of apartheid violence. Furthermore, violence contributes to actual life or death situations. Therefore, harm to a person (or people) provides insight into their vulnerability and worth in society. When violence is continuously exerted onto communities, or identity groups, assumptions can be made about the recipients of violence. They can be mourned, or ignored, and the extent to which this emerges is evidence of how they are regarded as valuable to society.

Despite that community psychology inquiry boasts a plurality that is inclusive of all identities and positionalities, it cannot be ignored that diversity in South Africa is complex and has not yielded results of equality in representation. While the nation transitions from apartheid, and boasts of democracy and a Rainbow Nation, the structural and institutional violence that exists is not as overt as the physical assaults (Long, 2013; von Holdt, 2013). Structural violence still persists where affirmative activists draw from community psychology theory to decolonise and promote equality for access into health systems, economic arenas and educational platforms. The reality is that not all human beings have equal access to resources, and this is indicative of socioeconomic disparities that have persisted across time.

It is commonly perceived that community psychologists work to enhance the quality of life of poor, black people. Though community work tends to find its site in less privileged geographical spaces, the objective is not to "help the poor", but rather to dismember the socio-political structures that have inhibited the potential of many 21st century South Africans, causing them to remain marginalised and disenfranchised. It is not a praxis of sympathy, but rather works to conscientise the South African community about equality and social justice, and the privilege that often comes with race and class. These characteristics cannot be overlooked as significant contributors to how human life is conceptualised in different spaces.

The value of community psychology as a point of departure for this study is that South Africa is a macro community and within it are limitless micro communities. All of these communities are dynamic and blended in their "tolerance" of diversity in their membership (Sonn & Fischer, 1996). Group dynamics exist, and within group dynamics, hierarchies are established. Wherever hierarchies are instituted, power must be enforced (Freire, 2005). There is always an issue of social order, both positive and negative that must ensure that society does not erupt into anarchy (Foucault, 1980).

Community psychology further blends well with theory on social constructionism for purposes of acknowledging and appreciating the diverse and dynamic nature of human experience. Society moulds human experiences through the intersections and positions that people occupy. The human vessel in which these experiences are carried determine the expression thereof, at any particular period in time. These experiences are also representative of the socio-historical contributors to the development of various communities. Critically exploring the value of human life as a socially constructed phenomenon serves as a platform upon which violence can be understood as an integral part of humanity, communities, and broader society. This further facilitates the understanding of how human lives are not equal, and may never be despite society's moral frameworks. Community psychology informs that there are multiple ways of understanding people, and different attributions are formed based upon where a person is from or affiliated to. The historical, ethnic and cultural experiences of communities impact how various identity groups are framed as vulnerable, volatile, or in need of social persecution or preservation.

2.5. Morality: Measuring Human Life and Making Sense of Violence

The concept of morality is drawn from the notion that in the world there can be wrong, and right or good and bad. Hence people make meaning of behaviour and actions through what is observed to be acceptable. For centuries, morality has been explored as a feature of human existence that guides decision making in context (Cushman et al., 2010). It is drawn from centuries of human interaction and community, building a framework for the management of social life and the maintenance of a sense of psychosocial order.

It is important to emphasise the distinctions between moral and legal rights when discussing violence against humans. Moral rights are associated with natural law, and perceive human beings based upon how the world ought to be (Cushman et al., 2010). Legal rights have been developed over time, and take into consideration that human behaviour is complex. Legal systems aim to standardise policy that is representative of how society stipulates that human activity should exist. A right to safety may be legal, however, the manner in which people are protected from violence or abuse tends to depend on how they are recognised to have participated in that act. The contexts within which people are located also denote the type of support or privileges they are afforded (McMahan, 2002; Darby, 2009). Where social identities are not recognised as dignified, or are considered to be of low moral standing, individuals' moral rights tend to be discarded, and they may only have access to legal rights which may not always accommodate context.

Darby (2009) discussed the concept of natural rights; rights which afford human beings the voice to challenge the state. In order to illustrate this, two key examples in global history where morality was muted and human lives sacrificed for purposes of status and power acquisition were reviewed. During the Rwandese genocide, many children were abducted, trained and sent to fight as child soldiers (Bellamy & Wheeler, 2011). This is an example of human rights being violated, as they were children, and below the age of consent. These acts can be considered to be immoral, abusive, and unjust despite that they were legitimised by the acting militant group, for a cause. Post 9/11[1], American soldiers were deployed to Afghanistan on a quest to wage war against terror. Army training in the USA is a requirement and an act of martyrdom. Based upon this moral obligation, and the ages of American soldiers, they were all presumed to have offered consent as

[1] 9/11 refers to the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and the World Trade Centre in the United States of America which took place on 11th September 2001.

this was declared a necessary and just war (Butler, 2009; Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2014). Comparatively, two groups of people were sent to combat. It was morally unacceptable for a child to become a soldier, harm or kill people, risk their lives and/or live a life affected by war trauma. Yet, it was morally acceptable for an adult to become a soldier, harm or kill people, risk their lives and/or live a life affected by war trauma. The sites of contention within the two situations are located in the immorality of violating consent, and the ages of the soldiers. However, both examples provide the image of people being deployed to risk their lives for a cause, which ultimately reputes the value of the cause as higher than the value of the human life being sent to achieve it (Butler, 2009).

In her writings, Butler (2009) discusses death and conditions of living quite extensively. Emphasis is placed on the social deliberations that take place when life is lost, and the societal engines that serve as contributors to the loss of life. Butler (2009) purports that there is a tendency for society to grieve human lives predominantly when one ranks highly in the hierarchy of life. One's social or political affluence underwrites their status in society and their willingness to submit to social order. In relation to just wars, Butler (2009) unpacks the concept of martyrdom as a socially constructed phenomenon which justifies the death (or physical and psychological harm) of a soldier in an endeavour to protect the state. Martyrdom suggests that violence is a moral and humane act that is embarked on in the "best interest" of the state. In reverence of the state, martyrs are prepared to place their lives at risk to retaliate against other populations, or to act violently in anticipation of further attacks.

Butler further places emphasis on loss of human life and loss of status and identity with a focus on the injustices that occur as a result of violent policing and state instability, asserting that contemporary society is constantly at war. In conflict there are always lives that are targeted or placed at risk of violence. No war is declared upon an arid place, but rather on the person or people who inhabit it. Butler (2009) investigates the paradox that human beings are subjects of power, and power is governed by human beings. When troops are deployed to war, people sent to work, or children sent to run errands, they are subjects of a hierarchy of existence. In combative contexts, they become stripped of their full human value because their superiors are aware that they could be maimed or killed, and that is acceptable. Without fully acknowledging this truth, Butler (2004; 2009; 2012) posits that society can neither claim equality, nor can we fully grieve these lives when

they are lost. They remain subjects of political frames of governance where hierarchy and power serve as determinants over which lives can be injured, and which are grievable (Butler, 2009).

Elaborating further on the war on terror, Butler (2009) questions why a war (categorised as a just war) devalued and jeopardised the lives of by-standing and innocent populations in those targeted regions. By association, they were categorised as enemies, and experienced the full brunt of being positioned within the parameters of the war. It is within these large scale incidents that violent acts are considered by society as morally acceptable, honourable, and therefore justified. There is justification for the loss of life, as a function of a just war (Butler, 2009).

Carastathis (2010) and Hook (2014a) make reference to Fanon's writings on violence through colonisation. The introduction of the western church by settlers brought division to Africans under the guise that some people were more apt than others to oversee communities. Through their interpretations of the Bible[2], colonialists were able to create hierarchies of social order. This difference was further enforced through language, where some people were chosen to learn the English language. This facilitated interaction between intellectual natives and the settlers in the colonised space. Divisions emerged amongst the indigenous population as some had more freedom and ability to negotiate space. Hence, language and knowledge were tools that were used to introduce the concept of elitism and class divisions in the populace (Fanon, 1961). Tension, power dynamics and inequality were established between social groups, which were upheld by violent socio-political structures.

Freire (2005) speaks about the dilemma of the person who is alleviated from oppression and becomes the oppressor. Power has a permanent role in society. It shifts ownership, where the previously oppressed person exerts their power on those who are still oppressed because that is the only channel of power dynamic that they have been accustomed to. The performativity of this power tends to be reliant upon empathy and structural pressure to perform this new found social status. Hence when society enforces difference, the moral constructions that people hold tend to delineate their perceptions of who is deserving of oppression, and who can escape (Butler, 2009). These moral markers are located in the position of the people involved, and their context. They

[2] The Christian Bible – for example Matthew 22:14 which states, "For many are called, but few are chosen" were interpreted to mean that within the African population there are some people who are chosen to be separate and superior to others.

illustrate how valuable different lives are considered to be as they escape the violence of oppression.

Literature on ethnocentrism presents valuable insight into the cultural and ethnic motivations for creating hierarchies of human life. Pratto and Glasford (2008) conducted a study on ethnocentric valuation in crisis situations. The outcome determined that there are moral judgments that are made about human life when there is conflict, and the propensity is to lean towards valuing in-group or cultural identities (Pratto & Glasford, 2008). The desire to preserve oneself in a violent society could be understood as a function of evolution. In the social world, the value that one places upon themselves tends to be reflected in the value that one ascribes to people who are similar in identification.

On a national scale, ethnic violence also persists cyclically in smaller communities in South Africa (SAPS, 2015). In these spaces, violence isn't only motivated by material gain, but can also be a result of differences in cultural and national identity where diversity is not always embraced. The xenophobic attacks in South Africa have been typically fuelled by ideology about identity differences, intolerance and violent othering (Langa & Kiguwa, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2006). It is often perceived that certain cultural or national identities are superior to others when they are in the same geographical space, and the people who do not have a historical claim on those spaces are regarded as intruders. It is from this stead that conflicts emerge, and the violent assaults become justified by conservative principles and acts of self-preservation. It appears that maintaining homogeneity supersedes the moral expectation that lives matter more than social categorisation.

In South Africa, vigilantism is a response that has been adopted by many communal groups in order to manage behaviour that is harmful to the members. It is a reaction to perceived criminal activity that threatens the social cohesion and wellbeing of the space in which it is identified (Schuberth, 2013). Vigilante groups serve as law enforcement actors, who typically do not have the legal authority to do so. They serve to replace a justice system which is unable to meet the security requirements of the people under its jurisdiction (Schuberth, 2013). The controversy around vigilante enactments is the collective violence that ensues, where there are often limited resources to control the enraged vigilante groups. Furthermore, vigilante groups are motivated by the belief that they are acting to protect and maintain moral standards within their communities, while too becoming violent actors (Martin, 2012; Schuberth, 2013).

In many communities, violence is acted (by a perpetrator), and it is received with violence from vigilante groups (Martin, 2012). By acting unlawfully, members of these communities are also becoming perpetrators against criminals – who are still human beings. Nonetheless, the vigilante system exists in many parts of South Africa to preserve the social space in communities, and manage the criminal activity that seems to slip through the cracks of the criminal justice system. Mob justice[3] exists as a justified form of violence by those who have experienced interpersonal conflict in their communities that may otherwise remain unresolved. To others, the violence is often described as senseless. This term "senseless killing" is intriguing as it implies that there are killings that make sense, and killings which do not make sense. The term "senseless" in violent culture is generally afforded to victims that are socially constructed as vulnerable (Thomas, 2012). There is a tendency for society to empathise more with victims if they are considered to be vulnerable. This also applies in incidents of self-defence, where it is deemed to be socially justifiable for a person to preserve their own life even if it requires that they must cause harm to another.

Reflecting on causal determinism, it can be deduced that events and how they are experienced do not happen by chance (Hoefer, 2003). It is posited that there is a causal link between behaviour and how people experience their environments that is directed by elements that preceded that incident. Determinism can be understood from the concept of free will, and the notion that human beings have agency in thought and action. From this perspective it can further be posited that the situational predictors of violent enactments can be identified from psychological, social, and historical points of departure (Hoefer, 2003). These form parts of the elements which people use to frame their understanding of behaviour, and attribute the role of victim and/or perpetrator to identities involved in violent situations.

Commercial sex work is an industry that has existed for many centuries, yet is still illegal in South Africa. Drawing from feminist theory and female body subjectivity (Ahmed, 2017; Kiguwa, 2019), it is posited that commercial sex (typically but not exclusively involving women as the workers) is representative of females transgressing the social construction of the female body. The Madonna-Whore theory interrogates patriarchy's impressions of female sexual agency, femininity, sexuality, and gender roles (Welldon, 2004; Bareket et al., 2018). The identity frames

[3] Mob justice is a more colloquial term for vigilante justice. These terms are used interchangeably in this thesis

that society has formulated about commercial sex workers tend to be negative and demeaning. If a sex worker is raped, assaulted or robbed, there is a tendency towards victim blaming, or the insinuation that the individual enjoyed the violation as sexual intercourse is in line with one's work. The concept that sex workers are only engaging in this industry for economic reasons is also misleading. It provides the impression that sex workers are emotionally disconnected from the sexual interactions, and have limited moral convictions, which is not always the case (Jeffreys, 2009; De Beauvoir, 2012). Accounts of sex workers being sexually violated by police personnel is not uncommon. These are indications that commercial sex workers tend to be devalued in society. They often become victims of injustice and inaccessibility to adequate healthcare as a result of acting within their autonomy to choose to utilise their bodies for economic gain (Scheibe et al., 2016).

Modern day society still has a voice in the conceptualisation of diversity and the empathetic impressions that are attributed to shared identities (Pfohl, 2008). People often become distraught when violent acts, harm or death involve the attractive, the rich, the young and old, and other identity categories which people hope to preserve (McMahan, 2002; Butler, 1993). This study aims to explore whether the reaction to violence and harm differs when it involves individuals with "questionable moral standing", people who are less aesthetically appealing, and of lower socioeconomic status.

Poverty is multidimensional and due to the deprivation trap, low socioeconomic spaces often experience high crime and violence rates, health disparities, and excessive substance use (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2014). Where there is high competition for limited resources, people often live in a state of desperation. To a disconnected society, this may present the impression that more frequent episodes of violence in working class localities are a result of culturally or biologically embedded elements of being uncivilised (Fanon, 1963). This also desensitises the general public to rape or murder in poorer communities, where they have been normalised (Laing et al., 2013; Fassin, 2008). Violence involving women and children tends to trigger shock and evoke empathy within people. However, if a woman or child aggresses, there is a tendency to attribute their motive to dysfunction in their developmental journey or the absence of an adequate support system (Heider, 1958; Hoefer, 2003; Kramer, 2015). This removes responsibility and agency from the offender, and attributes blame to a system that prohibits the individual from access to an adequate quality of life (Butler, 2009).

As a result of socio-political structures, there is a tendency to attach violence to gendered identities (Wykes & Welsh, 2009; Ratele, 2014). It is the purpose of this research to identify some of the attributions that are established in the presence of violence and what they mean for our conceptualisation of gender as an actor and a subject of violence and oppression. As global society is founded on patriarchal principles, the male identity still holds spaces of dominance and superiority, often perceived to be the aggressor who is deemed to be less vulnerable (Stevens, 2008; Ratele, 2014). Women who perpetrate often trigger mixed emotions and contestations in violence discourse because the female body still tends to be associated with the function of bringing forth life, instead of taking it (Kramer, 2015). Gendered identities tend to be conceptualised, idealised or devalued by how they influence social activity.

McMahan (2002) presents the discussion about how society formulates decisions about life and death. Much debate has been conducted over the years about the rights to choose life or death in situations like euthanasia or abortion. Ethical boundaries tend to blur, which cause contestations about policy pertaining to mercy killings and euthanasia. In an age where society is exploring and negotiating agency, it becomes critical that the nature of human interaction and human perception across history are reflected upon. Apartheid, the Holocaust and Rwandese Genocide are examples of distorted moral judgments about 'less human' people based on identity and appearance (Agamben, 1998). It is imperative that stakeholders have conversations about the ethical requirements for offering consent – even when acting violently. Systems of power have excluded the voices of certain identities, making decisions on behalf of individuals who are considered to be 'less human' due to constructs like ethnicity, age or disability. During the abovementioned era, mass murder was justified and legitimised in the name of managing human beings. This is indicative of the authority that the social world has over human life (Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Freire, 2005). These justifications can be critiqued when explored through psychological theory (like psychoanalysis, personality theory, moral judgment and psychopathology) as elements which influence society's moral perceptions that become our convictions (Mullen & Stitka, 2006; Hook, 2014b).

Lives that are considered to be undesirable, tend to be susceptible to punishments that are morally accepted by broader society. Declarations about "war on terror" are essentially war on the human beings who are identified to conduct terrorist acts. This further impacts the people who reside within their shared localities. Thereafter, it emerges that terrorism starts to become affiliated

with an identity, and a body. Butler (2012) challenges society to explore how we respond to impunity and suffering, and how external forces serve as gatekeepers of how the human mind frames the "other". These pathways, fuelled by context, ethics, morality, and power intersect and facilitate the framing of the human lives which are considered to be valuable. Thereafter, our own identities and experiences influence the moral judgments that are made about the lives that are noticed, valued, and grieved when violence is enacted upon them. This process is not linear, and tends to bring to the fore the inequalities in society that are perpetuated by socio-political hierarchies, and the reality that dominant ideologies tend to govern what is acceptable moral behaviour. The people who do not subscribe to moral expectations are often considered to be transgressors of societal norms, and therefore deserving when punishment in the form of violence is meted upon them.

2.6. The Condition of Being Human

Within the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) exists the most fundamental human right – the right to life. Articles 3, 4, and 5 dictate that everyone has the right to not experience torture or violence (UDHR, 1948). This is the basic condition of being human, being allowed the right to live and experience life. It is a global decree that all societies prohibit the facilitation and adjudication of violent acts against people. However, oftentimes the very same structures that are supposed to govern and protect human life are the very instigators of structural violence. Fuelled by capitalist ideology, many modern day socio-political organs facilitate class division (Bourdieu, 1987). These class divisions perpetuate inequality, and regulate access to resources, some of which are fundamental for human survival like healthcare and sanitation. In these processes of division, the human beings who are excluded can be considered to be of little dignified value to the body politic, despite that they are of economic value through their labour (Foucault, 1980; Agamben, 1998).

The concept of who (or what) a human is, and who (or what) a human is not, is much more complex than biological nomenclature which places Homo sapiens as one species. Within the human species, there are various biological differences which still do not justify the categorisation of human species into hierarchies. There is no reasonable theoretical framework that justifies, for example, the superiority of the male body over the female body. Brown and Gershon (2017)

discuss how manmade systems of governance have framed social identities into categories that facilitate hierarchies of human value. Despite that no single person can be represented through one single identity, the categorising of identities into binaries restricts the expression of real human experiences. In a society where people are forced to choose a category within an identity (e.g. male/female), people are ultimately being coerced to denounce the parts of themselves that do not subscribe to those dichotomies. These oppressive social structures prohibit the human being from exploring and expressing their inner worlds, and force them to submit only to the parts of themselves that are acceptable in society.

Human governance has been arranged such that those who have access to resources and mass communications tend to have the privilege of organising and dictating the various aspects of social order. This includes the regulation of access to institutions, some of which are required for development and integration into society for self-sustenance. Reference is made to vocation in post-apartheid South Africa and the dissemination of employment and residency which are directed by systems of capitalist governance (Bufacchi, 2009). Mbembe (2008) discusses the South African mine worker who must seek employment to survive. In this journey of survival, the mine worker is compelled to place their life in a high-risk environment. Here the concept of autonomy and the need for survival become merged as one has limited options for employment to sustain oneself and one's family.

Agamben (1998) discusses *Homo Laborans* which is a lens through which the positionality of the mine worker in South Africa may be understood. This is a person who is valuable to the economy due to the productivity of their labour, yet is less valuable to society in terms of their political dignity and sense of self. Illustrating this further, the mine can be likened to a 'camp' where the miner is dictated to – an inferior – and a subject of the occupational activities which must take place for purposes of economic development. Mbembe (2008) describes the living conditions which are hostel-like, where patriarchs – adult bread-winners – live under the rule of the organisation and their appointed superior. Even though they have access to financial gain, the agency of everyday life is in the hands of those who dictate the movements of the mines and the state. These are the underlying acts of violence which Fanon (1963) speaks of and Foucault refers to in the concept of biopower and state machinery which shift the conditions of life, and human privilege (Dillon, 2008; Carastathis, 2010).

Agamben (1998) discusses *Homo Sacer*, meaning the "accursed man" who is the historical Roman categorisation of human life – bare life – that was neither accepted by human society, or the afterlife. As a result of criminal misdemeanour, this person did not have rights as a human, and was subject to whichever method of punishment was deployed by the political order of the day (Agamben, 1998; Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003). Reviewing this literature Agamben (1998) makes reference to modern day society's reliance on international organisations' plethora of human rights as a declaration of protection and access to basic resources. However, it is often the discrimination against identities that work against most of human society, prohibiting many from accessing basic rights, or being considered with the compassion and dignity that every human being deserves (Agamben, 1998; Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Butler, 2004; Butler, 2009)

When violence is justified by political organs to maintain order, human wellbeing becomes secondary to the mission that is being conducted (Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Butler, 2004). In these contexts, the condition of being human is relative, and this influences how violence will impact people who become involved (Butler, 2004). It is in these spaces where one's perception of their humanity becomes muted, and though human beings have intrapersonal identities and autonomy, social constructionism argues this, establishing that the self to a large extent is externally constructed and therefore affected by socio-political activity (Pfohl, 2008; Butler, 2005).

Identity is not purely a conversation about self, as society provides frames of identity, some of which are more dominant than others (Bourdieu, 1987; Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Butler, 2005). Furthermore, within each person there exist competing identities which express themselves where necessary. In some instances, a body is male, in others it is a father, and in others, it is a labourer. These identities must constantly navigate through societal and institutional spaces in order for a person to retain a sense of autonomy (Mama, 1995; Fanon & Markmann, 2000; Turner, 2008; Suchet, 2014; Kiguwa, 2014; Langa & Kiguwa, 2016). This sense of autonomy allows people to act according to their sociocultural mandates, morals, and projections for the quality of life that they envision. According to Morris et al., (2001) there exists a link between causality and agency, which is substantiated by attribution theory and the just-world hypothesis. If one is perceived to have control over their life and this agency may provoke or result in violent behaviour, society tends to offer less empathy to the person (human) in that violent situation (Lerner & Miller, 1978; Ross & Sicoly, 1979).

Mullen and Skitka (2006) discuss the moral mandate effect, which describes the thoughts and emotions which result in moral convictions that facilitate judgments of people and situations, and motivate responses to incidents. This serves to conceptualise how society rationalises which human lives to grieve in violent situations, and to whom violence is morally or ethically justifiable (Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Cushman et al., 2010).

When retracting to a historical overview there are institutions of governance, systems of economic and human development, evolutionary needs and cultural and ethnic practise which influence the social identity of a populace through bio-power (Foucault, 1980; Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Reid, 2008). This philosophy provides a view of how social and political power over populations is governed. Essentially, this power also influences who should live and who should die depending on whether they have the resources to adapt to an ever changing global terrain (Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003; Fassin, 2008). Despite that many strategies are not as overt as the holocaust or the Rwandese genocide, bio-politics exist as an evolutionary method of governing existence and experiences of human life. This process of prescribing which human lives are allowed to live appears to have filtered into modern day society through various global institutions. As the value of identities continue to be redefined, it appears that what it means to be human in civil society tends to shift, giving power to some identities over others. These identities are proxy markers of human life, and the people who embody the identities that are considered to be of lower value, contributing less to the economy, tend to be treated with less consideration of their human status.

2.7. The Complexities of Negotiating Identities

The term identity has transitioned from historically dichotomous categorisations to more fluid and dynamic understandings of human existence (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Bosteels, 2016). Identity is a complex construct to define because it can be conceptualised from many perspectives. Identities are discursive products, where the most dominant discourses tend to inform how society organises people based upon the identities that they embody (Hall, 2000; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This definition is congruent with social constructionist traditions, and has been adopted for purposes of this study. It provides the understanding that the self is not sovereign. People have the

power to negotiate identity, but they do not have the power to dictate the way society makes meaning of its subjectivities.

Identity is a marker for how we experience one another in society. Society has previously been governed by identities that exist in polarised categories e.g. masculine and feminine, able and disabled bodied, Caucasian and people of colour (Fanon, 2000; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Canham & Williams, 2017). In reality, identities are inter-subjective; they merge and intersect as people shift through class, ability, gender, ethnicity (etc.) (Crenshaw, 1991), making it impossible to explore human interaction through "neat" categories of identity (Rosenthal, 2016; Canham & Williams, 2017). Instead, a person's positionality can be located at intersections of the temporary attachments that they have made to various identities. By sifting through the various groups that a person subscribes to, it becomes possible to conceptualise how they make meaning of themselves, and their lived experiences.

A distinct characteristic that makes identity complex is that, historically it has been framed through rigid dichotomies. These binaries have been influenced by colonialist dogma, favouring members of society that are (for example) white and middle to upper class (Fanon, 1967; Mbembe, 2015). This has perpetuated inequalities in society as people have become accustomed to responding to the discourse that is a product of the dominant voice. As identities are socially constructed, they determine how people are perceived in society, which ultimately determines how people negotiate their way around their communities (Wallerstein, 1991; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Canham & Williams, 2017). Furthermore, people act and work according to the identities which they subscribe to, with the measure that society affords them.

Foucault (1980) makes a summation about the relational cycle between body and power, which inevitably becomes part of how identity becomes engrained on an individual and social level. He posits that power is introduced to the body through work and activity (entertainment, education, exercise, etc.). These then allow the body to negotiate space in various social platforms, which work in tandem towards developing social identities (Foucault, 1980). In order to retain, and continue to embody those identities, individuals subsequently demand power to exercise their agency. This becomes a struggle between society and human subjects as their quest for autonomy in identities pushes back against traditional norms that socio-political power has tabulated (Foucault, 1980; Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003). In South Africa, this serves as an explanation for

why people protest and burn infrastructure. As government distributes resources and establishes services in different areas, people tend to feel that they are not being heard, particularly when there are other competing resources that are required more urgently. In the aim of making their voices heard, they act with the power that is readily accessible, by destroying buildings, stations, schools etc. (Canham, 2017). Canham (2017) describes this Black rage as an expression of self-love, and a necessary means of negotiating Blackness in post-Apartheid South Africa. The difficulty for the Black person in democratic South Africa is located in how these actions are interpreted by society which has historically constructed the Black body as violent, inferior and unintelligent (Fanon, 1967). In his writings, Fanon (1967) describes the Negro as someone who is constantly being compared to the white person, the one who colonised and has set the standard for who a functional human being is in society. He describes the difficulties of negotiating black skin in a society which responds firstly to white skin, and then to the white mask.

In the South African socio-political arena, whiteness is often associated with privilege, and dominance (Biko, 1981; Ahmed, 2007; Straker, 2013). The apartheid regime was governed predominantly by people with white skin, hence history's depiction of identities with power and access to resources include people of Caucasian decent (Fanon, 1967; Biko, 1981; Straker, 2013; Kiguwa, 2014). It is important to emphasise that discourse about racial identities need not be defined solely from the perspective of white privilege, as this reifies the association of whiteness and power in social identity discourse. What this essentially does is strengthen the ideology that whiteness is an identity for people of colour to aspire for (Fanon, 1967; Ahmed, 2007; Bowman, 2013; Hook, 2014b). However, it also cannot be ignored that whiteness appears precariously as an invisible yet dominant ideology through which race has been constructed (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007). It is being referred to as "invisible" due to the manner in which it has been normalised that white people have access to generations of formal education, wealth, and systems of governance. These resources have placed white people at the top of the hierarchy upon which constructs like beauty, intelligence, and class have developed. This is substantiated by the commonly referred to statement, "I don't see colour". The problem with this stance is that, ignoring colour can be equated to ignoring a history of oppressive systems, the lived experiences of generations of people of colour in South Africa, and the reality of racial othering (Ahmed, 2007).

South African society is for the most part unpredictable, a melting pot of identities, political agendas and a quest for development and a stake in economic society (Ratele, 2003). Post-1994, shifts in power and governance have tipped the socioeconomic scales, resulting in marginalised populations continuously being restricted access to essential yet basic resources (Prilleltensky, 2008; Long, 2013). However, poverty and homelessness in urban spaces are no longer solely experienced by people of colour. South Africa's urban traffic intersections are sites for people from all ethnicities to beg or entertain motorists for purposes of income generation in the quest for survival. Reflecting on how economic status intersects with racial identity, this has given rise to new demarcations in social class.

In the 21st century Rainbow Nation, it is not uncommon to see Black people begging for money or food on street corners. However, meeting a white person begging for food can be confusing in light of South Africa's racialised history. Encountering a white beggar tends to evoke a spectrum of emotions and questions including those of unfamiliarity, punishment, reparation, Black rage, and white guilt for the actions of one's forefathers (Ryan, 1998; Straker, 2013). Within these narratives, the value of the human being becomes inferior to identity discourse, and empathy and compassion emerge disconcertingly (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Hook, 2014a; Hook, 2014b; Langa & Kiguwa, 2016). However, this also depends on the race of the person observing these socioeconomic disparities, and how they have come to conceptualise the apartheid regime (Straker, 2013). Dialogues that emerge in these situations reflect upon how white people are linked to historical spaces of privilege. There tends to be a disconnect in conceptualising how identities associated with privilege exist in the same position as previously disenfranchised identities. It is within these intersections of race and class that people have to negotiate the evolving South African terrain. In this literature review, emphasis has been placed on racialised identities, only as a platform for understanding South Africa's position with transitioning social identities. Feminist and gender ideology have produced critical theories of enlightenment and activism pertaining to equality in gender and sexuality in modern society (Mulvey, 1988; Ahmed, 2017; Moolman, 2013). Considering South Africa's transition through oppression, the violent trajectory in socio-historical hierarchies imply that toxic masculinities are experienced in society as an extended vehicle of colonial and apartheid oppression (Mama, 1995; Schinkel, 2004; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kuokkanen, 2008; Stevens, 2008; Langa, 2012).

Feminism is a diverse sociocultural ideology developing from the power dynamics that are associated with gender roles and historically founded patriarchal structures. Feminist discourse does not only drive against oppression of one social group (women), it aims to deconstruct the historical paradigms that gave birth to a patriarchal worldview. These include the subjectivity of the female body, and economic, social, and political inequality. Feminism, as a movement aims to give voice to the narratives of women's lived experiences across the millennia (De Beauvoir, 2012; Ahmed, 2017).

An important area in women's lives that needs to be deconstructed is in relation to sexual intercourse and sexuality. The female body has been constructed to be a nurturer, to be vulnerable and a subject for sexual gratification of the man (Welldon, 2004; De Beauvoir, 2012; Kiguwa, 2019). Feminist ideology typically aims to make meaning of these subjectivities in an endeavour to emancipate the women from the role of the "other" – the person inferior to the man. Historically, women have been framed as the mother and supportive partner. However, the notion of a woman being the epitome of human nurturance is in contradiction to feminist theory, which motivates for equality of all genders (Ahmed, 2017). Feminist theory aims to shift the narrative in society about the strength and agility that is perceived to be located in gender. While women have historically been considered to have supporting roles to men, there are leading roles that women have been expected to occupy in families. These tend to involve responsibilities that are aligned with health, nutrition, hygiene and cleanliness (De Beauvoir, 2012). As women have filled these roles, they have become idealised in those spaces, and thereafter have a duty to live up to that particular standard. As ideology is shifting and people are becoming more conscientised to the nuances of human rights and equality, the women who are expected to identify with these roles are beginning to revolt. This is important for conceptualising how women negotiate their identities, as it is often perceived that women cannot be violent. Debunking this myth, Kramer (2011) discusses the invisible perpetrator, the woman who commits acts of sexual violence. The woman tends not to framed as a perpetrator because in broader society, it is unfathomable that women are able to act violently, especially while exercising their agency. This is particularly problematic when considering the real experience that the victim has undergone, and how this becomes negated in the midst of patriarchal discourse that renders women as vulnerable and incapable of violence (Kennedy, 2005; Kramer, 2011).

The Madonna-whore dichotomy makes reference to gender and sexual intercourse. It is an explication of how women are expected to use their sexual prowess in a chaste and submissive way (Welldon, 2004; De Beauvoir, 2012). This concept alludes to how women have been idealised in their gender roles (mother, wife, etc.), and when they deviate from these spaces, they become vilified by their communities. This is not only limited to roles that are in relation to sexual intercourse or sexual expression. Devaluing persists when women venture into institutional and geographical spaces that have been traditionally reserved for men. As women endeavour to self-actualise and develop a sense of autonomy and power, they are interjected by the expectations of social and sexual chastity that have been prescribed by patriarchal discourse (Butler, 1999; 2004).

Parallel to this, men have been subjects of a patriarchal society as well. Masculinities have been embedded in the lives of men from early ages, and transcend through the life span (Connell, 1993). Characteristics of strength, agility, and entitlement are presented in culture and gender performativity as men negotiate their way through social and institutional spaces. However, as with other identities, there are intersections within masculinities which delineate that all men are not privileged to the same extent. A useful way to make sense of this in the South African plateau is by engaging with discourses about violence and how they have constructed masculinities across history (Connell, 1993). During the colonial era, being male was not sufficient, as one had to be a white male in order to "benefit" from the process. Black males were dehumanised and oppressed, introducing the reality of hegemonic masculinity and how it transitions across racial and class domains. Hence, some masculinities were, and still are subordinate to others. As South Africa experienced apartheid, these masculinities persisted despite nationalist similarities. They are still experienced in tribalism and gender relations as men continue to negotiate their masculinities in an ever changing racial, social, and gendered terrain.

In the Rainbow Nation, as opportunities have opened for South African society to venture into enterprise and institutions, the shift in class dynamics has introduced new complexities in masculinity as men of all ethnicities are given space to become active players in economic society (Ratele, 2014). The new order in masculinities is such that men are constantly seeking space in society, driven by the intersections of their identities. This is not limited to heterosexual men. Homosexual men have had to endure the same subjectivities, and discrimination due to the dominant traditional discourse that dictates that gender is a binary construct (Connell &

Messerchmidt, 2005; Ratele, 2013). Hegemonic masculinity enforces that men are defined by their sexuality, they are not effeminate, neither are they vulnerable (Ratele, 2013). Men have been naturalised to experience their worlds through sex roles, and social power over women. These are the contestations that men in modern day society embody, or are struggling to dissociate from, particularly in the wake of women's liberation and gay liberation movements (Connell, 2012; Ratele, 2013).

It would be an injustice to society and the objective of this study to discuss sexuality and gender from the dichotomous categorisations of men and women, which exclude queer identities. Acknowledging that these are complex positionalities which reinstate each other (Shields, 2008), it should be emphasised that the paradigmatic position adopted for this study posits that identity is socially constructed, and not merely a reflection of the self (Du Preez & Eskell-Blokland, 2012; Gergen & Gergen, 2008). From this stead, as queer culture tends to shift away from categorisations or identities, the lived experiences of the LGBTIQ+ community are best conceptualised at their intersectionalities (Gray & Cooke, 2018).

Society is still shaped from patriarchal origins, and discourse about sexuality is still predominantly driven by resistance to dichotomous gendered norms (Crenshaw, 1991; Burr, 1995; Butler, 1999; Shields, 2008). The narratives of queer people are largely impacted by the need to actively defend a gendered identity which is still discriminated against (Butler, 1993; Ratele, 2014). This is further problematized by hegemonic masculinities which perpetuate heteronormative practice and corrective rape (Brown, 2012; Morrisey, 2013). Despite that this presents an imagery of helplessness and vulnerability, the LGBTIQ+ community are actively making strides in ensuring that gender identity formation is not exclusive. The use of the word "queer" for purposes of naming sexual identity is a discursive action that members of the LGBTIQ+ communities have employed as a means to deconstruct sexuality. Butler (1993) describes this as an act of mockery directed at discourses that have previously discriminated against them. By adopting a previously derogatory term, and embodying it with pride the LGBTIQ+ community is engaging in queer gender performativity, and locating space in gender discourse (Butler, 1993). Butler (1999) laments that it is more important to acknowledge that gender will never be a neatly organised construct as the experiences of gendered bodies are never hierarchical and contingent at any given point in time.

Gender-based violence in South Africa is reflective of the transfer of abuse along the spectrum of vulnerable or minority groups (Crenshaw, 1991; Wykes & Welsh, 2009; Moolman, 2013). Patriarchal systems have upheld traditional gender norms which promote male and masculine as dominant (Ross, Amabile & Steinmetz, 1977; Moolman, 2013). This means that identities that do not fit into this category are subject to any possible violence that can be enacted in the name of toxic masculinity (Kaldine, 2012a; Brown, 2012). These include (but are not limited to) child abuse, abuse of the elderly and disabled, women abuse, xenophobia, corrective rape and various other forms of homophobic activity (Kaldine, 2012a; Leoschut, 2008). This should, by no means reify maleness as the prototype for identity power (Ratele, 2014), but rather emphasise that identities whether biological, physiological or social tend to determine how people negotiate space, and negotiate their bodies in a violent society (Burr, 1995; Prilleltensky, 2003; Prilleltensky, 2008; Agamben, Fabbri & Fay, 2009). Hence, one's identities also present how vulnerable you may be perceived to be in social spaces, which impacts how emotionally invested and grieved people become when a vulnerable person is violated (Allport, 1964; Butler, 2004; Butler, 2009; Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Stevens, 2016).

Violence is often utilised as a tool of oppression to govern minority identities (Schinkel, 2004; Agamben, Fabbri, & Fay, 2018). It can be posited that some identities become more susceptible to certain acts of violence (physical or psychological) while other identities may never be exposed to them. Examples of people who tend to be easily victimised include children, the elderly, and the disabled. This emerges for various reasons, which include but are not limited to access to security systems, safe or regulated transportation, and access to healthcare. As children and the elderly are typically considered to be vulnerable people, they tend to be on the receiving end of the impact of injustices in policy and structural dialogue (Kaldine, 2012a; 2012b). In South African society, they are generally regarded as passive members of communities having either lived their lives, or yet to embark on a life of autonomy. However, Erikson (1985) reflects on how the developmental needs of a child have value. This is observed in how they have framed the gender roles of women across history. According to Erikson (1985), the presence of children has awarded mothers value in society, as carriers of life. Children's rights have influenced policy, and drawn sympathy across international borders where race and ethnicity have failed to prevent manmade destruction. This perspective provides insight into how society places value on children's lives and responds to violence enacted upon children with more outrage than they do to

adults and other people who are considered to be independent (Motz, 2014). It is often posited that non-vulnerable people are more autonomous and expected to be more in control of what happens to them – whether profitable or detrimental to their health and existence.

Sex workers have been identified as susceptible to physical abuse both by their clients and the criminal justice system (Manoek, 2012). Sex work is still illegal in South Africa, therefore when sex workers encounter trouble or are physically violated there they are often unable to report these cases. This is because their occupational identity is representative of someone who is engaging in criminal activity in South Africa's economic environment (Manoek, 2012). Sex workers, like everybody in the world should have agency over their bodies, which is a narrative that society claims to promote. However, systems of government still exercise authority over their bodies by dictating that they are not permitted to engage in sexual activity for purposes of income generation. This is reflective of patriarchal dogma, and the discrimination against sex workers from a moral perspective (Welldon, 2004; Jeffreys, 2009; Ahmed, 2017).

Another such system of governing human life is described by Saxton (2013) as the in utero diagnosis of disability which will afford the parent(s) of an unborn child the opportunity to terminate the pregnancy. This is drawn from the power that society has to suggest which bodies should be allowed to live and which should not. With the focus on disabilities, this provides insight to the manner in which society has conceptualised disability as a dysfunction of the human body (Hubbard, 2013). The idea that someone with a disability should not be allowed to live because their body is "abnormal" is suggestive of how society still dictates that some human lives are worthy of life, and some are not. These discussions further infringe upon disability rights by insinuating that a person with a disability should be restricted the ability to reproduce in case they may not have the adequate financial, cognitive, or physiological resources to look after their children. More than anything, this is reflective of how technology and structures in institutions are not inclusive and need to be decolonised (Barker & Murray, 2013). This amplifies the sense of disability in people who are forced to negotiate their communities with the stigma of being disregarded by societal structures. The irony in society is that scientists and engineers are inventing technology that aims to assist people with disabilities to integrate into society. Concurrently, processes like selective abortion are being promoted as a result of the development of technology which is able to screen and detect various types of disability (Saxton, 2013). Potential parents are

provided with the option to decide whether they are able to, or interested in raising a child with a disability. This provides insight into how disability serves as a measure of the types of lives which are burdensome, and therefore discardable before birth, and thereafter.

A unique type of identity is the virtual identity, where people are able to "embody" identity markers that they may not ordinarily be permitted to access in the physical world. Online communities have permitted people to engage with others by proxy of avatars and filters. In doing so, one can look and sound different to who they are in the physical world. The term "physical world" is being used instead of the term "real world" because the latter would insinuate that there is nothing real about the virtual world. This is not true. Cyberspace is an integral part of 21st century society, allowing for limitless interactions to take place in real time.

Benwell and Stokoe (2006) discuss the postmodern complexities of cyberspace. The virtual world creates more than just an illusion of what one would like their physical world to look like. It can easily be used as a bridge between someone's current world, and the world that they aspire to have. With features like instant messaging, cyber chat rooms and online dating, social media platforms permit access to realms of entertainment, knowledge exchange, and employment. This is all accessible by creating a profile, where often there is no accountability or regulation of the information that one inputs. As are result, there is never a guarantee that the person who one meets on social media is who they really say that they are. This alludes to the dark and violent side of the virtual world – a site for predators and syndicates engaging in child pornography, human trafficking, catfishing, fraud and scamming (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Nonetheless, there is a liberty that virtual spaces afford people to negotiate new spaces, interact with new people and learn from cultures that they may not have the physical resources to engage with.

Identity has been conceptualised on a spectrum, where multiple identities are embodied in each person, giving them an overarching psychosocial profile. Identities intersect and are constructed socially, drawing from the different histories that have contributed to how various aspects of human life are framed today. Within each identity sit varying measures of power and vulnerability. Reliant on which discourse is applied to analyse a situation, the dominant identities tend to emerge as more noticeable to observers. However, this should not negate the presence and legitimacy of other identities, or the internal conflicts that may exist precariously in the psyche of the privileged. There is also a tendency to identify people according to physiological descriptors

like skin colour, sex, and beauty because these are readily noticeable in an interaction. These are typically also the markers that ascertain how society perceives and ascribes value to different people, and determines how they are received when they are violated. The complexity of identity markers lie in the dissonance that permeates as people negotiate various spaces through the lens of their dominant identities as they are framed, valued, and devalued by society.

2.8. Conclusion

South Africa is a complex society with a rich cultural diversity and a tumultuous history of violence. In order to make meaning of the people and the context, theories from social psychology and community psychology were explored. They have served to conceptualise how human life shifts in value at various intersections of identity, and how people are understood as members of the communities that they belong to. The social identities that exist in the 21st century still have great resemblance to historical periods where categories of difference have dictated how society governs human life. Marginalisation and exclusion are violent processes, and still exist in the institutional and structural systems that oppress people in everyday life. Violence also exists as a function of governance for purposes of instilling and maintaining social order. These acts are often justified by the moral contingencies that emerge when different people are involved. Hence, the complex human being can be conceptualised as a subject of a violent society. It is in these violent situations that one can analyse the attributions and responses of observers, and obtain some insight into how human life in its different identity formations is experienced, and therefore ascribed measures of value.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework that was applied for purposes of obtaining data for this research study and answering the research questions. The first section provides a synopsis of the paradigm that was utilised to conceptualise the value of human life as a social and interactional phenomenon. The second section describes the research design procedures that were applied to obtain the data. Thereafter, the research questions are outlined in the third section. A description of the participants follows in the fourth section. It delineates the type of sampling methods applied and the purpose for which that particular sample that was selected. In the fifth and sixth sections, the data collection and procedures explicate the steps that were followed to conduct this research study and ensure that all areas of investigation are scientifically acceptable. The seventh section is a summation of the data analysis process. Precluding this chapter is the eighth section which involves the ethical processes that needed to be followed for the research study to conducted, and to protect all parties involved. A ninth section on the researcher's reflexivity concludes this chapter.

3.2. Paradigm

The paradigm from which this research was conducted was a critical social constructionist paradigm. From this platform, it is hypothesised that reality is constructed through cultural, historical, economic, and environmental lenses (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018). The objective was to investigate how participants in the South African context make meaning of human life. This involved taking into consideration perceptions about violence, victims and perpetrators. It further explored the legitimacy of violence for purposes of conceptualising ideologies about human subjects in the South African context.

Ontologically, the critical social constructionist paradigm deconstructs philosophical reasoning that the nature of the world is measurable by fixed components (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018). This framework posits that there is no absolutely fixed construct in the world, as

society evolves according to time and ideology (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018). Knowledge and morality are not absolute and exist as a function of history, culture and society (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018). Hence, one dispensation can be experienced differently by different people, and realities are constructed not only by those who experience it, but more so by those who have the power to express their experiences of the world (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018). This paradigm permits for the exploration of how violence influences society's perceptions of various human identities. Violence is conceptualised as a form of power that exists in society, and is not necessarily the cause or effect of a specific societal behaviour or ideology (Agamben, Fabbri, & Fay, 2009; Bowman et al., 2015).

Epistemologically, this lens was ideal as it acknowledged that social concepts are not static, and are enhanced by collective meaning (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018). The critical lens further posits that power serves as a functional dynamic in society by governing the production of knowledge, and understanding of social constructs. This is vital for this study for purposes of answering the questions about what causes human life to vary in perceptive value (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

By utilising this lens, it was further possible to research the perceived legitimacy of violence when it is enacted on human bodies in the South African context. The discussions permitted for the exploration of the nature of violence across history and how it has impacted the evolution of human identities (Kitzinger, 1995). Through critical inquiry, the study aimed to investigate and interpret the conversations that were had between participants about social and cultural capital, and theoretically interrogate their underpinnings.

3.2.1. Social Constructionism

As discussed in the literature review chapter, community psychology in South Africa has emerged to serve as a vehicle for social justice and wellness through empowerment and liberation of disenfranchised groups (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Prilleltensky, 2003). Nonetheless, psycho-political transformation is slow and on-going, and still governs ideology pertaining to identity roles and social groups, despite the ongoing calls to deconstruct and decolonise identities (Fanon, 1963; Long, 2013; Hook, 2014).

Social constructionism engages with the perspective that the social world is not static and realities are constantly in motion, constantly being negotiated through socio-political organs (Burr, 1995; Du Preez & Eskell-Blokland, 2012; Gergen & Gergen, 2008; Butler, 2004; Butler, 2009). The context within which people experience the world around them varies, according to the elements of identity that are considered to be dominant or inferior by systems of governance at that particular time (Bourdieu, 1987; Burr, 1995; Butler, 2009). Social constructionist theorists posit that human society is governed by subjectivities, and there is nothing that exists which is completely objective (Du Preez & Eskell-Blokland, 2012; Gergen & Gergen, 2008). Hence, identities are afforded quality and value by the texts that describe them, and not by individuals' subjective perceptions of the identities which they embody (Burr, 1995; Gergen & Gergen, 2008). This paradigm is important when conceptualising the value of human life, as a feature of existence, which is mutable (Butler, 2009; Stevens, 2016). Social constructionism explores the negotiating of subjectivities between people, linguistic descriptors and events that take place globally which, essentially demand that members of society are constantly making meaning of their space in the world (Burr, 1995; Gergen & Gergen, 2008).

Exploring the value of human life through a critical social constructionist paradigm, and using violence as a lens is appropriate because it is in violent interaction that empathy, morality and action (or lack thereof) are observable in the responses of individuals, groups, communities, countries and continents (Butler, 2009; Stevens, 2016). It is within these violent enactments that conversation (does or does not) take place about the bodies which are involved in an incident. This provides insight into which identities become noticed, and why it is considered more of an outrage when certain bodies are violated, oppressed, or harmed (Butler, 2004; Stevens, 2016).

Stevens (2016) makes mention of the disembodiment of bodies when conducting investigations into violent enactments. This is in relation to methods of inquiry which aim to quantify and describe human life while negating the relational and subjective identities that intersect in every incident of violence (Stevens, 2016). At the crux of this discussion is the notion that exploring human life in violent contexts requires that both the act of violence and the subject of violence are explored. Hence, drawing from social constructionist theory, the spaces that a victim would occupy in society are determined by societal power to enhance or discount the value

of victims' lives (Gergen & Gergen, 2008; Schneider & Ingram, 2008; Butler, 2009; Stevens, 2016).

Reflective of South Africa's tumultuous history, theorists postulate that political entities, in a quest to maintain an optimal human race, may render certain human beings as unwanted (Agamben, 1998; Schneider & Ingram, 2008; Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003, Butler, 2009). Apartheid, like colonialism, the holocaust, and xenophobia are examples of the development of political norms that were formulated to disempower "unwanted" people from their rights to access political discourse (Agamben, 1998; Bourdieu, 1987). Agamben (1998) has deliberated extensively about body politics, which can be referred to the historically and culturally guided policies and structures that societal power dynamics establish in order to regulate the human body (Schneider & Ingram, 2008). He further discusses the difficulties that the average human being experiences as they aspire for agency and the practise of autonomy. Agamben (1998), Butler (2009), and Mbembe and Meintjies (2003) make reference to agency and the limited ability to control what one experiences in their socio-political environments. They provide a realist's perspective of the degree of independence and autonomy one really has over their own body.

Discussing this further, it is understood that when negotiating space in society, diversity indicates that some people may be more noticeable, or considered superior based on aesthetics and how much cultural capital they have acquired (Bourdieu, 1987). Hence, the relational and interactional identities that people embody may provide the implication that society is more attuned to celebrate certain lives over others. Gauging by how attractive, rich, educated, and eloquent (amongst other qualities) an individual is, it is hypothesised that society tends to afford more affection and action to them in situations of crisis or celebration.

It is important to emphasise that the outcomes of this study are unique to the South African context, and as discussed above, the construction of identities tends to vary across contexts. Amongst the tenets of social constructionist philosophy are cultural and historical specificity, which serve as determinants of how people within those contexts are included in political narrative, and make meaning of how and who is permitted to take up space in their communities (Burr, 1995; Mbembe & Meintjies, 2003).

3.3. Research Design

In order to obtain rich and detailed accounts of perceptions and experiences, a qualitative methods research design was employed for the study. Qualitative research methods are aimed to answer questions about the phenomena under investigation by collecting textual data (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This data is derived from the populations who have experienced the phenomenon that is being explored, and provides open ended and experiential evidence. One of the strengths of qualitative research is that it provides open ended and diverse information that is not easily predetermined (Cannella & Lincoln, 2018). The participant in a qualitative study is considered to be an expert in their experience of that phenomenon. Considering the abovementioned, in order to obtain complex and diverse data for this exploratory study, it was imperative that qualitative research designs were applied for open ended, quality textual responses (Creswell, 2014). Should the researcher have approached the study with a quantitative research format, it is assumed that the use of close ended options would have been a reflection of the researcher's perceptions of how violence impacts human life, and the situations where actions by perpetrators can be considered to be legitimised (Creswell, 2014; Cannella & Lincoln, 2018). This may have hindered the depth and quality of the data that would have been obtained.

Qualitative research can be embarked on through various mediums of data collection. The focus group design was decided upon for purposes of obtaining various different opinions in a shorter period of time (Kitzinger, 1995; Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, it was perceived that an individual may be more likely to speak openly about their experiences and perspectives in a group platform rather than an intimate one-on-one interview format.

The qualitative research design ensured that the data that was derived from the focus group discussions was sufficient for purposes of answering the research questions (Ashworth, 2013; Creswell, 2014). A qualitative approach is ideal for an exploratory, and appropriate for the study of the motivations and ideologies which influence how value is attributed to human life. The phenomena which are being investigated are violence, morality and the value of human life, which are all abstract and dynamic, swayed by the demands of the contexts within which they are presented.

The format of focus group discussions (FGDs) was applied, and an interview protocol was used to guide the discussion and to maintain a sense of unity in all focus group sessions. However,

the protocol was used as a guide as the objective of the study was to explore the phenomenon of the value human life and obtain participant's perceptions in a manner that did not serve as leading or directive to them. The researcher served as a facilitator and not as an interviewer, only providing open ended probing questions.

The participants as adults or emerging adults in the South African context had experienced various forms of violence directly and/or indirectly, and these experiences were reflected upon during the discussion. Each contribution by the participants was considered to be their truth, which is reflective of the need for a critical exploration of human perceptions and behaviour (Cannella & Lincoln, 2018). The value of this thesis can be ascribed to a nuanced understanding of how participants as representatives of members of the Wits University community perceive the value of human life.

The discussions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thereafter, the data was labelled as codes and categorised into themes. These themes were analysed to provide findings that were insightful. These were further interpreted and conceptualised through literature about the value of human life, violence and concepts of morality as entities of contemporary South African society.

3.4. Research Questions

a. How do participants construct human violence, as either legitimate or illegitimate, in their talk?
b. How do these attributions of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of violence in participants' talk, reflect the differential value of human life ascribed to various human subjects?
c. What do these emerging themes in participants' talk convey about the moral contingencies in circulation around the value of human life in the broader South African context?

3.5. Data Collection

Three focus groups were formed to discuss the vignettes and perceptions that the participants had about the individuals who were involved in enactments of violence. At the

beginning of each session, the participants were provided with rules of engagement. This was aimed at ensuring that the environment was as safe as possible for all participants in order for the study to comply with the standards of ethical practise (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Cannella & Lincoln, 2018). Each focus group comprised of between four and eight people who were at liberty to discuss the contents of the various scenarios. The direction of the conversation was steered by the contributions that the participants provided, and the researcher served as the facilitator, using the protocol as a guide. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on the topics, and integrate both academic and social experiences of human life in a violent society.

The use of a focus group as a qualitative data collection method was considered to be ideal in comparison to the semi-structured individual interview. It was presumed that a focus group would promote social discussion, and encourage debate around the area of study (Kitzinger, 1995; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The rationale was that individuals tend to be more inclined to speak openly in a public forum than what would occur in an intimate conversation between interviewer and participant (Kitzinger, 1995). It was considered that an interviewee may have been intimidated by the setting of a one-on-one discussion. Such settings would demand for the sole ownership of the impressions and opinions, which may render one to be self-conscious about divulging their perceptions of sexuality, race, gender, class, ability, and various other ways in which identities intersect. Considering the nature of this study, the inability to respond honestly and openly would compromise the quality of the data. This method facilitated discussion while each participant engaged with the researcher, the enactments of violence, and with each other. Another advantage of the focus group approach over one-on-one interviews was that it eliminated possible researcher bias in the event that the discussions became sensitive and the participant felt intimidated or uncomfortable with the direction in which the conversation was going (Wilkinson, 2013; Patton, 2015). The focus group method of data collection was also ideal as it provided the platform to attain qualitative data from more diverse sources in a shorter period of time (Kitzinger, 1995).

3.6. Participants

The participants for this study comprised of students from the University of the Witwatersrand. The sample included individuals above the age of 18 years old in their second or third year of university. The sampling method used was non-probability, convenience sampling

(Patton, 2015). Posters and flyers with the details of the research study were circulated on e-platforms and in common locations in the psychology blocks of the University of the Witwatersrand, East Campus. Furthermore, students were accessed during lecture or tutorial periods as permission had been acquired to motivate for participation in the lecture halls. Contact details of the researcher were provided, and only those participants who responded positively were further contacted to form part of the focus group.

As the sampling method was non-probability convenience sampling, the dispersion of diversity in the sample was not controlled (Patton, 2015). The initial objective was to obtain as heterogenous as possible a group of participants. This aimed to derive data which covers a wide variety of subjective experiences from the broad spectrum of demographic groups attainable. For purposes of this study, the participants' identities were not integrated into the analysis as they were not interviewed individually. As the data collection process was a focus group discussion, their contributions to the conversation were both a reflection of their subjectivities, and their positionality in the group dynamic. Therefore, providing a thread of how their identities shape their discourse in relation to the vignettes would have required an analysis which extended beyond the aims of this study.

The premise behind identifying second and third year psychology students as the target group was that they would have spent at least two years in Braamfontein while registered at the University of the Witwatersrand. This implies that they would have had significant exposure to both diversity of identity and culture, and a basic understanding of the nature of violence in South African society. The perceptions and conversations of second and third year psychology students was considered to be experiential and perceptual based on their life journeys as social beings, and the knowledge that they would have been exposed to in academia. For an exploratory study, it was also considered that they would be an ideal sample, as opposed to more academically nuanced staff or students at higher levels of study. Second and third year students were perceived to provide a balanced, and less processed opinion of society that would be influenced by critical thinking and basic life experience. From these discussions, the researcher was able to draw from both the interactions and content of these conversations for purposes of analysis based as well as make inferences based on the diversity.

The researcher approached participants to form three focus groups involving between six and eight people each. Willing participants were requested to supply the researcher with contact information. Sixteen participants were eventually included in the sample, spread out over three focus group discussions. A typical disadvantage of focus groups is when participants do not arrive on time or become unable to proceed with the discussion. During each scheduled session, some participants arrived late, and some did not arrive at all. Despite that the researcher coordinated times and venues that were suitable for participants easy accessibility, this is considered to be a normal feature of conducting focus group discussions (Patton, 2015). The researcher aimed to ensure that the environment was conducive for all participants regardless of race, gender or ability. This was conducted to reduce any discomfort which may further result in a participant withdrawing from the group. This would have been a negative experience for the participant, and detrimental to the data collection process if the discussion had been completed. At the time of compiling the report, none of the participants had requested to withdraw.

3.7. Procedure

Ethical clearance was acquired through application to the Registrar, the Head of School of Human and Community Development, and the Head of the Psychology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand. This was achieved by submitting a formal letter requesting ethical clearance, and an undertaking to comply with the ethical requirements of postgraduate research. Accompanying the letter was a copy of the research proposal, and a duly completed ethics form signed by the researcher and supervisor. Once the ethical clearance[4] was approved, the researcher approached various Course Coordinators in the School of Human and Community Development for Undergraduate studies for schedules and permissions to speak to second and third year psychology students for five (5) minutes before or after lectures. This platform was requested to inform potential participants about the study and invite them to participate in the focus group. Course coordinators were also approached to publish the research flyer on the Wits e-platform (Sakai) in order to access students that may not have been accessible during lecture periods.

[4] Protocol Number: MACC/18/007 IH

Potential participants were presented with an outline of the research aims. They were also provided with an outline of what participation in the study would entail. The students were informed of the social, community psychology, and violence-related insight that they may gain or be exposed to by engaging in the discussions. All potential participants were approached for contact details, and were later scheduled to participate in the focus group discussions.

On the day of the focus group discussion, the participants were provided with information related to the ethical standards[5]. They were also provided with name tags for easy identification and reference. Participants were encouraged to use an alias, particularly if they were not comfortable with using their real name. The researcher was mindful of power dynamics that emerge in group settings, and exercised professionalism in establishing an interactive environment which aimed to be a safe facilitated space to discuss the value of human life and violence in South Africa.

The data collection method comprised of three focus group discussions scheduled on different days (subject to availability of participants). Each session was guided by the same interview protocol[6], and introductory and administrative procedures were conducted in the same manner. The data was collected with two audio recording devices which were positioned in different places in the room to ensure that all voices were captured and no data was lost. Four brief vignettes were randomly distributed to members of the group to read aloud, and once all of them were completed, the contents were discussed. Each focus group was presented with the same vignettes describing enactments of violence, and the same probing questions were used to facilitate conversation between the members of the focus group. The vignettes described incidents which were adapted from multiple articles sourced from the internet. None of the incidents contained in the vignette were drawn from the researcher's professional experience, or from any specific source. The objective was to provide representations of some of the types of violence that have been experienced in South Africa to ensure that they were relatable to some or all of the participants.

[5] See section 3.9 Ethical Considerations
[6] See Appendix E for Focus Group Discussion Guide

3.8. Data Analysis

Once the data was collected and transcribed, the researcher began the data analysis process. The method of analysis that was applied was the thematic content analysis method according to Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was ideal as the discussions were broad and heavily emotive due to the total number of participants involved. Furthermore, diversity in participants' social and cultural identities provided for data which was inspired by personal experiences, knowledge and affect. This is a significant strength of the study as students who converge in Braamfontein for university may emerge from different geographical locations and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The thematic content analysis process was also optimal for this exploratory study due to the steps that the researcher was required to follow to acquire relevant themes. Each phase enhanced both the quality of analysis, and also the interaction of the researcher with the data. The first phase of analysis required that the researcher become familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was achieved primarily through transcribing the audio recordings and reading over the final transcriptions. The second phase included extracting and generating codes of specific pieces of data which emerged. Thereafter, the researcher identified themes, and then compared them with the codes to ensure that they collated. Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to this process as a "thematic map". In order to refine the analysis, there was a need to name and group the themes based on the inferred meanings. The most prominent themes which adequately answered the research questions were extracted and a report was generated. The results thereof were utilised to answer the research questions.

In order to ensure a holistic report, the researcher also documented personal perceptions and opinions for purposes of reflexivity (Patton, 2015), and to complement the theoretical and experiential quality of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Creswell, 2014).

3.9. Ethical Considerations

As the data collection was conducted through a focus group, it was the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that no harm was inflicted on any of the members during the discussion session. The researcher explained the background and aims of the research. It was further

confirmed that anonymity would not be achievable as each participant spoke in the presence of the researcher and other participants (Creswell, 2014). There was an attempt to refer to all members with a pseudonym (e.g. Participant 1, Participant 2 etc.) to ensure partial confidentiality, however, during the discussions there was often a mention of names as participants were sometimes familiar with one another from social spaces. During transcription, all participants were allocated a number e.g. Participant 1, Participant 3, etc.

The participant information sheet[7] contains all of the details of the study. It was made available to each participant on the scheduled date of the discussion. All participants were informed that it was vital that confidentiality is maintained. It was emphasised that they are bound by confidentiality to not reveal the contents of the focus group discussion or participate in any other conversations which would negatively impact themselves or any other focus group participants. It was maintained that the only conditions under which this may arise was upon specific request by the researcher or the supervisor as stipulated in the Focus Group Non-Disclosure Agreement[8].

Prior to the focus group discussion, all participants were requested to sign consent forms for participation[9] and for audio recording[10]. Each participant retained a signed copy of the participant information sheet and contact details of the researcher and supervisor. Once this information was relayed adequately, and the participant information sheet and consent forms had been signed, informed consent was formally granted.

It was important that the discussion was audio recorded to ensure that it could be transcribed verbatim for purposes of data capture and data analysis (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). The participants were informed that the recordings and transcribed documents were saved securely in a password protected computer folder. These recordings and transcribed documents will only be accessible by the researcher and supervisor, and audio recordings will be kept for a period of three years, and thereafter destroyed.

[7] See Appendix A for Participant Information Sheet
[8] See Appendix D for Focus Group Non-Disclosure Agreement
[9] See Appendix B for Consent Form
[10] See Appendix C for Consent Form – Audio Recording

It was emphasised to the participants that they are free to withdraw from participating in the study at any time without any negative consequences, and their contribution would not be used in the study. It was further explained that findings of the focus group discussions would be reported in this research report, which is a requirement for the researcher's completion of the Master of Arts in Community-based Counselling Psychology degree. Participants were informed that this report would be stored at the University of the Witwatersrand, Emthonjeni Centre test library, as well as on the Wits library website where the public may have controlled access. Participants were also informed that if they required access to the results of the study, a summary would be made available upon request via email, no earlier than twelve months from the data collection period.

Considering the historical and socio-political terrain, it could not be overlooked that oppression and violence are prominent features in the South Africa context. Hence, everyone who has resided in this country has directly or indirectly been affected by one form of violence or another. These are realities that may trigger participants' (and readers') current or past trauma to varying extents (Cannella & Lincoln, 2018). Upon completion of the focus group discussion, the participants were provided with details for free counselling services at the Counselling, Careers and Development Unit (CCDU) at Wits West Campus, and Emthonjeni Centre at Wits East Campus.

It was strongly advised that focus group members attend at least one session of counselling particularly due to the quality of violence described in the vignettes. The objective of the study was to acquire explicit and honest content from the conversations between individuals pertaining to quality of life, and the moral contingencies surrounding acts of violence. It is imperative to note that it was not the intention of the researcher to disturb the emotional state of any of the participants. No participant should become disadvantaged or emotionally deprived as a result of this study, and the researcher made every effort to apply interpretive skills to be aware of any aggressive discomfort that emerged.

3.10. Reflexivity

Locating one's position in the research space is crucial to ensure that the utmost levels of objectivity are being sought where required. As the data collection method was a focus group

discussion and the researcher was the facilitator, it was important that the researcher acknowledged their subjective presence as an instrument in the focus group (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2015). The data was themed, coded and interpreted by the researcher through a critical lens. Academically, this is obtainable, however, realistically one is unable to be completely void of subjective interpretation or influence on the research (Patton, 2015). It cannot be ignored that the academic exposure and the social constructs with which the researcher identifies would impact the interpretation of the content of the discussions. As a black, female academic, the researcher acknowledged that identity, ethnicity and personal ideological stances exist, and pledged to function only to ensure the free flow of conversations, neither intimidating nor colluding with focus group participants to her best ability.

Due to the topic of the study and the presence of violence in South African society, every participant expressed a direct or indirect experience of violence. Hence, there was an affective investment in the topic, as part of the motivation to participate stemmed from understandings of social justice and marginalisation. The aim of exploring the phenomena of perceptions about human identities and violence was to gain insight, and further to contribute to the understanding of violence as a vehicle that inflicts harm. This study further aimed to explore how this harm frames or influences moral judgments about human violent behaviour. As the participants were all students from the school of human and community development, it was considered that they each had an adequate level of engagement in human thought processing and behaviour. It was also presumed that each participant possessed a measure of self-awareness about their own identities and positions in society, which were expressed in their contribution to the dialogue. Where there was opportunity to explore the relationship between one's identity and their contribution to the discussion, this was attempted. However, the researcher had to remain conscious of her own perceptions and position in the focus group, and be mindful of posing leading questions or shifting the dynamic within the focus groups by highlighting the presumed identities of participants.

The researcher kept a research journal which was used to record impressions and perceptions that were derived throughout the research journey. This included opinions on the content that emerged during the focus group discussion. This was important particularly due to the researcher being a black woman, of which, the experiences of Black women was a constant theme in the discussions. Understanding one's own blackness and how that has evolved over the decades

is vital. Hearing accounts from people of different races in relation to violence evoked mixed emotions, and was reflective of the magnitude of the different life experiences that people have in the same place due to access to resources, and privilege that one has. It was the researcher's interest to explore violence as a feature of society, and to understand the manner in which human beings understand and perceive people who are violent and people who have been violated.

Furthermore, the researcher acknowledged that in the field of psychology there is a vast spectrum of contributors to human behaviour. Hence it was vital that the researcher exercised intent about not influencing the discussions with any form of experiential knowledge, not overtly colluding with specific members, and aiming to facilitate as contextually relevant a discussion as possible (Patton, 2015). The researcher had to be mindful of her personal convictions and how her experiences of various identities may have stood out as more interesting or challenging. It was equally important to reflect on how the various identities in the room experienced each other, and how society has constructed and allocated social capital. Engaging in the focus group discussions also triggered thought about how far and how impactful the narratives of the participants are heard in society. Reflecting on how vocal some voices were over others, it was observed that gender and race as externally identified features of the participants shifted dynamics such that some participants were more prone to dominate discussions, and others would express themselves in undertones. It was deduced that this is a representation of the current South African context, and how movements are gradually being formed in the media to promote the voices of the marginalised.

Listening to some of the discussions both during the FGDs and while transcribing, there were moments where the researcher pondered on the tendency for people to want to force violence into a box. There is something threatening about conducting an introspection and realising just how much violence we all harbour in different forms. There was a tendency to hold a "them" and "us" stance about violence which was somewhat discomforting for the researcher. Often, this meant taking a step back for the discussion to take its course. There were moments where the researcher as a Black woman felt that there were racially offensive connotations to what was being said, and in these moments, when one's emotions were triggered, it was vital to step away from the emotional content of the discussion and remain present as a facilitator.

To some degree, there were moments when the researcher was listening to the discussion and perceived it as linear and unidirectional. However, one's academic exposure to literature and critical discourse should not denigrate the real experiences and positionality of other people as important narratives in contemporary society. Exploring the data and themes, what resonated the most for the researcher were history and time – the expressions of how an oppressive past has resulted in a dormant violence or rage within populations that cannot be expressed, but is often triggered by institutions and systems of exclusion. It is perceived that the identity of the researcher as Black, female, and a foreign national facilitated for the free expression of this dormant violence, possibly in a manner that other covert genders or races may not have allowed.

The texture of some of the discussions, brought the researcher to an inference that there lies a difficulty in expressing one's true perspective about human life and how it is experienced in society in academic spaces. Sometimes to have a voice, you need to have a theoretical backing in order to be heard. It raised the question that in dialogues, does that mean that the opinion of the uneducated doesn't matter? It forced the researcher to further reflect on what really informs theory in modern society, and how much of this is based upon the life experiences of those with social and cultural capital. However, adopting a critical social constructionist approach meant that the researcher would be able to look at the individual and the collective experiences of people and how they frame their understanding of society (Cannella & Lincoln, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). With a global population of 7.8 billion, there is no single instrument or scale that can categorically measure the value of any human life. However, these discussions brought to the fore the complexity of violence as it is experienced at the intersections and positionalities of various human bodies.

3.11. Conclusion

This chapter provided a description of the methods and procedures that were embarked on in order to conduct this exploratory study. It provided an overview about the paradigm and thematic content analysis which formed part of the framework through which the researcher could process the data, and aim to conceptualise the value of human life. The section on reflexivity presented some of the researcher's thoughts, insights, and experiences while conducting the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The themes that are discussed in this chapter draw from the premise that human life is experienced through the identities which people embody. The themes that are presented do not aim to categorise identities or create a hierarchy of valuable human identities. They provide a summary of the various identities in human society that are affiliated with value. The vignettes that were discussed between participants can be found in Appendix F.

Gender appeared to emerge as a significant theme, as the conversations across the focus group discussions were located within gendered narratives. The first emerging theme discusses gender and sexuality as characteristics of human nature. Thereafter, other prominent identities emerged in relation to how certain human beings were perceived to be important in violent enactments. Identity was separated amongst two themes based upon the conversations which materialised, and not as a representation of the significance of some identities over others. The third theme discusses power roles in different institutions, reflecting on how people who have been given spaces of authority may misuse their power to violate the rights of others.

4.2. The Role of Gender and Sexuality in Valuing Human Life

As identity is a multifaceted social construct, many identities emerged throughout the FGDs. Gender and sexuality were prominent areas of discussion, presenting the notion that these are identities that tend to be ubiquitous in the participants' various social spaces.

The sub-themes below provide an illustration of when participants considered women to be vulnerable. The perceived vulnerability of a woman impacts how they are thought of when they transgress society's expectations of women, and enter spaces that render them susceptible to violence. This vulnerability is echoed in participants' talk about masculinity, how maleness prohibits men from expressing their insecurities or struggles, and reinforces the ideology about men as violent actors. The third sub-theme provides an illustration of corrective rape as a violent enactment upon members of the LGBTIQ+ community. In traditional (non-progressive)

communities, deviation from heteronormative practise and gender binaries is often punishable through sexual violations under the guise of "correcting" the homosexual person's sexuality (Brown, 2012; Morrissey, 2013). The following are summations of how participants made meaning of gender and sexuality in violent situations. They are an analysis of how these constructs determined which lives are tolerable, and which are intolerable in these contexts.

4.2.1. Womanhood: Locating Vulgarity in one's Vulnerability

This sub-theme presents a discussion of how society confronts violence that is committed against women when they are found in spaces that are traditionally reserved for men. Considering that women tend to be classified as vulnerable in society, this sub-theme expounds upon interactions where women venture outside of traditional gender roles, and their actions are thought to be vulgar or distasteful. Participants discussed vignette F3 (a fatal shooting in a busy shebeen[11]). In the scenario victims of the attack included both men and women. Making reference to the women who were killed, participants questioned what women were doing in the shebeen in the first place.

Feminist ideology emphasises that patriarchy and structural violence have, for centuries, reinforced the narrative of women being inferior to men, and thus less deserving of space in active society (Welldon, 2004; Ahmed, 2017; Kiguwa, 2019). As modern society develops and feminist philosophy becomes part of everyday discourse, identity groups appear to be split by the tensions that emerge as a consequence of the pursuit of gender equality (Ahmed, 2017; Kiguwa, 2019). Roles and spaces that were traditionally occupied by men are now more accessible to women. This is a victory for people in support of feminist dogma, but a frustration for many parts of the world that still enforce patriarchy.

Participant 15: …I'm not trying to blame women that you know they were not supposed to be in the shebeen. They have right as well to be in the shebeen, to go and enjoy themselves. They do have the right, they are human beings. But, eh culture, I'm going to put in culture as well. You know, culturally it's not acceptable to see so many women… (Laughter)

[11] A shebeen is a South African word for a bar or tavern, where people converge to drink alcohol and socialise. They are normally located in townships or informal settlements.

The above excerpt reflects upon culture as a social structure that delineates the positions that people are expected to occupy in their communities (Morris et al., 2001). The shebeen was identified as a place where it is not culturally acceptable for women to be socialising. Much of the discussion was centred on the women who were perceived to have trespassed into a space which is traditionally male dominated. By trespassing, these women were perceived to have placed themselves in a position where they became victims of violence. This was pronounced in how the participant expressed the acknowledgment that women were acting within their rights to go to the shebeen, yet still laying emphasis on the cultural inappropriateness of their presence there. The laughter at the end of the statement was interpreted by the researcher to signify a sense of agreement by other participants, with undertones of ridicule at the behaviour of the women. This is corroborated by the extract below:

Participant 2: …it's culture that you know women are not allowed to be in a shebeen, be drinking alcohol. It's our culture…

The concept of culture emerged significantly as an indication that women were renouncing their traditional female roles (and subsequently, their vulnerable lives) by engaging in culturally unacceptable behaviour. The culture that was being referred to can be understood as traditional, Black South African culture which is founded upon patriarchy. It was observed by the researcher that this cultural explanation was accepted by other participants, and that little compassion was afforded to women in a shebeen, as their transgression of gendered spaces was emphasised more than the actual loss of life.

This attribution of blame is synonymous with myths about the relationship between rape and provocative dress codes. In these conversations it is often implied that women's appearance and behaviour "attracts" sexual and/or physical abuse (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Du Mont et al., 2003). It is within these contestations of behaviour and agency that female bodies are devalued. Blame is attributed to women, who are then forcefully being held accountable for the violations committed on their bodies.

Participants delved further into conversation about women exposing themselves to violence by trespassing beyond the parameters of male dominated spaces. The traditionally imposed

vulnerability of womanhood is presumed to be the same characteristic that renders the presence of women in a shebeen as vulgar (Welldon, 2004).

These statements are indicative of how members of society make meaning of the context of the enactment of violence. Through embracing culture as a medium of organising human behaviour (Barker, 2012), it emerged that participants sympathised less with the women who died, than the men as it was believed that the men were within their socially acceptable domains.

Participant 5: …because like what are women doing in a shebeen? People will be like slut shaming them, oh, they were there for free drinks, and that's why there are a lot of women and less men…oh this, this, this, you know, people create different scenarios. So, now that we're conditioned to think that the shebeen is, is a bad place for women to be…

The statement above reflects upon gender and alludes to a distinction between men, and women in a place of entertainment. Some participants recognised how shebeens are gendered spaces, or spaces that are more socially acceptable for men to frequent because culturally, they had a right to be there. However, despite that the women were acting within their agency, they were also acting outside of traditional gender mores, which raised questions about their morals (Cushman et al., 2010). The introduction of terms like "slut shaming" and "free drinks" into the conversation also presented the image of the previously implied vulnerable women being viewed as vulgar. It was perceived that women who were found in shebeens could not possibly be in these spaces to celebrate the agency that they had acquired, but rather to seek the company of men for purposes of sexual and social gratification.

Traditional gender roles influence the various spaces that female bodies occupy both physically and psychologically (Butler, 1999; Kiguwa, 2019). Through the upholding of gender roles, women are continuously being stripped of their autonomy to think or act in ways that society regulates as unacceptable (De Beauvoir, 2012). Participants' talk indicated that women should be more conscientious about the spaces that they occupy. It was posited that these spaces impact society's perceptions about women in crucial, life defining moments. It was deduced that a woman's "uncultured" conduct shifted her status from being a victim (and vulnerable) to being a co-conspirator to any act of violence against her because she had "placed herself" in a position that exposed her to violence. This can be substantiated by the just world hypothesis which proposes

that a person's actions are inclined to reproduce morally fair and appropriate consequences (Lerner, 1980). In this situation, participants legitimised the violence against the women because they had opted to defy the precepts of culture and gender roles.

Throughout the FGDs, the researcher noted that all of the participants did not express shock or raise awareness of the men who were murdered in the shebeen. This is indicative of the expectation that there are spaces where men should be able to move more freely than women. The men who were also victims, did not attract attention as a gender, but were experienced as a general population or statistic of human beings who were murdered. Conversation honed in on the attack on human life, and the method of attacks that were used in vignette F2. When discussed, the cause of death of the men was linked to the situation, which is South Africa as a violent society. Contrary to this, it was inferred that the women willingly acted within their agency to enter into a shebeen at night and contravene the dictates of traditional society. Their deaths were related more to their dispositional attributions (Heider, 1958; Myers & Twenge, 2018), as they were held accountable for the violence that they then encountered by being in a space that was not created for them.

According to feminist theory, gender norms tend to be used as tools that facilitate the victimisation of women (Ahmed, 2017). Participants were asked about which lives were more susceptible to experience violence. Violence against women was considered to be prevalent, and culture, traditional gender roles and patriarchy were cited as catalysts for violence. This is iterated in the participant's contribution below:

Participant 8: Also the culture and the society that we grew up in that always protected men, that made men the head and women the inferior to men is the main reason why we are saying that women are more, I mean, what's the word…are more vulnerable to violence than men. Because of that culture, we know kuthi uBaba inhloko yamuzi [the husband is the man of the house]. *We know how the society always protected men over women who didn't have to go to school. Women had to submit, women had to commit and things like that. So that's why I would say that women are more violated.*

Cultural norms of subduing women as an inferior gender tend to serve as a justification for acts of violence which typically emerge in domestic violence contexts (Butler, 1999; De Beauvoir, 2012). However, the violations and exclusions that are being discussed are not unique to domestic

situations, and tend to be experienced in social and organisational settings as well (Butler, 1999). Power dynamics and structural violence as governors of modern day society tend to exclude certain identities (like womanhood) from various spaces (Bourdieu, 1987). This is perpetuated by a patriarchal society, fuelling a cycle of oppression and suppression which is often experienced as both physical and psychological violence. The notion of women as a weaker sex is expressed in the extract below where the participant is making reference to power dynamics.

Participant 3: …it shows that there is a certain gender which is, which has less power and that is why they get attacked like this.

Ideology about power dynamics is founded upon narratives of male dominance and female gender roles being forcefully imposed on women (Bareket et al., 2018; Welldon, 2004). This often legitimises assault or abuse of women when they deviate from patriarchy's expectations of submission. The idea of "less power" alludes to the vulnerability of women as subjects of a society that contains spaces that are hostile to the female gender.

Gender based violence, particularly in relation to women abuse has been normalised as a feature of global history, and is prevalent in South Africa (Armstrong, 1994; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Women have been viewed as "owned" by men due to traditional and cultural practises, like the paying of dowry. Supporting this in contemporary society, many institutions like the police force, hospitals and many faith based organisations tend to challenge the behaviour of a victim as a contributor to the violent interaction. In these contexts, the violence enacted upon the victim is often attributed to the victim's perceived tendency to be provocative (Du Mont et al., 2003). The perpetrator – because of their higher standing in society, is often protected and not challenged as someone who acts independently. This is presented in the discussion below, where it appears that the violent behaviour of the perpetrator is accepted as a fitting response to the emotional expressions of the victim.

Participant 10: But the other thing at homes, most of the things that led to these, led to these violences especially with at homes relationships, a husband and a wife. Obviously they will say it's a woman who started. You know maybe, us women that's what is being said that us women we're always…
Participant 11: Always emotional...

Womanhood which is considered to be a vulnerable identity shifts from vulnerability to vulgarity when society views them as provocative (Motz, 2004; Welldon, 2004).

Participant 1: …we always provoke men, you know. And then they get violent. But when I provoke this man, am I not violent to this man? That's what I want to know.

The last question by the participant about how provocation is violent to men was left unanswered, settling in more as a rhetorical question. The researcher interpreted the posing of this question as an illustration of the type of discourse that prevails in many traditional settings where women report intimate partner violence (Du Mont et al., 2003). They are often questioned about their contribution to the toxicity of the situation, and how the man was provoked. The two extracts above imply that violence is justified in some communities as an appropriate response to emotional expression. This speaks to how the voice of a woman has been silenced in the past through ideology, and is now experienced as provocative (Ahmed, 2017; Kiguwa, 2019). This is a summation of this theme which aimed to highlight participants' impressions about how women are experienced by a society as both vulnerable and vulgar. This is founded upon traditional patriarchal ideology, and is contested by feminist theory. Despite that globalisation has allowed for a more critical and contextual conceptualisation of various identities, the impetus still remains on identity groups to actively shift the narratives and create awareness of spaces and ideologies that are experienced as oppressive and dehumanising. These practices and ideologies are the determinants of how violence is considered to be a legitimate act on female subjects' bodies when they transgress from the dictates of culture and tradition.

4.2.2. Masculinity: The "Plight" and the Privilege of Male Identity

In a society that has constructed masculinities over centuries, the male body and the act of being a man has typically been associated with privilege and power (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Ratele, 2014). Privilege is related to the ability to access various spaces, and the advantage of being considered in higher standing by virtue of a specific demographic categorisation, like gender or race (Connell, 1993). In these situations, other people are perceived to be less qualified

and are therefore excluded based on the same demographic categorisation which is considered to be of lesser quality.

In this discussion, the male gender was appraised as superior to other genders. However, masculinities come with their own plight. This is to perform according to the demands of a society that has orientated men towards dominance, the role of provider and consequently, an innate drive for success (Connell & Messerchmidt, 2005). The reality of social construction is that men are required to subscribe to the dominant characteristics of culture, ethnicity, tradition, and class at any given time (Ratele, 2014). This is two-fold; as the male body responds to expectations of society, society also reciprocates by placing demands on men to act with machismo, and not express their vulnerabilities (Foucault, 1980).

Masculinity has a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde persona where one's plight is to carry the burden of the identity, while the other enjoys the privilege that comes with being a man. The dilemma of this double-sided existence is that the dominance that is associated with the traditional masculine image works both for and against the individual. When violence is directed at men, they are expected to withstand or retaliate, thus perpetrating and legitimising macho behaviour. This has been an integral mode of survival throughout South Africa's tumultuous history (dating back from colonialism to apartheid). This dual persona illustration provides insight into how men have been conditioned to act violently against other people in South African contexts, and why the male identity is synonymous with aggression and perpetratorhood.

South Africa is gradually acknowledging gender-based violence and femicide as national disasters. The country is further considering the gravity and complexity of violence enacted upon specific bodies, typically but not exclusively by men (Stevens, 2016). Masculinity has evolved to become synonymous with strength, belligerence, and leadership (Connell, 1993; Connell & Messerchmidt, 2005). These qualities are engrained in the social construction of male identities, and form part of the culture of raising and developing young men across their lifespan (Moolman, 2013). It is therefore common for boys and men to have difficulty expressing sadness and the struggles which are inherently part of navigating one's life journey, which in itself is never linear.

A study conducted by Langa (2012)[12] illustrates the complexities of negotiating masculinity for adolescent boys in a township[13] in South Africa. The in-depth study hones in on the difficulties that emerge as young men engage with culture, their peers and the broader society while developing their own sense of identity. As expressed in the extract below, it is frowned upon for men to express their vulnerability. Vulnerability tends to be interpreted as weaknesses, and weakness challenges their masculine identity.

Participant 3: …we, we say men, you know, men don't cry (agreement) and all those things so they can't report. So there's a lot of things that are happening with men (agreement) that they can't go and report…

The inability for men to present themselves as vulnerable in South African society stems from the aforementioned traditional gender roles and expectations. Theory on hegemonic masculinity describes how men perform in society, and how power and privilege are experienced at the different intersections of the male identity (Connell, 2012). Machismo as the performativity of masculinity often puts the male body in danger. Hence, in violent spaces, it is often considered that men are the instigators of violence. This is not uncommon due to power that has been afforded them both physiologically, psychologically, and socio-politically (Connell, 2012). To make meaning of the moral attributions underpinning male violence, it is important to evaluate under which circumstances men tend to act with violent conduct that cause harm to their own, and other human lives.

The discussion below is centred on the participants' perceptions of the interactions between Oscar Pistorius and Reeva Steenkamp in her final moments alive[14]. Social psychology considers that one's actions are not determined "in the moment" (Ratele, 2003; Baron & Branscombe, 2014). They are a collective of one's historical, psychological, and social experiences. Participants described Oscar as a white male South African man with a prestigious status as a world renowned Paralympics athlete who shifted the narrative in South Africa about disabilities. Reeva was a white

[12] This study has been selected as a reference due to the diversity in thematic content that emerged from the research. It is relevant for conceptualising the expressions of masculinity of many South African males as they develop from the adolescent phase into adulthood.

[13] A township is a residential area in South Africa that comprises of predominantly Black people. This type of residential mapping is a result of apartheid legislation which dictated the areas that black people should occupy

[14] This incident did not form part of the interview schedule – it emerged during one of the focus group discussions in relation to the conversation that was taking place.

female South African law graduate, who further pursued a career in modelling and acting. This gave her significant social status. Popular discussion and the media attested to the notion that Oscar had a history of aggression and gun violence (Nkosi, 2015). Interpreting this incident from a social psychology perspective, it can be posited that Oscar's masculinity and privilege were compounding contributors to the incident that ended Reeva's life, and changed the course of his own.

Participant 6: My theory around it is I feel that Oscar felt emasculated by Reeva. There's a man, an amputee, I mean, with a very beautiful woman supposedly with what is constructed as a beautiful woman in society. Blond, white, that is a classic symbol of what beauty is, in this country. Oh well all over the world in fact. And then he has her, for him that could have been some sort of achievement but looking at the stories that surround it, he suspected apparently that she could have been flirting with other men in some baby shower. That must have emasculated him.

The participant raised this view, attributing the root cause of their argument on Valentine's Day and the subsequent fatal shooting to Pistorius being a misogynist who struggled with feelings of inferiority. It was speculated that the murder was intentional and driven by malice and an inability to control and oppress Reeva as per the dictates of patriarchal society. In many global communities, patriarchy permeates and there is an emphasis on women to submit to and respect men as authority figures (Connell, 1993; Butler, 1999). The quality of gendered relationships across communities varies, and are reliant on the cultural and traditional practises in that context. The above excerpt reflects on how Reeva was described as the epitome of beauty, possessing the characteristics which contemporary society associates beauty with. Despite that Oscar was a phenomenal Paralympics athlete, there was a site where masculinity's double-sided persona converged, causing Oscar to be conflicted by his vulnerability and misogyny, and act out violently.

Theory on hegemonic masculinity provides an understanding of how gender has been socially constructed offering power and dominance to men over women (Connell, 2012; Ratele, 2014). It provides an understanding of how a well-established man like Oscar became violent and abusive as a result of intimidation by the beauty of the person who he identified as attractive. The need to validate the male authority position is derived from centuries of patriarchy and the means by which patriarchy has been imprinted in society, and threaded into personality. Toxic

masculinity provides an understanding of violence as a gendered construct (Connell, 2012) and why intimate partner violence is prevalent.

Participant 4: Like we said men demand respect from women in all sorts. For him to feel like he was in control of the situation, I feel that killing her or showing her, teaching her a lesson was away for him, because this is what men do to women. Women are objects, women are disposable to men and for them to exercise and maintain their power. If they can't control the situation, this final act of maintaining this power and violence and so the hold of a woman is to kill that woman. It must have been liberating feeling for him to say that ya...
Participant 5: If I can't have you...
Participant 4: No one else can and I've taught you a lesson and you, you will never do that to another man again.

The problem of men perpetrating violence against their female partners was attributed to the ideology that men are superior beings and have dominance over women. It was implied that men then tend to act violently when this ownership feels threatened regardless of whether the threat is real or perceived. This is consistent with Allport's (1968) conceptualisation of social identities as dynamic and highly reliant on context, and how one perceives themselves to exist in the social world.

The concept of violence as a response to a threat is pertinent to this discussion in light of Oscar's defence that he thought there was a robber entering his house. He had a scapegoat – South Africa as a violent society (Langa et al., 2017), and this was the crutch that he used to evoke sympathy from the world. He spoke about an intruder in the home, and how his main objective was to protect both himself and Reeva. Through these statements, Oscar was presenting an image of a woman's vulnerability and a man's ability to protect her being compromised – a scenario that is unheard of in masculinity discourse. Ultimately, he was justifying his actions by reminding the world of his plight as a man, which was to protect the vulnerable. Whether consciously or unconsciously, he was drawing his defence from patriarchal discourse, while holding to ransom South Africa as a violent country with a high crime rate (Langa et al., 2017). Participants attributed Oscar's actions to male privilege and entitlement – which suggest that the man has power to possess and subdue a woman – rendering her life as inferior (and therefore less valuable) to his.

During his trial, other incidents where Oscar was implicated for abusive and aggressive behaviour were raised (Nkosi, 2015). Ideas that Oscar was emasculated by Reeva's unwillingness to submit to his interests and demands were explored by participants. It was suggested that as a man, he felt that he had a right to interrogate and control her interests and lifestyle particularly when they did not agree with his expectations of her. It was further postulated that Reeva's murder and the subsequent trial acquired global attention because of her status as a model, and Pistorius' status as a globally renowned athlete. The extract below attributes the high traction to social class and race:

Participant 3: He was a public figure, Reeva was a public figure, it had to be big, that's one.
Participant 2: And he's white...

The intersection of Reeva and Oscar's race (white) and upper class statuses distinguished this case of gender-based violence from many others in South Africa and abroad. This is substantiated by participant's assertions about their public statuses and Oscar's whiteness. The motives for violence against women at the hands of their intimate partners arises from a history of oppressive systems and traditions that normalised the subduing of men by men, and women by men (Butler, 1999; Connell, 1993). However, femicide and intimate partner violence are not isolated occurrences in South Africa, and the circumstances under which Reeva died were not unique. Heider (1958) theorised that society tends to respond to actions and events that are extraordinary or abhorrent. It can be hypothesised that Reeva's murder challenged society's image of perfection which is often located at intersections of beauty, class and whiteness. Their relationship was aesthetically pleasing, and the shock emerged as a result of how Oscar as a white male public figure transgressed the expectations of society by killing his partner.

As mentioned by participants in the above excerpts, social status, race and socioeconomic status were key contributors to this incident attracting global attention. When pondering on Reeva's positionality and that of many other cases of intimate partner violence that were not publicised (locally and abroad), it can be deduced that some lives appear more valuable to society than others. Furthermore, considering Oscar's expressions of remorse, his actions may be a reflection of the unintended or uncontrollable consequences of masculinity. Participants attributed his violent actions to his maleness, and how patriarchal discourse facilitates a sense of superiority and power to act violently against people who are considered to be vulnerable or inferior.

4.2.3. Sexuality: Identities "Inviting" Corrective Rape

The experiences of members of the LGBTIQ+ community are diverse and non-linear. They are diversified by the intersection of an individual's various demographic, class and social identities (Gray & Cooke, 2018; Butler, 1993). Hence, the complexities of constructing one's sexuality and sense of self emerge from how one has experienced their own sexuality, to how their communities respond to the expression of sexuality at that particular time (Butler, 1993). It was discussed in the focus group that South African society has experienced a scourge of violence in the form of corrective rape. This has emerged as people are increasingly expressing their sexuality by "coming out" either in words or action (Mkhize et al., 2010; Brown, 2012).

South Africa has a history of oppression of people who have been identified as inferior – including members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Heteronormative attitudes have influenced the actions by people with homophobic beliefs to violate (mostly) lesbians in a bid to "correct" their sexual orientation (Mkhize et al., 2010; Morrissey, 2013). Corrective rape is not solely enacted on non-cisgendered women, however, the narrative around culture and submission is such that women who deviate from traditional gender norms of being attracted to men need to be disciplined (Mkhize et al., 2010; Morrissey, 2013). The belief that one person's genitalia has the power to correct the sexual orientation of another person is rooted in patriarchy. Hence, the violence in corrective rape is located in the act of one body expressing power over another. It is further entrenched in the justification of these actions through homophobic talk and behaviour (Morrissey, 2013). In the excerpt below, it was discussed that the life, the lived experience, and independent choice of a non-heterosexual woman is considered to be of less value than that of heterosexual people.

Participant 6: Also with this corrective rape thing, you know we don't talk about it you know, it's like what about lesbian women so…yah, you know? It goes with that certain bodies don't matter.

The participant was making reference to lesbian women being sexually violated, and these acts neither being addressed nor discussed in society. The conclusion that lesbian bodies don't matter was reached based on the participant's perception that corrective rape occurs, and society doesn't seem to be raising awareness of these injustices.

Corrective rape is a form of sexual assault that communicates hatred for queer identities. Through the medium of hate, it is understood that rape works as a weapon of subordination for all women, and can also be committed against men who present as effeminate (Morrissey, 2013). The justification of the violation upon them is that their sexuality was what solicited the punishment of rape. This is a reflection of how society still considers homosexuality as an alternative and inferior identity to heterosexuality (Butler, 1993; Gray & Cooke, 2018).

Based upon participants' conversations, there were perceptions that rape is often committed against women, and the act of rape on a man is unfathomable. This cements the conception that rape is a violent act that tends to be committed against women in order to reinforce patriarchal and heteronormative ideology (Welldon, 2004; De Beavoir, 2012). Rape serves to subdue and remove the dignity of the victim, thus destabilising their sense of self (Armstrong, 1994). This is a reflection of how violence is used to exert power over other humans. It was reflected upon in the excerpt below that rape would be an unlikely form of revenge punishment on a perpetrator, as long as the perpetrator were male.

Participant 5: If I'm a man and I attack her, I attack (inaudible) at night people might come beat me up at night, but rape me?? (laughter) Hhayi [exclamation], *why would you do that? Like why? Participant 4: …I'm thinking it's a man. And then, eh, the only person who can sexually assault another man it's another man.*

The statements above reinforced the concept that rape is both a physical and psychological violation directed at the female identity and the female body. Despite the prevalence of sexual assault in South Africa, the participants' laughter and Participant 5's expression implied that it was difficult to conceptualise sexual violation on the male body – regardless of one's sexual orientation. This is a reflection of how sexual assault on the female body is normalised, it is thinkable and therefore doable (Armstrong, 1994; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002).

The discussion between participants progressed with the notion that, if there were a sexual assault on a male body, only a perpetrator who was considered to be "equal" in gender would commit rape. This alludes to how men and the male body are experienced to be stronger and more superior, and therefore not easily susceptible to sexual violence. However, it was expressed in the

extract below that in situations where a man was sexually assaulted, there was a high likelihood that he had provoked his violators.

Participant 5: …he brought this upon himself. (laughter)

The above statement is consistent with literature on masculinity and theory that infers that men tend to be more active (or reactive) than passive in violent altercations (Connell, 2012). Furthermore, the participant's statement and the humour appeared to be legitimising the sexual assault on a man. The idea that he did something to deserve the assault is drawn from the just world hypothesis which alludes to how one's actions tend to be rewarded with outcomes that are consistent with their behaviour (Lerner, 1980).

The above statements also insinuate that rape committed against a male body is an indication of the sexual orientation of both the victim and the perpetrator. This implies that, in order for a man to be sexually violated, the perpetrator has to be able to be sexually aroused by men. Alternatively, the perpetrator may have been driven by the intention to engage in sexual intercourse. In this type of situation, the perpetrator would be drawing motivation for sexually assaulting another man from principles of hegemonic masculinity that posit that some male bodies have dominance over others (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Still analysing this discussion, participants may not have considered how rape can be committed by a woman on a man. This omission is also consistent with discourse on masculinities which unpack how and why men do not report sexual assault due to the ridicule and discrimination that they may receive (Connell, 1993).

The researcher further observed that this discussion was explored by participants with humour, and not the sense of sombreness that was present when discussing corrective rape. From the above discussion, and the actions that they reflect upon, it was concluded that males who are not heterosexual were considered to be more susceptible to sexual violation than heterosexual males because the former's sexuality needed to be "corrected". For women, rape is generally perceived to serve as a method of subduing one human being by the other. With regards to corrective rape, the lesbian body was considered to be defiant, and thus was susceptive to the harsh punishment of rape as a form of discipline and correction.

The excerpt below comprised of discussions around rape, sexuality and gender. Of particular interest was the manner in which the statement "evidence of severe sexual assault" (vignette F4[15]) emerged as a prominent theme for discussion about the seventy-four year old man's sexuality. The discussion was focused around Mr Oppenheimer (vignette F4) being a victim of sexual assault because participants presumed that he was gay.

Researcher: … I'm just wondering why you think that the person who was raped was gay?
Participant 3: Because there's no, even with me I was interested in the thing of rape because…
Participant 4: Yes, that's what I'm thinking that it's, yes it's someone, maybe he had a relationship with another man. And that man that night, maybe they had a fight and that man did what happened in that scenario.

Based upon the discussion above, the analysis is that participants were neither condoning nor condemning the actions, but were focusing on the motive of the perpetrators in relation to the victim's sexuality or masculinity. This is an indication of how identity is a key characteristic that contributes to how society makes meaning of different human lives when they are violated. In this scenario, the researcher posed the question because participants were more captivated by Mr Oppenheimer's sexual orientation more than the concern that was placed on his injured life.

It was further presumed that if the man had been a perpetrator who had acted violently toward someone else, even if this was a revenge attack, he would not have been sexually assaulted – because he was a man. This may be substantiated by Card (1996) who discusses that in more politically unstable societies, rape of women has been utilized as a communicator of dominance and superiority both to the victim and her male partner or any male relative who is present. This form of hegemonic masculinity stems from heterosexual ideology, where raping a man may be an indication of homosexuality or bisexuality, which is still frowned upon in many cultures.

Participant 3: But it's so vague. It might be so vague. If I'm a man and I attack her, I attack (inaudible) at night people might come beat me up at night, but rape me. (laughter) Hhayi [exclamation], *why would you do that? Like why?*
Participant 4: A naughty grandpa

[15] See Appendix F4: Elderly man murdered in Killarney home

In the above extract, the researcher observed that the discussion by participants was very light-hearted. This light-heartedness was interpreted to be part of the process of minimising the harm that was experienced by a man because it is considered to be culturally unacceptable for a heterosexual man to be raped (Gear, 2007). The use of humour can also be considered as a signifier that the victim's human identity was reduced in that moment to caricature, which was further substantiated by the closing comment "naughty grandpa".

While sexual assault should not ever "make sense", it appears that the perceptions of sexual violence on a white, male elderly person was intriguing to participants. It emerged that the concept of men as victims of sexual violence was contrary to the norm, whereas sexual violence towards women appears to be more common in society. Participants' expressions insinuated that it would be easier to acknowledge the rape of a man if the man was gay.

With regards to men as victims of sexual violence, it has been explored that in some situations, men are sexually violated in the aim of subduing their masculinity (Card, 1996) and this is often committed as a form of torture on him while he was still alive. Sexuality is still a predominantly contested area in human society, with people making efforts to include and understand that sexual identity does not render one person as less deserving, or less human than the next. The violations and nature of the discussions in this sub-theme can be considered to be products of a predominantly patriarchal and heteronormative society that is still making efforts to be more inclusive and diverse. However, it was also significant that the discussions about corrective rape appeared to place more emphasis on lesbians, while little empathy was afforded to a man who may have experienced a sexual violation.

4.3. Other Emergent Identities in Violent Enactments

This theme discusses various other identities which were not discussed in the previous theme. This separation is not a reflection of some identities presenting as more important than others. They were clustered in this manner to present a concise discussion of participants' views on violence and the value of human life. The theme presents participants' impressions about race and class (socioeconomic status), ageism and perceptions of people who are disabled. Further

elaborated upon were the dualism of the perpetrator identity as a characteristic of vigilantism. It was further discussed that some identities present as more dominant in a subject's body than others.

4.3.1. Race and Class as Signifiers of Human Value

Participants suggested that society acknowledges and mourns violent acts upon certain bodies because they matter due to the colour of their skin, and the amount of money and privilege they have access to. They spoke about race and class in situations where there is violence being enacted by a perpetrator on a victim.

In the previous theme, it was discussed that Reeva Steenkamp's murder may have become the poster image of gender based violence and femicide due to her beauty, her whiteness, and her outward appearance being socially appealing. Elaborating further on how the attractiveness of a victim or perpetrator gains peoples' attention, participants introduced another case of femicide that was covered extensively on various South African media platforms. This involved the murder of University of Johannesburg student, Karabo Mokoena (BBC News, 2018). She too could be categorised as beautiful, of a noticeable socioeconomic class, and socially appealing, which are qualities that she had in common with Reeva.

Participant 4: Honestly, I think that the only reason the, the, the Karabo thing was taken seriously was cause of the Reeva thing. So, but before, before the Karabo Mokoena situation, did we hear anything about women being abused at all?

The two cases of femicide that were being referred to took place approximately four years apart. Considering the rate of gender based violence in South Africa, it is a safe assumption that in that period, there were numerous acts of femicide that were committed. However, what the participant was alluding to is that some cases are afforded more attention than others. The presumed reason behind this is that society has a tendency to become emotionally drawn to incidents that involve lives that are considered to be more socially attractive. In this context, social capital determines which identities society classifies as important, and worthy of empathic indulgence (Bourdieu, 1987).

Participant 15: …So, I don't think, after Reeva and, and Oscar, nothing happened. I'm pretty sure there were still women being abused, killed, sexually assaulted, raped by their boyfriends, definitely. I'm pretty sure even after the Oscar case, but no one said anything. It didn't come out in the papers, it didn't come out on social media, until, until Karabo.

Karabo Mokoena can be identified as a young, black, attractive, student from one of the prominent educational institutions in South Africa. Sandile (her partner) can also be described with similar characteristics – a young, vibrant black businessman. Their identities both hold significant cultural capital – sufficient social and cultural capital to be identified in a violent society as a prominent or high profile femicide case (BBC News, 2018).

It can also be argued that the manner in which her body was discovered, burnt beyond recognition may also have been a contributing factor for why this particular incident received national attention. This reflects on how certain types of gruesome acts are more frowned upon than others because they infringe upon the moral value that should be placed on the body – nonetheless, the violence against her body was considered to be heinous and unjustifiable, and South African society was aware and outraged, because the victim embodied the type of human being whose life is considered to be grievable.

One can then also deduce that, for an incident to be considered "newsworthy", the victims or perpetrators have to appeal to society in a way that will sustain popular interest. This feeds into the identity of a narcissistic society and the unconscious desires for beauty, fame, and fortune. In the meantime, what then tends to happen is that other members of society, the majority, the average human being tends to experience this lack of attention during their own violations as being less important members of society, and in essence less valuable human beings (Butler, 2009).

Sandile Mantsoe, was found guilty of femicide, defeating the ends of justice, and not having a viable scapegoat. He attempted to present an image of Karabo (the victim) as unfaithful and unstable, depressed and dissatisfied with her life, attributing her death to suicide (BBC News, 2018). This was a strategy that was used to shift the identity of the victim, so that she was less palatable to society with the hopes that this would evoke leniency in his judgment. This strategy is the same as that which was employed by Pistorius in the sense that they both drew from the identity of another human to shift the conversation and evoke sympathy for themselves – shifting the narrative from being a perpetrator to being a co-victim alongside their now deceased partners.

In Pistorius' case, his scapegoat was the violent South African society that made him believe that he was shooting at burglars (Langa et al., 2018). It can be hypothesised that this may not have been as successful for Mantsoe because he may have fit into the description of an individual who commits crime, as it was highlighted during his trial that he had been investigated for fraud, as well as talk of recurring issues of infidelity (Folkof, 2018). This seemed to further validate his character as the person who then placed the victim's body in a bin and burnt it, and the lack of remorse depicted in his actions thereafter – he embodied the identity of a perpetrator.

These cases were raised by the participants in relation to the topics of violence and subjectivity. A comparison of the two cases was explored with regards to participants' perceptions of how and why Pistorius received a substantially lighter sentence than Mantsoe.

Participant 3: And there is no difference between him and Sandile Mantsoe. They are exactly the same WhatsApp group and if he is a killer and so is Sandile Mantsoe and so why is the other one getting 30 years.
Participant 4: And he got five the first time and they came back and they said, what fifteen minus time served.
Participant 3: And people will argue the point of remorse. I didn't see remorse....

It was discussed that the reason behind Pistorius' lighter sentence was that he expressed remorse and fear of being a victim of a burglary (Langa et al., 2018). Remorse is an indication of one's moral inclinations, and can be expressed practically through one's actions, however, it needs to be analysed subjectively (Cushman et al., 2010). Mantsoe's actions were indicative of severe lack of remorse due to the manner in which he attempted to dispose of the victim's body, by placing her in a dustbin, and proceeding to burn her (Folkof, 2018). The subjective nature of morality and remorse are drawn from identities, and how these identities are experienced by the people who are analysing the remorse, and how they have been morally constructed in society. Furthermore, it was perceived that the two incidents were treated differently due to race, and Reeva and Oscar's financial affluence.

Participant 4: Number 2 they're white, they're both white and number 3, financial, financial power. He has financial power to make it big…

Drawing from the above statement, Reeva and Oscar's whiteness may have been one of the main reasons that this incident received global traction. Historically, whiteness has been considered to be the superior racial category, as actioned through colonisation and apartheid. This incident could be considered to be an indication of the collapse of whiteness (as a proxy of race and class) as the "ideal" human life. The actions of Oscar, a world renowned champion, and an amputee are indicative of how the constructs which the world has idealised, are not a true reflection of perfection, and can be as flawed as the identities that have been considered to be inferior, and subject to act violently.

To substantiate the racial perspective, participants also discussed how apartheid has perpetuated violence through democratic South African society. Research on coloniality as a form of violent oppression from systems of governance depicts that violence does not necessarily end with a regime. It changes into different forms of violence as power is transferred from one system to another (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). When this takes place, some identities become progressively alleviated of the violence through affirmative action (Mogapi, 2011). While this is a process with its own complexities, the lived experience of a violent society are not erased by the identities that are still disadvantaged, and living a sub-human life.

It can be ascertained that socioeconomic status and the resources it provides serve as protective factors against various forms of violence. When people have access to money, they are typically more able to put measures in place that may make them less vulnerable to various forms of unpredictable violence. Examples include acquiring personal body guards or having access to transportation systems which are managed with appropriate safety measures to minimise harm to commuters. In these situations, human life is more preserved where one is able to actively choose safety (Butler, 2009).

For purposes of establishing an overview of violence in society, a question was asked in all focus groups about which identities were perceived to have the least likelihood of becoming victims of violence. Discussions about race emerged as a protective factor against violence.

Participant 10: White people
Researcher: Okay…

Participant 11: Guys, they grew up with privileges hey (laughter). They grew up with so many privileges
Participant 10: Yeah, that's right
Participant 12: Isn't though that like primitive now? The service you get as a white person and a black person is completely different

The above comments suggested that the historical nature of racialised violence positioned white people at an advantage financially, where they have been afforded the privilege of accessing spaces and resources more easily than people of colour. This tends to persist in post-apartheid South Africa. The reference to privilege can be presumed to include access to resources more fluidly, and better service in different sectors of society. In essence, this would imply that one's whiteness permits them to exercise their agency in a manner that may protect them from harm through protective factors (such as security, secure transport, safer employment, etc.) where necessary.

The objective of this study was to explore how participants make meaning of different identities in violent contexts. Hence, the discussions about the different subjectivities does not attempt to make legal arguments, but rather to present ideas, and an understanding of how society experiences different bodies in everyday life. From the abovementioned comparisons, it emerged that participants believed that race and class are key contributors to enhance human value in society. At the same time, though race and class make society aware of one's life, they also place these identities under public scrutiny. Considering that femicide and intimate partner violence are considered to be national problems, not all incidents will emerge, and it can be theorised that this is a result of social capital, and that not all bodies are experienced in broader society because they may or may not draw sufficient empathy to matter in public spaces.

4.3.2. Young, Elderly, and Disabled: Too Human or Not Too Human

The content of this sub-theme is derived from the manner in which participants responded to discussions about the young, the old, and people living with disability. In society, people who fit into those identity classifications are typically categorised as "vulnerable people". However,

these identities emerged with contestations drawing from the violent contexts in which they were presented. Drawing from the discussions, it appeared that there were situations in which certain vulnerable identities needed to be protected. There was also mention of contexts within which they were ridiculed, or considered to be liabilities. Hence, the discussions were centred on the circumstances under which violence acted upon vulnerable bodies was tolerated or intolerable.

Mature age (very old people) was discussed as a key signifier for vulnerability, and an indication of when people needed to be protected from perpetrators. Vignette F4 described the assault and murder an elderly man. Participants expressed shock in relation to the violation of an elderly man, however, they also appeared intrigued by the sexual violation upon the same body.

Participant 2: …he's 72 and he's been sexually assaulted. Everyone is gonna be like, who assaults a 72 year old?
Participant 3: I'm thinking he's like, he's gay, maybe, maybe he's…I'm not sure.

It appears that there was a contestation about his identities as an elderly male and a victim of sexual assault. Significant focus was placed on his sexuality, as this emerged in relation to the sexual assault. Participants questioned the motive behind attacking an elderly person, as elderly people tend to be regarded as defenceless. It appeared to make more sense that the target of the assault was his sexuality, and not his age. Exploring these identity intersections provided insight into how sexual assault on a homosexual man may be more conceivable and acceptable than sexual assault on an elderly man, which is rooted in homophobic discourse.

The next excerpt is a reflection of the emphasis that the participants placed upon the identities that arose in this vignette (F4). It was ascertained that the sexual assault of a man had to have been committed by a person of the same sex because in traditional society, men are not expected to be sexually vulnerable when a woman is involved (Welldon, 2004; Bareket et al., 2018). Based upon the statements below, it was also perceived that when there is a sexual violation on a man, the perpetrator would have to have been someone who they were intimately involved with at some point in their lives. This shifts the conversation towards intimate partner violence and deviates from the notion that this may have been a homophobic act.

Participant 1: So, it could be an ex-wife. It could, it could be anyone, but it doesn't make sense for robbers to come and sexually assault a 72 year old man…
Participant 4: But remember, remember….
Participant 1: …unless it's someone he knows or he knows they were out for revenge or something

These statements by participants provided insight into how sexual violence upon a man tends to be linked to how their sexuality conflicts with the expectations of men and masculinity, further drawing upon discussions in section 4.2.3 about corrective rape. Despite that participants expressed outrage due to his age, it was observed that due to the elderly being associated with vulnerability, it is intolerable and therefore inconceivable that he could have been sexually violated "for no reason" at his age. It made more sense that he became a victim due to his sexuality, or some form of disorderly conducted which would result in people seeking revenge.

It was further observed that sexual violations of vulnerable people were considered to be a topic of interest to participants. This is predominantly from the premise that children and the elderly needed to be protected. It was posited that some participants would act violently against people who had been implicated in the rape of a child or an elderly person. Probing further, the researcher enquired about whether participants believed that they would actually be able to act violently against a perpetrator. Responses are documented below:

Participant 7: …I know not a lot of people will agree with me on this, but for rape, that, like I mean […] if it was, it was proved, proven like I know in past instances where I would personally […] become a vigilante like that, it's because, you know, they can be innocent, but I mean if it was, let's say if the world was black and white and its perfect, and that is a rapist, I'd be like, "listen, hand him over to me, I'll deal with him". (laughter) I just feel like, especially child molestation.

Participant 9: Oh, yeah, it's just that if there's any elements of like or sexual elements to, like I know that even if it's just rubbing or anything like that, but personally for me, if it's just a sexual thing whether to children or old people or anything like that, it's just, personally for me I just feel a lot more obliged […] I would kill the person, I would torture then kill.

From the two quotes above, participants disclosed that they would be in a position to act violently against a perpetrator. These convictions were justified in their minds as a form of justice

for the violation of vulnerable people. This alludes to how society often makes moral judgments about behaviour where violence is not tolerated, unless it is justified as an action with noble intention (McMahan, 2002). Hence, from a moral perspective, defence and self-defence tend to be acceptable motivations to act violently.

According to the just world hypothesis, anyone who harms another person should be punished. However, this would not necessarily apply to someone defending a victim, because essentially they would be acting from their altruism, rather than from a place of malicious intent (Lerner, 1980). It was further emphasised by participants that conditions which legitimise causing harm to a perpetrator involve threat or harm to a vulnerable person, and when rape or sexual violation is committed. Participants were observed to be intrigued by the imagery of picturing themselves acting violently and/or torturing, and killing a perpetrator of sexual violence. This was a particularly interesting contrast to the manner in which, throughout the FGDs, mob-justice was considered to be unlawful, and participants were of the opinion that this type of mass action was intolerable, inhumane and an unproductive abuse of power (see section 4.3.3). It can be deduced that society places value on the lives of elderly people as people who need to be protected regardless of the measures that need to be taken to implement this.

Young children were also described as defenceless and more prone to becoming victims of different forms of violence. This is predominantly because children are under the guardianship of their caregivers, and they are less able to protect themselves (Kaldine, 2012a). The excerpt below describes an incident that a participant shared about being a victim of sexual assault.

Participant 8: Yoh, especially young ones. I was also victim at a young age and I couldn't speak up until I was grown. So, it was like I was scared because my grandmother told me how to be as a girl child so I felt like she's going to say it's my fault. So I kept it to myself. And I was embarrassed to talk about so. As children, we don't have a voice. And we don't have enough protection. You know what's worse, neh, you send me next door to go ask for sugar, and you don't know that that five seconds, that person is putting their finger inside me, you understand? Literally you're thinking "no mntanam, ngim'gadile" [I have guarded my child]. *You're watching at spaces that you think are prone to me being abused or whatever. Kanti* [but] *you don't know that your makhelwane* [neighbour] *that you're sending me to for that one second is busy with his finger inside me.*

At the time of the incident, the participant could not report it because she was both a child and a girl. Her sense of insecurity was fuelled by gendered expectations of her, and she believed that she would be blamed for what had happened. This is not uncommon in society, as responsibility is often placed on women to take precaution to ensure that they are not sexually violated (Kiguwa, 2019). This is reflective of how patriarchal systems and masculinities perpetuate oppression against women. The neighbour capitalised on her age and his gender to violate her, with the confidence that he would not be exposed, which, according to Jewkes, et al., (2005) is common due to practises of sexual coercion that persist across South Africa.

The above statement also illustrates the complexities of sexual assault in young children where they are taken advantage of due to their vulnerability. Typically, vulnerability is associated with a sense of revere, and a command for preferential treatment and protection. In the incident above, the child was violated specifically because it was known that she was defenceless, and she didn't have a voice (Jewkes, et al., 2005). Child abuse is elaborated upon in the extract below:

Participant 9: Children can be like abused both by men and also by women. Whatever you say, children are always victims. I still stand on the manner of verbal abuse and, and it's something that literally is ignored. What our parents tell us, it stays with us (noise). I'm not saying leave us…I've seen Africans you go like, when you're a mom…you're abusing the kids because possibly you'd be far with your life.

In the statement above, the participant was explaining how parents can become abusive towards their children. This abuse was explained to be a projection on the children due to the responsibility (or burden) that comes with raising a child. The participant was referring to how a parent can feel that their child is one of the reasons that they have not been able to enhance their quality of life, or that the presence of a child has prohibited them from exploring different avenues. This tends to be the narrative in many situations where children are unplanned. The parent projects their unaccomplished life attempts or unfulfilled desires onto the child, by acting out violently (physical and verbal abuse) against the child (Motz, 2014). In these situations, a child, having had no choice about being born, becomes a victim and a liability in the situation.

The two previous excerpts laid emphasis on children being defenceless and voiceless. It can be deduced that regardless of the circumstance, participants believed that violence against

children cannot be justified. It was further posited that as a result of ongoing domestic violence, a child may start to act violently towards other people in different social and educational environments like schools, and social clubs. This intergenerational trauma results in a cycle of violence where the victim becomes a perpetrator in an endeavour to reclaim their power, and violence transitions from one person to the next in society.

Participant 2: …And it also goes to us children. We can say our mothers and our fathers verbally arguing I took it from home. But some of the things that my mom directly says to me, sometimes it goes like "ngubani [who] *from school is going to pay for this one"? (laughter) Sometimes I just become violent to other people because of what my mom said. Maybe I firstly hear it from my dad calling me a bitch, and then next thing I'll be like calling someone else from school a bitch. Like, it goes on and on (agreement).*

This type of violence tends to manifest in educational spaces where students become victims of the actions of other students. Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) provides a holistic way of conceptualising the shift from victim to perpetrator. A student may bring the violent elements of their family system into the educational system by being aggressive or abusive to other students. These moments then form parts of the collective experiences of students. This does not justify the violent behaviour, but helps to provide the understanding of how children are subject to various forms of violence. Often the perpetrator in school violence tends to be identified in collaboration with the other systems that contribute to their actions, thus providing an explanation for why children are perceived to be exposed to violence in many spaces, and when they too become perpetrators.

Elaborating further on identities that are considered to be vulnerable in society, it was discussed that people living with a form of disability (often referred to as different ability) also tend to be victimised. People with disabilities are categorised as vulnerable because they tend to struggle in society, partly due to the loss of some form of ability, and partly due to the loss of some form of human interaction or accessibility to various spaces (Barker & Murray, 2013). Participants spoke about disability mainly in relation to what are considered to be attractive physical features in an infant. This discussion ventured into participants' justification of when and why infants with disabilities tend to be rejected by their parents.

Participant 1: I, I would, I would be really sad if my child came home with a head like this (gestures: unconventional head shape).

Based upon the above, it was implied that certain types of deformities are considered to be undesirable. An incident was raised by a participant about the prevalence and motives of parents intentionally switching babies at birth in hospitals because they would prefer to have a boy instead of a girl. The conversation that emerged presented participants' perspectives of babies who are born with disabilities.

Participant 2: Put yourself, put yourself, put yourself in her shoes and if it's you knowing that you, eh you, at the hospital and they told you that you gave birth to a baby boy. And you got a, are you going to…
Participant 1: I think it's better than a disabled child…
Participant 2: What? What's wrong with a disabled child?
Participant 1: Now your child has a nose like this (gestures) they have this…
Participant 3: Now that's a bad person if you say that.
Participant 1: They have a head like this, they have dyslexia, they have this, they have that. You have to do everything, there's special conditions, they don't grow. They're this meaty, they have a big head, hhayi guys…
Participant 4: So, it is better for you to get someone's child?
Participant 1: Ya, I'd rather. I'd rather that.

Though it is typically perceived to be controversial and immoral, it was ascertained that some people would rather consider not having a child at all than raise their child with a disability. From the extraction above, it could be deduced that people would consider switching their baby with another parent if they discovered that the baby had some form of disability or deformity.

Participant 3: Okay. So now this girl has a girl marked as a boy. That means you'd be cool if that also happened to you
Participant 1: I am saying between these two scenarios, I'd rather have the child that's not mine than raise my child who is (gestures deformity)

The above discussions are examples of how society places importance on disability as an inferior form of human status. There were mixed perspectives on the scenarios, however, it was

expressed that disabled lives could easily be discarded of because they do not fit into the mould of how society presents the optimum human body. Considering how often children and adults with disabilities become vulnerable to neglect and violence, this is an issue in society. The above discussions allude to how disability may cause people to be regarded as less human, or less accessible to basic human rights, like being raised in one's biological home, or gaining access to social, occupational, and educational spaces (Barker & Murray, 2013).

4.3.3. Vigilantism: If You Live by the Sword, You Die by the Sword

In South Africa, vigilantism has been discussed extensively as a form of collective violence. It serves as a system of justice for when security agencies are not meeting the needs of communities. In this section, participants discussed vigilantism and the contexts in which people are considered to be victims or perpetrators. Participants presented their impressions about when vigilante action is justified, as well as the social performance that ensues in a case of mob justice. The social performance of vigilantism refers to the statement that vigilantes are presenting to the public through their actions. These actions are consistent with the just world perspective that the violent actions that are meted to alleged criminals are a consequence of their own criminal and violent nature (Lerner, 1980). When vigilante groups apprehend criminals in public, they are making a statement to the public that the criminal "deserves" to be punished for their actions, and their violent behaviour trumps their human status.

Participants had conflicting views about the actions of vigilantes. This was observed to be due to the differing level of exposure that they had to vigilante acts in their various communities. The statement below reflects upon the limited resources that some communities may have to follow prescribed legal processes for apprehending perpetrators of criminal behaviour. It provides insight into how vigilantism is justified as an acceptable form of violence in some contexts.

Participant 16: I was looking at this as well, where, whether it's ok or not and, I was thinking about how, if there is no other form of justice, because obviously you don't want this person who is just robbing people to run around. But if there is no other form of justice, like the police aren't being effective, there has to be another measure...if you take it into your own hands.

Community policing can be explored for its relevance as a social performance against violent behaviour. The scenes in which mob justice is enacted, tend to display the perpetrator as a trophy, or success story. The manner in which many victims of vigilantism are punished is a bold statement to society, and anyone who may be considering the same path of crime or violence. "Victims" of vigilantism tend to be stoned to death, or burnt alive in public spaces where onlookers are privy to the "award ceremony" (Martin, 2012). In these moments of triumph, vigilante leaders are also identified as a form of protection service in their communities, and the perpetrator-turned-victim is viewed to have received the punishment that was due to them. One cannot ignore that social capital is gained, at the expense of the life of an alleged perpetrator and possible tyrant in one's community.

Support of vigilantism is founded upon a sense of insecurity about one's environment. In every community in South Africa, there is one form or other of violence, and part of the objective of community members and law enforcement agencies is to keep violence under control (Schuberth, 2013). When the government does not appear to meet the needs of people (as cited by Participant 2 in relation to vignette F1[16]) it is often found to be acceptable for community members to exert violence to manage social spaces.

Participant 2: I support mob justice in this scenario because we need something severe and strong to punish people so that they can obey. Otherwise taking them to prison has seemed ineffective for a long time. So, in places where people know that a lot of people will attack them if they try to rob someone, they tend to do it less. So, in this scenario, I do support the mob justice.

The participant above alluded to how a potential perpetrator may refrain from act violently if they are aware that their actions could result in harm to themselves. This was an important contribution as it reflected on how human beings have a drive for survival, and how this influences ones sense of morality, motivates behaviour and shifts the positions that people choose to occupy in society. Sometimes that drive may be fuelled by self-preservation where people act according to the dictates of their communities. Other times it may place a person in a position where they prioritise themselves over the survival of other people, and act violently (Freire, 2005; Stevens, 2016).

[16] See Appendix F1: Vigilantism

Violence tends to be perceived as a negative, oppressive and an intolerable characteristic of society. Nonetheless, it is a feature of society, and how it is conceptualised in relation to social order is influenced by the manner in which human identities are constructed when they are involved in violence (Stevens, 2008; Butler, 2009). Participants were asked about which contexts they perceived that violence is justifiable in. Various themes emerged which provided suggestions about how the value of human life is reliant on contexts, human actions, and the identities that people embody. In the extracts below, participants stated that violence was justifiable in situations where it was acted on a perpetrator to protect a victim.

Participant 12: Self-defence.

Participant 13: I think just defence in general because like with the mob justice you want to go and help other people you can't just go protect someone.

The above statements allude to how the motivations of violent actors serve as a determinant for whether self-defence is justifiable. Self-defence and promoting security in a community were mentioned as acceptable forms of violence as they had altruistic and moral underpinnings. This is drawn from what society constitutes as morally acceptable behaviour. When asked about whether they would participate in mob justice, participants responded with the following:

Participant 8: I feel like I would, I'm not afraid. Why are you raping children, you must die? I, I'm, no honestly, I know it sounds like 'hawu [exclamation]*, you're probably…you're a softy', I feel like I could kill you.*

Participant 9: Maybe if you just shoot them, then you get off easy do you know…
Participant 10: No, no, no, not shoot to hurt, shoot to kill. You deserve…
Participant 8: Before killing, torture.
Participant 9: Torture, torture, yeah
Participant 10: If you kill them, it's like you basically like okay you've hurt so many children but, but that's okay.

The statements above provided insight into how society shifts their moral convictions about violence. If provided with the opportunity to inflict harm on a perpetrator, participants stated that they too would act violently. These responses were indicative of how violence is embedded in society despite that people often try to distance themselves from it. It is often considered to be an

act that is reserved for a certain quality of aggressive or malicious people. For example, people often refer to a rapist, or someone who harms vulnerable people as “an animal” or “a monster”. This comes from the idea that human beings are reluctant to be affiliated with violent perpetrators because violence is considered to be acted by those who are less than human (Agamben, 1998).

Based upon the statements above, participants were accepting of the role of violent actors as a form of defence. They justified this defence as a moral action against the inhumane behaviour of the initial perpetrator. They were further observed to justify retaliation by expressing that it was important for a perpetrator to know how it felt to be violated. These statements imply that violence can be framed as a moral act if it serves to avenge or protect people who are considered to be vulnerable. This is elaborated upon further in the excerpt below:

Participant 4: That’s true. And then that’s why I feel like if everyone feels like it’s justifiable, like with the whole thing an eye for eye, like hey. If you, um, cross the boundary to rape someone then that, people feel like it gives them the right to take that and be like listen if you feel you can do that then let me show you how it feels, you know. […] I’m not saying it’s right. (noise)

Another participant justified the punishment of a perpetrator, but queried what it would mean if there was later evidence to show that they had accused the wrong person.

Participant 6: So that makes me wonder if you now use violence on someone and you beat them up and you physically injure them and it’s now found out that oh they didn’t do the crime. How do you justify that? Because I would then, if I had been the one committing the violence, I would then see myself rather as the vigilante, or someone who is doing justice as now just as bad as what I was trying to protect.

Essentially, this participant’s statements were engaging with the legal construction of a perpetrator as someone who has caused harm to another person, and has been found guilty. These were the people who were considered worthy of vigilante action. There was a consciousness of associating a person’s worth with how they behaved. These discussions implied strongly that perpetrators have been constructed in society as less valuable than the average human. By questioning whether one was guilty or not, the participant was insinuating that a perpetrator (as a human identity) deserved to be subjected to violence as a form of punishment, and the people who

were meting out this violence were acting within their moral parameters by punishing the perpetrator, and maintaining social order (Thomas, 2012).

Providing an alternative view, and delving further into the concept of morality, a participant also raised the notion that violence is cyclical, whether one felt that their actions were justifiable or not:

Participant 15: …I was just thinking with justifiable violence. Say someone rapes your child then you go and attack that person, but then they were someone to someone else, and so what if that someone else comes and attacks you again, and then it's just like an ongoing thing.

This statement reflects on the power that violence has to capitalise on the human ability to connect emotionally, and influence behaviour in society. The participant alluded to the concept of emotional attachment to a perpetrator as a signifier of their human value. This implies that a relative or associate of a perpetrator may not experience the accused perpetrator as "an animal", because they do not perceive them as less than human due to their emotional or psychological investment in the whole person. In those moments of retaliation, as described by Participant 15 above, a perpetrator's relative would have been acting on the human value that they had ascribed to the accused regardless of whether they believed or were concerned that the accused had acted violently or not. They would then also justify their own violent actions as revenge. Hence it can be deduced that violence in itself tends to be motivated by how someone makes meaning of the life of another person as threatening, or deserving of harm.

Based upon the FGDs, revenge was legitimised as an act that is noble and morally acceptable if there is a worthy cause. The narration below describes the manner in which a community can come together to avenge the harm or death of other community members. In these situations, the perpetrator can be perceived to have lost the status of "human" as a result of their own violent actions. In many incidents in South Africa, the gruesome murder of a gangster or murderer has been celebrated by community members due to the extent of fear and harm that they may have inflicted on members of their community (Martin, 2012). It was echoed below that it may occur that family members become implicated in the violence due to the actions of a relative. In the excerpt below, the participant described how the actions of a perpetrator need not be considered in isolation.

Participant 2: What's happening is they are going to your house because they know you are killing people. They went to the people and say this is your son? Yes, ok come out. Did this guy kill who, who and who? Fine. Now you [they] *gonna kill me too, that's how it's done.*

Vigilante action, which is aimed at promoting safety also tends to strain relationships between community members because violence is a complex commodity (Hamby, 2011; Bowman et al., 2015). As human beings exist within communities, their actions tend to impact people within their immediate relational systems (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). This then renders the people in one's micro and macrosystems susceptible to violence or punishment for violence that they did not commit. The participant below mentioned the fact that a perpetrator is still a human being, who has other relationships. This discussion was in connection to how a vigilante group can apprehend someone who is presumed to be causing trouble in the community, and bystanders or family members become exposed to the violence that is being meted on the perpetrator. In this context, the participant below was reflecting on the transmission of victim and perpetrator positions, by questioning who the victims were and who the perpetrators were in these interactions.

Participant 1: We also think that most of the time with people that are perpetrators, we don't look at them as people who also have human rights, so uh there is that dilemma. Like she said that is it right or wrong? To them it's right, you know? Ya!
Participant 4: It is a grey area. I also agree because on the receiving end of that, well let's just say I'm witnessing a member of my family, my boyfriend, my husband and my brother, who's being mob justiced and I identify some of the community members as people I know, people I spent my time with every day. Interact with. It's a sense of betrayal in a way, like guys, but how could you? You know the situation at home, was this the only solution for, for us to handle this?

Participants were alluding to how the positions of perpetrator and victim become intertwined, as families of perpetrators were identified to also become traumatised due to exposure to mob justice. Through the justified actions of the vigilante groups and their supporters, the moral underpinnings that foster a sense of community were set aside. This gave rise to the understanding that justifiable acts of violence also worked in ways that oppressed those who may not have committed the act. Hence, some participants did not support the act of vigilantism. It was mentioned that people tolerate violence against "bad people", but it still did not justify the violent actions of people against a perpetrator. This is substantiated in the comments below:

Participant 12: Like, I get like some people are just like, "he deserved it" because he was maybe like, maybe a bad guy, like whatever he did in his days, yah but, I mean no.
Participant 11: No there is no way to justify it.

It was also identified during a conversation between participants that violent action against women was perceived differently to violence enacted upon men. A participant narrated their experience of witnessing a woman who was at the receiving end of mob justice. She was being assaulted for stealing from a shop.

Participant 7: … When we get there, we went straight to the tills. They were beating up this woman, like "you're so beautiful for what you're doing. Taking [take] it out!" I was like, "what are you doing to this lady?" Like literally I was, nearly said like, "stop it". It was men hitting that woman. "Hhayi [exclamation] *she's stealing this one". They took her at the back to…*

The perpetrator's gender and beauty were cited as reasons for why the behaviour of the vigilante group was unacceptable. Ironically, it appeared that the men who were assaulting her were also angered by her actions due to how they also described her as beautiful. From this narration, it was deduced that one's external appearance was an indicator of how society expected one to behave. This implies that a physically attractive person tends to be attributed character traits that society considers to be valuable, or of good standing. This is consistent with attribution theory which explicates that people have perceptions about various social actors others, and use those perceptions to make meaning of the events that happen to people (Heider, 1958; Myers & Twenge, 2018).

During the narration of the incident, the researcher observed that the participant appeared disturbed by the situation. The narration was met with a response from other participants expressing intolerance of the men's behaviour, particularly because the vigilante acts were being exerted on a woman.

Participant 8: But that's still an assault. They can't take the law into their own hands whether a woman was stealing…
Participant 9: But you said that it's okay if they are doing it to a guy (agreement…noise and laughter)
Participant 8: It's okay, you're right

Participant 10: Because we are saying you know, punishment here, men must… (laughter) and when we talk punishment it's for both men and women…

The discussion above provided insight into how participants made meaning of violence. It was strongly implied that violence committed on a woman was considered to be morally unacceptable. Despite that they eventually reached a consensus about equal types of punishment for both men and women in the situation, the discussions alluded to how gender plays an important role in determining whether (or how) someone should be punished for their actions.

Elaborating on the action of vigilantism, participants spoke about the motivations for intervening during a violent attack. This was discussed in relation to the bystander effect and the social expectation that someone will come to the rescue of another person in that moment of need (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). A participant narrated their experience in an upmarket area in Johannesburg.

Participant 15: …we saw this person I mean, this person must have had money, must have been an inside job, because there was a car in front of him and a car behind him and they like blocked this person. And then you see like, like I think four guys coming out with huge guns and they're like banging on the door and this person had like kids and stuff. And I told the Uber driver, I was like, "stop, stop, let's try and help", and he literally like just sped up. He was like it's none of, it's none of your business. That's the thing, it's so sad because you could have helped them, but instead of helping them you act like nothing happened.

Analysing the above excerpt in relation to mob justice, the principle of community interventions was raised. It was discussed that the intention or motivation of the people who were mediating between victim and perpetrator contributed towards how they justified the vigilante action. Participant 15 emphasised that there were children in danger, implying that that was reason enough to intervene. As vulnerable people, children tend to evoke empathy in society. It is often expected that one must risk their life to protect a child (Kaldine, 2012a). This alludes to how society tends to respond to age as a characteristic of vulnerability, where children by virtue of their age are considered vulnerable, and should always be protected.

Participant 13: You should have just called the police.

Participant 15: Like honestly I wanted to and he was like, "it's none of your business" and he just drove off, and I was like, are you joking we could have helped somebody. The kids, think of the kids like.

The saying "it's none of your business" in this context was rooted in self-preservation, and recognising one's own life as valuable. The Uber driver was protecting himself from possible harm, making a conscious and rational decision to ensure his wellbeing was maintained. By emphasising that someone must think about the harm that could come to the children, it was assumed that the Uber driver would have considered the lives of the children as more valuable than his own, which (through his actions), he did not. This was supported by Participant 15 in the statement below.

Participant 14: That's beautiful, I mean nobody thinks like that, no one. Why would you, why would I put myself in danger? Did you see the guns? There's two cars. Me stop my car? Listen I'm sorry, I wish I could help you and your kids, but my kids, need me at home. It's, it's, but it's sad. It's very, very sad, but it's, you have to think for yourself first.

It is uncertain whether Participant 15 would have intervened in the situation, but there was an overt expression of empathy for the family that was in danger. It was further discussed that participants' ideas of intercepting violence differed based upon the community in which the events took place. As this narration occurred in an upper class community, the participant encouraged and justified the active intervention of onlookers (they were not referred to as a mob). On the other hand, it was presumed that the scenario in the vignette (F1) was located in a township, and the legitimacy of the actions of the onlookers (mob) were questionable. Drawing from the discussions, it appeared that the geographical location, and the socio-economic status of the people who lived in those spaces impacted how participants viewed the actions of a collective intervention as legitimate or illegitimate. Based upon the conversation below, it was presented that in a community like Sandton, it was acceptable, and justifiable that a group should intervene if a person was in danger.

Participant 11: Like if you're in Sandton and you scream juba…

Participant 12: Juba, no I doubt you'd get any help.

Participant 11: I was just saying that if you, like if, like a person driving had to see this, like us hooting and they would be like, okay this person is trying to help, let's do the same. Then like, a

bunch of cars will start hooting and try and scare of these people and they'll eventually leave and the person who was about to get robbed will be saved. I think it just depends on where you are.
Participant 13: But, does that, does that make difference? It's still viewed as a person who is not involved trying to do your part in justice. So in a sense it's still, it's still mob justice if you help.

In an endeavour to justify whether community mass intervention was acceptable conduct in society, participants' views varied due to diversity in class, exposure or experience with mob action, and access to justice systems. Vigilantism tends to occur in many lower socioeconomic communities due to the lack of trust that people have in police. Often, police are experienced as instigators of violence or a threat to the safety of minority groups (Schuberth, 2013). Despite that vigilantism is illegal and controversial, it is still practised across South Africa. It is stated that most people who participate in mob justice are not typically violent people (Martin, 2012). However, the need to protect oneself and one's environment serves as a motivator for a group of people to inflict harm on another person. At one's point of desperation it can be hypothesised that behaviour that is socially acceptable is more readily substituted with violence.

This sub-theme provides an overview of the complexities of vigilantism as a feature of South African society. Exploring violence in context is vital as this provides a nuanced understanding of the impact it has on the people involved. Morally, violence is not a solution to any problem. However, in society violence has been used to suppress others for centuries in very primitive and inhumane ways. In contemporary society, the prevalence of violence can be located in the need to enforce safety and a sense of security in some communities. Furthermore, there tends to also be a legitimisation of violence that is enacted on people who are considered to be inherently violent. It emerged that people who act violently or engage in criminal behaviour are deserving of any violence that they may later experience as a result of their own conduct.

4.3.4. Virtual Identities: Online Profiles as Unregulated and Unaccountable Human Lives

Globalisation has facilitated the interconnectedness of people who are continents apart. This has made room for people to enter each other's spaces via social media platforms, and have virtual lifestyles with people one may never physically meet (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This has

also facilitated the expansion of community as people are able to engage with others with whom they share cultures and identities, when there is no shared geographical space.

Reflecting on diversity and the geographical distance that exists in virtual spaces, the reality of human life is somewhat suspended in many social media interactions. Online profiles exist as a diversion from traditional human positions and roles, permitting only an inference of the person who exists beyond the avatar or home page. These disembodied profiles allow people to create a persona that they may aspire for, that they do not ordinarily have access to. In doing so, people are able to denounce identities that society has conferred upon them. People may be dissatisfied with the way that identities have been socially constructed and categorised, however, these restrictions can be discarded off on social media platforms (Brown & Gershon, 2017).

Virtual spaces further allow people to express themselves freely, without the pressure to filter the thoughts and actions which are not "politically correct". It emerged in participants' talk that the value of human life in virtual spaces is unregulated. The limited ability to regulate profilers' tweets, statuses, feeds, timelines, pictures, and videos at any given moment allows for a social "free-for-all" where people are not guaranteed to be held accountable for their speech or their responses. Opportunity is plentiful for society to express their real thoughts about themselves, and others without the burden of being politically correct, or socially desirable. These expressions can include hate speech, offers of support in a crisis, or encouragement for people to act violently towards themselves or others. Whichever response is opted for, virtual friends/followers are not obligated to take ownership of the repercussions.

Performative violence takes place on social media's unboundaried platforms. As people interact, their attributions about aggressors in cyberspace tend to be based on what is presented in a profile, permitting only inferences about the form which the aggressor is perceived to possess. This is reflective of how society has created identities in a manner that attributions are made about profilers' violent actions regardless of whether or not there is a physical body which fits those descriptors. An individual can communicate their intention to harm themselves or another person to all of the people in their social network. Virtual reality serves as a world where one can create and promote their identities, express their interests, advocate, and behave in a generally unfiltered manner with fairly limited regulation (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). The attributions and value placed

upon incidents that emerge on virtual platforms are reflective of how society has constructed certain identities to be of value, or easy to discard.

One participant narrated an incident that occurred on Facebook in 2018. In a discussion, a lecturer from a university in South Africa described how he had had thoughts of raping a toddler for whom he was a guardian (Hyman, 2018). Participants lamented that people on social media networks become exposed to violence through interaction. It was elaborated that his feelings for wanting to violate the child were caused by his depression (Hyman, 2018). This explanation was justified by some as a depiction of his state of ill psychological health. However, his ability and boldness to post the commentary on a global platform was indicative of the social performance that exists in virtual spaces. As expressed in the comments below, virtual spaces foster an uncertainty of who people are, what is real and what is not.

Participant 7: With, with this daily life we're living here. With the decisions that we make sometimes, we, we, we don't consult with our real selves, sometimes we conform to what someone else has said so I can also make fun of it. I can also say something strange. Okay let's just say he, he does do it like, will he like, after saying it, literally….

The comment above alluded to a disconnection that one's virtual world catalyses from one's "real" world. Progressively, it becomes easier for a person to become disconnected from oneself, and subscribe to the irregularities of a virtual, and borderless world (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This was evident in this situation where one can presume that the lecturer would not have announced his violent nature, if at the very least, due to the impact that it would have had on his social and academic status.

Participant 6: …and he's actually going to go do it and we'll feel bad for not trying to do anything about it…

Through his comments, the lecturer spread the dread of knowing that a child could be harmed. He further left social media followers/friends with the burden of not being able to intervene. Typically, when someone is made aware that a child is in danger, it is expected that one will make attempts to prevent the violence from being enacted (Kaldine, 2012a). The ability to act in an emergency in virtual space is limited, particularly when one does not know factual

information about their cyber friend. The trauma and burden of not being able to intervene in a crisis situation that occurs on a virtual platform infiltrates into people's everyday life journeys. Intervening is not always feasible due to the geographical distances that can exist between virtual "friends" or "followers". In the context of violence, it can become more apparent that the people who one interacts with are only as real and human as the information that they provide.

Based upon his actions, one can hypothesise that his motives for posting his difficulties, and justifying them through constructs of masculinity and the lack of emotional support from society were also indicative of his moral understanding of sexual dominance and consent. In his thought processing, the minor was positioned as a subject of violence and a location for him to project his depression in exchange for sexual gratifications of paedophilia and dominance. These were all parts that were not presented in the descriptors under an avatar.

Another incident that was raised by participants in connection with the social media performance of violence involved a young lady who posted on her social network that she was going to commit suicide (IOL, 2018).

Participant 5: She even put the time zone [frame] to, she put it for herself. Died, born this date, died on this date. And we were all liking. People were liking on social media, she, she killed…
Participant 4: ….they encouraged…

In this incident, participants reflected on how, through social performance she announced her suicide. She had planned her death, and it appeared that a critical part of the process included making a statement to society. She had previously disclosed how she had been a victim of a sexual violation, and did not receive the required support from the relevant systems. As an advocate for social justice and equality, her suicide may have been a statement to society about how the lives, and dignity of victims of sexual violence tend to be minimised. It is not uncommon for victims of sexual assault to be interrogated about the context within which they were violated, or the relationship that they had with the accused person. It was cited by IOL (2018) that her decision to take her life was due to the events surrounding her assault. She may have been assuming a position of martyrdom. Her bold statements and suicide were announced publicly in the hope to gain the attention of other victims. This may have also been an attempt to hold the relevant justice systems accountable for their failure to act justly. Her actions on social media were received with mixed

responses like people laughing, and others encouraging her to commit suicide. Typically, society has placed expectations on how people conduct themselves in public domains. These are applicable when placed with face-to-face interaction. However, in many virtual spaces, the rules are not rigid, and people are at liberty to express themselves with very few restrictions.

Participant 4: Yeah, the other girl said she was going to kill herself and she did kill herself
Participant 2: …that one even wrote. She, she was writing. People were even liking…
Participant 3: …laughing…

This was a reflection of the blurred line that exists between real life interactions and interactions on social media, as people were not held accountable for their actions on social media. Hence people have a tendency to act without thought to consequence, and how their comments could impact the next person. In these situations, when a victim is expressing their despondency, as was the lecturer and the young lady, people in their social media network may have acted as perpetrators by ridiculing or shaming them.

The virtual spaces within which an individual interacts provides insight into the internal self-images that one holds, and the places that they desire to explore. However, one's virtual identity may not bear any similarities with the person who exists beyond that profile. To a certain extent, the true identity of a person may be depicted in what is presented on social media platforms, as these are the features that they would prefer that people interact with. This is where the discrepancy between real and virtual human existence becomes contested (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This is viewed in the above extract where participants made mention of social network followers encouraging a person to commit suicide at a critical moment in their lives. The contributions that one makes in critical moments, can be considered to be reflective of who they are when they must act instinctively, or they do not need to apply filters. One's willingness to participate in cyber-bullying provides insight into one's willingness to act violently when there is the prospect that they may not be held accountable for their actions. This gives rise to the understanding that the propensity to withhold hate speech or violent enactments appears to be an indication of how members of society aim to preserve their own identities, rather than the tendency of wanting to protect the "other". This is often achieved through virtual identities where one is not compelled to present their real self.

4.4. Institutionalised Power Roles as Determinants of Human Value

Power holds an important role in societal structures. It determines who is allowed into spaces, and who is not given access to particular resources (Bourdieu, 1987; Agamben, 1998). It is this exclusion from social and political activity that is systematically violent and tends to diminish the quality of one's life journey. The institutionalised power dynamics in society facilitate the processes that include and exclude people. They tend to determine which lives are "at the bottom of the food chain" and how irrelevant they become in society when they are violated (Freire, 2005). The sub-themes below discuss some identities which hold power over others, and the interactions between them that become violent. These include the relationships between Police personnel and commercial sex workers, faith leaders and their congregants, and parents and their children. The institutional roles below are examples of human lives that are considered to be superior, and those that are considered to be inferior, and how violent enactments are considered to be legitimised on certain human bodies.

4.4.1. Police Officers and their Power over Commercial Sex Workers

Many theories have emerged exploring the reasons why people embark on commercial sex as a source of income generation. The 'why' and the 'how' of commercial sex work are critical discussions that need to take place in a society that has practised patriarchy and the erotic subjection of the female body for centuries (Welldon, 2004; De Beauvoir, 2012). However, delving further into this, it is vital that scholars and advocates do not deviate from the reality that commercial sex is an avenue in which people of all genders are identifying as a source of income. Feminist discourse has provided various arguments about the decriminalisation of sex work, and the exploitation of commercial sex workers globally (Jeffreys, 2009; Scheibe et al., 2016).

Sex workers often become abused or violated by people within their communities as it is perceived that they do not care about what happens to their bodies (Jeffreys, 2009). This sub-theme presents the discussion about violence enacted on a body due to one's choice to exercise agency and autonomy for purposes of income generation. The narrative about sex work in the eyes of various institutions tends to be centred on immorality and degradation of (normally) the female body. This narrative is founded upon society's history of constructing the female body as a site of submission, where sexual intercourse is an act which women should engage in for purposes of

pleasuring their partner, or for conception (Welldon, 2004; De Beauvoir, 2012; Bareket et al., 2018). This provides a paltry and somewhat perverted explanation of why perpetrators (like police officers) tend to feel justified when they "punish" sex workers for their seemingly immoral work. This is reflected in the excerpt below.

Participant 7: …but for the question you asked, when is uh violence justified and on her xenophobia point and on homophobia. Also…I brought it up earlier, with sex workers it's like yah they deserve it. What are they doing? What, what are they doing in the streets, you know?

In South Africa, sex work is still illegal, and the process of decriminalising sex work has been long and arduous (Jeffreys, 2009; Richter et al., 2010). In 2010, due to the FIFA World Cup, conversations on the matter intensified around decriminalising commercial sex which could serve as a tourist attraction and an avenue through which to boost the economy (Bonthuys, 2012). The nature of these discussions were also representative of power dynamics that persist, and how discourse shifts according to the dictates of systems of governance. They amplify the reality that the body of the commercial sex worker in this context is not their own until the government believes that their occupation will be regulated, and beneficial to broader society from an economic and a public health perspective (Richter et al., 2010; Bonthuys, 2012).

Participant 4: So, and also with the whole decriminalization thing, the state is really dragging its feet. Nothing is being done because I mean if we decriminalise sex work, they wouldn't be subjected to a lot of things that they face right now. So it's like, so yah it's justified because they are sex workers and stuff. So yah!

Due to the nature of their work, commercial sex workers can be considered as vulnerable people who are often targets of violence. The location of the work in order to access customers requires one to expose oneself to spaces and times which can be threatening to one's safety. This is a reflection of how the commercial sex worker's body is devalued, and a viable site for violence, particularly rape and physical assault (Richter et al., 2010; Bonthuys, 2012).

Globally, there are numerous dialogues that discuss the legalisation and human rights of commercial sex workers. Despite that there is consideration for the humanness of the commercial sex worker, there exists a moral judgement across society that tends to be expressed both verbally and physically. The exchange of sexual intercourse for financial gain as the nature of one's work

is considered to be undesirable and therefore remains a crime in South Africa (Jeffreys, 2009). There tends to be the assumption that performance of sexual activity for income generation invalidates a sex worker's agency during those interactions (De Beauvoir, 2012). Hence, in these situations the human value of the commercial sex worker becomes devalued by the work of the sex worker. Furthermore, as this work is considered to be an illegal act, the sex worker is often denied the option of legal justice because the action of their work goes against the dictates of political society (Jeffreys, 2009; Richter et al., 2010; Bonthuys, 2012).

The concept of the commercial sex worker acting illegally in South Africa implies that in this context, the body in which they work is acting against the systems of governance that society has put in place. Drawing from the discussions about illegal behaviour, particularly in relation to when one is a perpetrator, it can be implied that the sex worker in their interactions is acting as a perpetrator – someone who commits illegal and immoral acts. When violence is enacted on a perpetrator, the empathy is reduced, and the ability to mourn the loss of agency and human dignity is removed (Butler, 2009). In these contexts of violence, the sex worker is deprived of the right to mourn the loss of their body, as it is not allowed to express its agency in society (Motz, 2014; Kiguwa, 2019). In response to the researcher's question about when violence is considered to be justified, Participant 8 reflected on the issue of sexual violation of commercial sex workers.

Participant 8: And I think also with certain bodies, matter and others don't. In terms of like sex workers you know. We don't hear about how sex workers are violated especially by the people that are supposed to be protecting us, like the police, cause police do violate sex workers. We never have those conversation, you never see those stories in the media.

It was mentioned by Participant 8 that media platforms are either not aware, or not concerned about the lives of sex workers, which gives rise to the question of whether those lives really matter to mainstream society. It was emphasised that due to the power relations between a sex worker and police officer, the sex worker's life was considered to be of inferior value. According to Manoek (2012), a prominent branch of society who perpetrate violence against commercial sex workers is the police force. This is reflective of how power that has been awarded by the state can be manipulate to perpetuate violence (Fanon, 1967). It is reported that many sex workers do not feel safe reporting violence to the police (Manoek, 2012). Sex workers become

exposed to physical and systemic violence due to their engagement in a sector of income generation that is illegal, and moreso because of the inability to report their violations.

Participant 7 described an experience where it was suspected that a sex worker assaulted a customer for non-payment of services. It was considered that non-payment is a common occurrence, and many sex workers are unable to report this to the police as their work is illegal.

Participant 7: …I had a cousin who was stabbed in, stabbed in, in, you know, in the throat. So, we found that, it's a guy neh? He had, he had this lady and then, in fact it was suspiciously maybe it was a prostitute. Then when times when, when he had to pay him (her), when he had to pay her then the money was not enough then (s)he took a knife (gestures)… stab him. (Shock)

The shock that was expressed by other participants was interpreted by the researcher to be a result of the disproportionality of the violence. Stabbing someone in the throat for not having sufficient funds to pay for the services could be considered to be excessive. However, it may also be a reflection of how sex workers may feel that they are constantly being disregarded in society. From the perspective of the stabbing, the commercial sex worker was acting as a perpetrator. However, it is imperative that the lived experiences, and the nature of sex work is taken into consideration when making moral judgments about their actions. The limited ability to follow the appropriate legal channels to report incidents of violation is predominantly due to the criminalised identity of a sex worker. Furthermore, sex workers are often aware of the possible re-victimised in these processes. Re-victimisation tends to be in the form of detainment into police custody, assault, and sexual violations. Thereafter, the channels that sex workers are able to engage with to escalate their violations becomes significantly reduced (Manoek, 2012).

As members of society who possesses limited social capital, commercial sex workers often become despondent in their search for justice. The reality that many sex workers are not privy to the constitutional rights of other people in the occupational context is dehumanising. It further communicates that the life and positionality of a sex worker is likened to that of someone who contravenes the law, and therefore is less valuable in the eyes of society. This narrative draws from moral reasoning, and the notion that people whose behaviour is considered to divert from the expectations of society can be devalued. This is further exacerbated by the violations that tend to

occur as a result of police brutality, and the reminder that hierarchies exist in society such that one may be denied access to justice as a result of the communities that they are affiliated with.

4.4.2. Faith Leaders as "Super Human"

Conversations about the identities and roles of perpetrators and victims in society provide the impression that there is not always a clear, and linear relationship between who acts and who is acted upon in the victim-perpetrator dyad. Attempting to explore intentionality in violent incidents from the premise that "action equates to perpetrator", and "recipient equates to victim" becomes complex. Various cases, in South African society have presented blurred lines with regards to when a victim is considered to be a co-conspirator with the perpetrator. In these incidents it appears that the identities and positionalities of the people involved matter. Thereafter society determines whether the violent actions are considered immoral or unacceptable acts on a human body.

Faith is a key characteristic of South African society. Engrained in religious dogma, cultural and traditional healing, and sorcery, the concept of faith stems from the belief in a system that often supersedes logic or western scientific laws (Carastathis, 2010). The South African landscape, with its diversity and ethnic heritage, has centuries of customary practices for wellness and spiritual upliftment that rely on divination and naturally derived therapies. The culture of faith or what is perceived to be "following blindly" is not a new phenomenon, and is fundamental when engaging in faith-based activity. This was raised during participants' discussions, with regards to how faith-based leaders have been implicated in violent activity against the people who they are supposed to be providing spiritual service to.

The role of a spiritual or religious leader in society often affords them power over their congregants and communities, once again reinforcing the notion that their identities are superior to those who they oversee because they are "chosen" (Erikson, 1985; Carastathis, 2010). It is often perceived that faith-based leaders have supernatural abilities, and their actions are uncontested by the people who converge towards them. It is from this premise that they may engage in violent and manipulative activity with the belief that they are unassailable. This is expressed in Participant 14's comment below.

Participant 14: How our people are being misled using the church. People are now being sprayed Doom in their eyes, fed snakes, all in the name of what religion and church is. It doesn't make sense, but let's not talk about that.

What is also significant in the comment above is the ending, "let's not talk about that". This is reflective of the unchallenged actions of many faith leaders by their congregants. This does not persist solely because congregants are unaware, but also because of the structures that dictate that their leaders hold an authority that cannot be challenged. It was discussed that religious structures have become oppressive to people, to the extent that spaces which have been traditionally sought for refuge, have become harmful as leaders exercise their power over help seekers. This is congruent with Erikson's concept of pseudospeciation (Erikson, 1985) which explicates how society is constantly being restructured into manmade hierarchies where some roles are validated as more superior than others. In South Africa, various unconventional items are being used as methods to provide healing or deliverance to people who converge in various faith based organisations[17]. This has raised controversy in South Africa's religious sector.

The power dynamic that emerges in these spaces is reflective of systemic violence and how it tends to oppress those who are desperate or have been previously disadvantaged (Freire, 2005). The manner in which the participant expressed that "it doesn't make sense" is indicative of some of the situations which are cult-like yet people are "willingly" joining queues to be cleansed with harmful substances like insecticides. This was discussed further with participants referring to the agency that congregants possess to decide to be part of a practise that may be harmful to their human bodies. Based upon the knowledge that one has the power to choose, and they choose certain potentially harmful environments, the discussion ensued about who the perpetrator really is when violence then ensues.

Based upon the participants' discussion below, it appeared that there was less empathy for people who were considered to be able to account for their actions, and anticipate the actions of others in their environments. In these situations, congregants were implicated in their own victimisation when they could have known better than to be put in positions where they were engaging in harmful behaviour with their faith leaders.

[17] In recent years, there have been various incidents in South Africa where religious leaders were alleged to have made congregants eat grass, sprayed doom in their eyes and mouths, and coerced them to eat snakes and millipedes. Some of the allegations have been dismissed as rumours and no legal action was taken

Participant 15: The perpetrator is the…
Participant 14: …the pastor…
Participant 15: The pastor feeding me the snake. I'm also my own perpetrator (laughs). Self-harm
Participant 16: Yes… (laughter)
Participant 15: You're also your own because you know…
Participant 16: Yes, because why do you eat that snake when you know that it's harmful

Typically, in these relational interactions, it is perceived by victim help-seekers that their faith leaders have a supernatural power over them which transcends natural standards. Hence, they tend to follow blindly with the hopes that the remedy is founded upon a divine understanding. The above excerpt illustrated that if an individual had knowledge and was aware of their autonomy, they were not vulnerable when violence was enacted upon them. In these situations, participants attributed blame to the perpetrator (faith leader) and proceeded to blame the victims who were believed to have contributed to their own victimhood, by engaging in dangerous behaviour. This is reiterated in the extract below.

Participant 15: So, you go and you open your eyes in front of the pastor and they Doom you…
Participant 16: You know they even fight to go in front (shock). They even fight!

Derived from concepts of agency and vulnerability, it was considered that vulnerability is a key contributor of whether someone is an agent of the violence enacted upon them (Lerner & Miller, 1978; Ross & Sicoly, 1979). Faith leaders, as human beings, are perceived to possess authority from a supernatural source. However, these leadership roles also exist as a result of power dynamics that are present in institutional roles, where hierarchies are imminent. In the discussion below, it was posited that under-aged, and desperate members of religious communities tend to become victims of power dynamics which manipulate, violate and oppress them. This was discussed in relation to the prominent trial of a pastor who is alleged to have trafficked and abused many young girls and women in South Africa (SABC News, 2018).

Participant 2: So, the victim in the Omotoso trial would have to be the girls because they were misled initially.
Participant 1: But, yeah because it must have been at a very young age…

Participant 3: She had no control of the situation. They were taken at a young age. At that age they're very vulnerable to anything that they are being told. (agreement)

The girls who have been cited in a rape and human trafficking case against a faith leader were estimated to have been from the ages of fourteen years old and above. The faith leader in this situation was considered to be manipulative in that he allegedly convinced people to bring girls into his home, luring them with prospects of an improved quality of life. It was discussed that he capitalised on power dynamics that have been upheld in many religious structures to act violently against the vulnerable (under-aged girls) and their families (SABC News, 2018).

Participant 2: And they're taken to a house, being misled and told that they would be singing. And then when they get to that house, other things happen and you inflict fear using the word of God. So you condition their line of thinking (agreement). You understand why they're being victimized…

The above comment also alludes to institutional violence that becomes amplified in situations of desperation. As people quest for an improved quality of life, they become vulnerable to enticement by perpetrators who have more access to resources. The outcomes of these endeavours are often dependent on the demands of the perpetrator, but can result in violence or harm upon a vulnerable person (Fanon, 1963). In this situation, the pursuit of a better life is alleged to have resulted in various sexual violations where young women and their parents became the victims (SABC News, 2018).

The excerpt below elaborates on this phenomenon further by example of another prominent case involving criminals who posed as religious leaders and introduced people into a cult. Traditionally, a cult is any form of religious or social system where there is unconventional worship of a person or idol. This interaction was referred to as a cult because of the power dynamics and the faith doctrine that lured people into a violent and crime riddled environment.

Participant 1: You know the same thing happened, I think in 20…2011, or something like that at Eastern Cape. This man had like seven sons and then out of nowhere, they're like the seven angels…

Participant 2: And then they started having heists, batsi [they say], *like women in that place, let me say like, every, most women to that church were supposed to like, take packages from work and give it to church. All of it, you take ten per cent, they take the ninety per cent. At the end they found out they are perpetrating heists and they continued to say that "we are the seven angels, we don't die". The other one that was part of the heist, shoot, died. And it was like, what now? Women were like, we're not leaving this church. We're staying here.*

Central to this is how the women that were being referred to, while exercising their agency, opted to remain in situations that participants perceived to be psychologically and socioeconomically oppressive. This is indicative of cultural dissonance where people are conflicted between the traditions of religious submission, and present day society's expectations of people to be critically aware of the flaws in traditional systems (Hook, 2014a). Comparing the abovementioned discussions about faith leaders, one cannot ignore the importance of context when analysing how people become vulnerable in violent spaces. One must reflect on who the victims are and whether they were actually being oppressed if they had exercised their power to consent. It appears that historical deprivation, and a reliance on cultural and religious mores serve as a form of determinism for being exposed to victimisation. Power dynamics serve as a platform upon which people enact violence and legitimise their own actions because the victim is perceived to hold a lessor human status than themselves (Butler, 2009).

Pursuant to the concept of "super human" faith leaders, Participant 3 raised the possibility that supernatural forces may have contributed to how people in religious spaces became susceptible to victimisation and oppression.

Participant 3: …but we've seen that witchcraft is in existence like in our communities and stuff, like it's there (Agreement). People do things and people become disabled, or people say something against you and curse you and then your things don't go well. So maybe sometimes people are under a certain spell or something and they can't even think straight because someone did something in a certain area and then when you go into that area they kinda possess your thinking or whatever. So, some of these things that really don't look normal, maybe people are actually under a spell because we have seen that, that witchcraft exists...
Researcher: So, do you think the person who was being sprayed with Doom was under a certain spell?

Participant 3: I don't…
Participant 4: No…
Participant 3: …but it could be possible…
Participant 4: They were vulnerable now. I think once you, you, you receive a, a, a certain value and a belief (agreement) then it, it, it just work...
Participant 3: …Yonkinto iyavuma [everything is acceptable].
Participant 4: Uyayivuma yonkinto [one accepts everything]. *You just work. Because those people who were receiving, were giving, given Doom and they knew ukuthi* [that] *Doom is poisonous, but just because they are in this environment. Once you are under a certain environment...*

This contribution was making reference to mental health and wellbeing from a spiritual or supernatural perspective in the same way that mental health and wellbeing can be analysed from a psychological perspective. According to Mkhize (2004), it is imperative that when engaging in discourse about the wellbeing of people, they are considered from a universal perspective, which is inclusive of cultural and ethnic beliefs about behaviour. In the excerpt above, the participant attributed the behaviour of the congregants to a spell/hex, where their thoughts and actions were determined by the plans that the person with supernatural power had for them. The families were perceived to be vulnerable due to the loss of control of their cognitive and decision making ability, and their victim status was adorned by the infringement on their ability to consent. This perspective was markedly different from the previous submission that congregants were co-perpetrators of the violence that was enacted upon them, because they had the autonomy to object.

The role that faith and traditional leaders play in South African society is prominent due to the cultural and religious systems that have guided many South Africans over the centuries. As society has evolved, some of these systems have become modernised, and the demarcations between what is legitimate and what is not have become distorted. Some systems have become manipulated by human behaviour, where people who are placed in positions of authority act violently against congregants and communities. The expectation of faith leaders to offer moral guidance, has become distorted as they too have been experienced to perpetuate violence. The institutional settings of faith, cultural and traditional entities tend to facilitate the notion that the leader has a more superior human position than those who they are commissioned to lead through service. There tends to be a lack of accountability as the next higher authority is considered to exist

beyond the physical realm. In the absence of accountability, one's authority over others facilitates a hierarchical abuse of power, permitting violence to be enacted in an uncontested way. It is within these settings that violent actions are justified by both leaders and congregants, despite that they may be considered to be atrocities by broader South African society.

4.4.3. Parents as Stewards of Human Life

Psychology is the study of the human mind and motives, exploring who a person is and how they function in their communities. Drawing from attribution theory and personal causality (Heider, 1958), mental health has been explored as a determinant for violent and non-violent behaviour. Where violence takes place there are often times when society empathises with a perpetrator from the premise that one acted violently due to their psychological illness (Motz, 2014). This theme discusses the parenting dyad – the relationship between a parent/guardian and a child. This system is an integral part of societal hierarchies where one person has stewardship over another. The parenting role stipulates that a parent or guardian should work in the best interest of the children that they are raising, particularly due to the vulnerability and dependent nature of a minor.

Human beings have an innate struggle with conceptualising behaviour that is perceived to be out of the ordinary, as would be the case where a parent inflicts intense harm on their child. This is predominantly due to contestations of morality that emerge when popular beliefs about identities or groups are challenged (Motz, 2014). Making meaning of behaviour requires that people establish the source of the actions of other people (Heider, 1958). Drawing from discussions about vignette F3[18] where a mother killed her child, there were insinuations that women are not typically violent, and women tend to be the subjects of various forms of violence that occur in their environments. With regards to mothers acting violently against children, it was impressed that a mother's only plausible reason for harming her child would be that she were psychologically unwell.

Participant 16: Seriously there must be something psychologically wrong. I mean, naturally it should be that...You have a connection with your child and you put your child in the microwave.

[18] See Appendix F3: Mother kills child

And it's just that if she's working in a law firm, I'm just assuming, I mean, she's intelligent. She's smart. I mean, she will interact with people every day. Well that's, something that, something must have gone wrong on some other level.

Participant 13: Also, it's just, it's scarier to think that she's her mom, she's the baby's mom. That's the scariest part. And she's a mother of three...

In the above statements, the participant expressed that it was unnatural for a mother to harm her child. This draws from the notion that a mother is a protector of her child who is both innocent and vulnerable, not only to her but across society. It was further purported that a woman with (at least) a middle class socioeconomic status would not act violently against her child. This reflects upon how society perceives mothers to embody identities that nurture and incubate life (Welldon, 2004; De Beauvoir, 2012; Ahmed, 2017). It also alludes to how class is considered to be a signifier of wellness, and good conduct[19].

The participants were probed with regards to how tolerant they were of the mother in the vignette. It was observed that participants empathised with her, and attributed her actions to some form of psychological disturbance. They tended to deflect from viewing the mother as a perpetrator as this is contrary to the expectations of the mothering role in society. This is consistent with the issues raised by feminist discourse about the responsibility that has been placed on women to be docile and subscribe to the image of someone who nurtures (Ahmed, 2017; Kiguwa, 2019). This idealisation of the female gender dictates that a woman does not have the autonomy to choose to act violently. The participant in the excerpt below was trying to make meaning of the woman's acts of violence, because they could not be dismissed easily.

Participant 7: And, and she's got a job. She's a lawyer, obviously stressful. So there's other stressors in her life. And then there's this one thing that she's trying her hardest at and it's just not working, and she's done it before. It's just that now suddenly it's, it's not working. You feel like a failure as a person, as a mom because now that's the first thing that you identify as, as a mother. And now you can't even connect with this baby. I feel like something will definitely snap in you. I don't know if, um, I'd put the baby in the microwave, but…

[19] Class in relation to human life and value is discussed in section 4.3.1

The mother's gendered and maternal identity dictated that she could not be a perpetrator (Kennedy, 2005) and socioeconomically she may not fit the criteria of a violent mother (De Beauvoir, 2012). Reference was made to external stressors like her job and raising other children, further questioning how she had been able to manage before. These situational attributions alluded to the notion that the violence was not premeditated, but was a result of pressures that she could no longer contain, hence she "snapped". The fact that her actions were disproportionate to the stressors that had been mentioned was negligible, as she was perceived to be a person with an external locus of control. The underlying discourse was that as a mother, she was morally attuned to wholesomeness and control, which is consistent with feminist vexation of the Madonna-whore dichotomy (Welldon, 2004). It was hypothesised that when her external systems shifted around her, they snapped her thread of control, and she couldn't be held fully accountable. This is substantiated in the excerpt below:

Participant 14: There's gotta be something….
Participant 15: The environment. Something, there's a husband there. I'm definitely sure…

The participants were observed to be advocating for her innocence and victimhood, attributing blame to a husband who had not been mentioned. Consistent with patriarchal discourse, participants contested that the identity of motherhood was morally incapable of violence and being a perpetrator. At face value, and according to legal process, the mother was a perpetrator. However, upon exploring the moral contingencies at work, participants perceived her to be a victim of a system that had applied too much pressure and had broken her. The system that was emphasised to have oppressed her was that of patriarchy. Participants appeared satisfied with the attribution that she projected her frustrations with her husband onto the child.

Elaborating on gender in parenting, participants expressed that they were not tolerant of a male guardian or parent inflicting harm on a child. This is consistent with ideology pertaining to masculinity which stipulates that men are expected to be protectors of their families (Connell, 2012). A discussion was raised about whether the same attributions of mental illness as the source of violent behaviour would be acceptable if the parent in vignette F3 were a man. As a response, reference was made to an incident concerning a middle class male guardian who expressed (on

Facebook[20]) his persistent urges to have sexual intercourse with a toddler. He implied that this act would relieve him off his feelings of depression.

Participant 13: Why does she, why does he think like depression will come out if like he has sex with the child?
Participant 14: He's not thinking straight, I guess.
Participant 13: I think it maybe, if you can really check the scenarios and the events, you find that with some other, you know guys when someone is involved in sexual act he becomes so very more dominant, you know (agreement). In control…
Participant 15: …validate, yeah…
Participant 13: …you know, his, uh anger on sexual activity, he's releasing, yes…
Participant 16: …but why does it have to be through or via a woman that he can gain that validity of his manhood again?

The explanation that the male guardian provided – that he was struggling with mental illness – was not sufficient for participants. This is evident of the gender disparities that emerge when parents are being judged about the harm that they have caused to their children. When a child is harmed while under the stewardship of their parent, society tends to be outraged due to the vulnerability of the children (Erikson, 1985; Prilleltensky, 2010). This is due to the bond that is expected to exist between a parent (or guardian) and a child. It is deemed to be strong enough to ensure that a parent does not intentionally inflict harm on the child. Participants hypothesised that it was due to his toxic masculinity that the guardian thought about molesting the child. Comparing this to the perceptions of the mother, it can be deduced that there are connotations about gender that make female identities appear to be innately nurturing and vulnerable in parenting, whereas male identities tend to be experienced as innately toxic with a propensity towards being aggressive.

When a child is harmed by a parent or guardian, the personal causality of the caregiver tends to be questioned in an endeavour to either validate or negate their intentions. This serves to ascertain when it is justifiable to exert any form of physical force upon a child, and when a parent is now causing considerable harm. As per the purpose of this study, this questioning stems from a need for people to explore under which circumstances a person acts violently, and whether this is

[20] Facebook is a global social networking platform where users create a profile and interact with people through comments and sharing of events.

a result of limited psychological (or other) resources to judge their own actions as harmful. Within the parenting institution, this is a critical discussion, as the line of demarcation where physical disciplinary practices and child abuse meet tends to become unclear (Prilleltensky, 2010). This is predominantly due the parent-child dyad which is hierarchically structured with the parent serving as a steward of the child, yet still having power over them.

In line with the intersectional nature of the study, participants discussed the issue of ethnicity and racial background with regards to vignette F3. They expressed that they would be in a better position to understand and attribute the intentions behind the violent actions of the mother if they were provided with a more detailed context. This is reflective of how society socially constructs identities, and ascribes attributions based on the ecological setting, and the context in which a violent interaction is located (Ross et al., 1977; Wallerstein, 1991; Trickett, 1996). In this case, this meant that participants were eager to establish the racial identity of the mother who placed her child in the microwave. This is presented below:

Participant 10: Certain people, hypothetically would ask, "was the mother white or black?" (laughter) […] was the mother white because if the mother was white, we're gonna say, oh attachment problems. But if the mother was like black, we'd be like "witchcraft"? (laughter).

Participant 9: Yes…

Participant 10: So, it's very important how we know the mother's race. That one is important to judge.

The statements above were made by Participant 10 in order to make meaning of the motivations behind the violence against the child. They stem from the assumption that someone's upbringing and background is an indicator of their future behaviour (Ratele, 2003; Wallerstein, 1991). Participant 10's statements indicated that white people tend to be conceptualised in relation to western, individualistic psychological principles. It was postulated that if the mother was white, she may have been struggling with her own early childhood attachment difficulties, best conceptualised by psychoanalytic traditions (Motz, 2014; De Beauvoir, 2012). It was further indicated that the behaviour of black people tends to be attributed to traditional and cultural eastern practices (Mkhize, 2004). Hence, if the mother was black, she may have been exposed to a form of witchcraft which would then cause her to kill her own child.

Based upon the last statement made by Participant 10, knowing the mother's race and her motivations would have provided an understanding of her behaviour. This would have then provided participants with an appropriate platform to legitimise or delegitimise the mother's actions. This was further iterated in the discussion below, where it was considered that one's race could inform the type of violence that they would enact. The participants did not seem to be implying that a particular race was incapable of child murder. Instead they provided insight into how mothers are capable of killing their children albeit they use different methods of committing the act. From the extract below, the participants provided an example of how they deduced the race of the mother through the act that she committed.

Researcher: What about the women who put their children in pit latrines?
Participant 11: …maybe drugs
Participant 10: Those are normally black people even…
Participant 11: Yes, whooo! And in the dustbin.

The excerpt below makes reference to a concept in society that remains controversial for pro-life and anti-abortion advocates. Participant 3 below spoke about the termination of a pregnancy, which is a legal process in many countries, as long as it is conducted within a specific time frame. The debate is often centred on whether a foetus can be considered to be a human, or not.

Participant 3: No, I'm saying, I'm saying vulnerability of a child if really you want to kill, do you understand, you can kill when she's inside because no one knows, and no one can know. (Agreement). Do you understand? And also maybe when she is still very, you know one day old you can really do something.

De Beauvoir (2012) makes reference to the laws that legislate against abortion, describing them as rooted in patriarchy. It is understood that the life of a foetus is embedded in the lives of the parents, who will determine the quality of life that the child will eventually have. De Beauvoir (2102) argues that there are many violent acts committed against orphaned, abandoned, or neglected children, which should serve as an argument in favour of legalising abortions globally. What she was lobbying against were the moral judgments that were being made about abortion, and how they were unfounded in light of the extensive forms of violence that tend to be committed

against children. The participant above was providing insight into when it is considered to be morally acceptable to terminate a pregnancy, or kill a child.

In the extract above the participant stated, "…because no one knows, and no one can know". This was met with some agreement from other participants in the discussion. The notion that the child or foetus was vulnerable was mentioned because this is a typical stance in society (Motz, 2014). Hence, it was considered that the defenceless life was valuable, but, not as valuable as that of an older child. The participant further added, "….you know one day old you can really do something". This part of the conversation leaned towards the moral contingencies underpinning the killing of a child, and whether the life was considered to be valuable enough to be regarded as neonaticide, infanticide, or abortion.

There are moral implications surrounding the "killing" of a foetus or a child which tend to foster debate. Part of the debate includes whether a foetus has a right to live, and at which point in development these became applicable (Motz, 2014). Other debates in society have also made reference to the rights of parents to choose whether they desire to have the child after conception (De Beauvoir, 2012). Central to these debates is the question of when (during pregnancy) the action of a termination of pregnancy becomes a form of killing (Motz, 2014). Participants' conversations provided insight into how parenting as a form of managing human life has its own complexities. These include when a person actually begins to be a parent, and when they are able to discard of a child.

In the case of parents exerting their power over their children in the form of abuse and violence, participants attributed behaviour to some form of historical, sociocultural, psychological or biological determinism (Hoefer, 2003). The actions discussed above were regarded as violent, and parents viewed as perpetrators because society tends to consider the parenting role as one of the key protective factors over a child's life. However, judgments about vulnerability, and therefore how someone was ascribed victimhood or perpetratorhood were reliant on the factors that contributed to the behaviour of the parent, such as class, gender and race. This was substantiated by discourse on African psychology and western psychology about the motivators for behaviour (for particular identities), and what can be regarded as mental illness, lack of empathy, or witchcraft when violence occurs (Mkhize, 2004). In relation to a parent, a child was

considered to be a subject. It was posited that parents have a measure of power over their children which ultimately determines if, or how they live.

4.5. Conclusion

The discussions that were presented in this chapter were raised by participants in relation to when violence is considered to be a legitimate action on the human body, and when it is not. It was discussed extensively that the context in which violence takes place is a key contributor to how society makes meaning of, and attributes value to the lives that have been involved. The thematic areas that were raised by participants included gender and sexuality, race, class, age, and disability. Acknowledging that every person embodies multiple identities at any given time, the discussions reflected that there is a spectrum upon which some lives are considered to be valuable to broader society, whereas other lives are not as grievable. Lives that were considered to not be desirable in everyday human life included perpetrators, people who perpetuated power dynamics, and children with disabilities.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of this study, providing a summary of the theoretical framework that was utilised in order to conceptualise and analyse discussions about the social world. It further outlines the prominent themes that emerged from participants' conversations during the focus group discussions. During these discussions, participants were presented with situations which provoked the conversation about human lives in violent contexts. This is followed by a summation of the significance of the study, and the limitations that were identified. Complementing the limitations is a discussion of possibilities for further research, and the practical application thereof.

5.2. Summary of Findings

The main objective of this study was to explore how participants attributed value to human lives in violent situations. Based upon social constructionist principles in psychology, every human being embodies multiple identities, which intersect and manifest uniquely in different contexts (Gergen, & Gergen, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991). The space that any identity group occupies in society tends to be determined by how they have been constructed to be of value by socio-political systems of governance across history (Burr, 1995; Gergen & Gergen, 2008). Some identities have been subject to discrimination and oppression, and entire populations have been disenfranchised. At the same time, some identities are celebrated and idealised. This value that is placed on these identities is usually noticeable when the human beings that embody them are placed in a violent situation (Butler, 2009).

This study aimed to explore the differential value of human life that was ascribed to human subjects by participants. Through investigating and analysing participants' talk, the researcher aimed to gain insight into the judgments that people make about human life in violent contexts. The study further aimed to explore the moral contingencies that underpin the judgments about whether acts of violence enacted upon human bodies were considered to be legitimate or illegitimate.

The social constructionist paradigm that was integrated into the theoretical framework investigated how society makes meaning of human lives in violent encounters. This lens was optimal as it took into consideration that identity is socially constructed (Gergen & Gergen, 2008). Hence, the fusion of how participants made meaning of their lived experiences, with societal discourse created a richer data set for analytic purposes. It also took into consideration that the researcher is an integral part of the analysis process, and that there was no possible means by which one can be completely objective and impartial (Patton, 2015). From this perspective this study was an appropriate representation of modern day society.

The themes that emerged were complex, and were indicative of the intricacies that emanate when making meaning of the social world. While the objective of the study was not to reach a consensus about which identities are the most or least valuable, there were prominent themes around the different human descriptors which serve as signifiers of valuable human life. The main objective was to conceptualise how members of society attach value to these descriptors or identities, which was achieved. Participants drew from South Africa's socio-historical background and the manner in which its violent qualities have shaped racialised and gendered identities, as well as the identities of minority and disenfranchised groups. There were distinctions in how participants made meaning of human behaviour, attributing violence to psychological, social, or historical experiences. It was deduced that there were deterministic factors that emerged when considering people with a previously violent or disadvantaged upbringing.

The nature of the relationships between victims and perpetrators were considered to be integral to understanding how a perpetrator may manipulate their power to violate their "subject". The reality of hierarchies of power evoked empathy from participants, which was apparent in the discussions about parents who harm their children, the abuse of sex workers, and violating sexual identities through corrective rape. In order for society to function cohesively, institutional structures have designated leadership roles to people for purposes of managing socio-political and cultural spaces (Freire, 2005). In doing so, the bodies of sex workers, women and children, and people who are homosexual, tend to remain the target of various forms of violence because society has historically legitimised the dominance of some people over others.

A key theme that emerged reflected the power that *political and social institutions* have over the lives of people. It was discussed that people who hold leadership roles have power over

others. This affords them the ability to exert various types of violence on the people who they oversee, which threatens the victim's autonomy and quality of life. This was explored in terms of the power dynamics underpinning police brutality, the motivations for abusive parenting, and manipulative actions performed by faith leaders.

As institutions afford power roles to people, a hierarchy of subjectivity emerges in which violence can occur, and human life can be violated (Freire, 2005). Within the faith sector, it was suggested that religious institutions have become oppressive towards congregants or traditional/faith help seekers. Through perceptions of the *faith leader* as a supernatural being, it was stated that people become dehumanised through manipulative and violent actions inflicted on their bodies, their financial resources, and their overall psychological wellbeing. Despite an understanding of these violations in society, it appeared that in faith-based institutions, the behaviour of faith leaders was often incontestable. This was also consistent with participants' perceptions about *police officers* abusing or re-victimising *commercial sex workers*. It was highlighted that society tends to ignore violence that is inflicted upon sex workers because commercial sex work is still illegal in South Africa. Furthermore, it was implied that sex work contradicts sociocultural expectations of the female body as an incubator of human life, and a subject to man's sexual desires. Sex workers were also reported to be transgressors of society's perceptions of moral behaviour, hence it was easier to consider that they were deserving of the violations that they experienced. As a result of the work that they engage in, it was discussed that sex workers were often devalued by members of society.

Within the *parent* system, it was expressed that mothers are nurturers, and were not expected to intentionally inflict harm on their children. The discussions implied that environmental factors such as stress, relationship difficulties, work, etc. were more likely to contribute to a mother acting violently, than her innate violent nature. Mothers were presumed to be psychologically unwell, or unintentional when they acted violently, regardless of how heinous the actions were on a vulnerable child. However, the same attributions were not awarded to fathers, who were expected to have a more internal locus of control, and were therefore considered to be more malicious in their acts of violence against children. These attributions of violence, nurture, malice, and morality provided insight into how gender has a dominant role in determining which lives are vulnerable, and which tend to be experienced as perpetrators. Due to their gender, fathers were held more

accountable for their actions than mothers. By denying mothers the agency to be violent, the discussions provided insight into how gendered power dynamics are perpetuated by society as legal, religious and traditional dogma persist in South Africa's democratic plateau.

The vulnerability and possible victimisation of *children*, *the elderly*, and *people living with disability* was discussed. Participants were significantly entertained when discussing violations against these groups of people, despite that society tends to present them as people who need to be protected (Kaldine, 2012a). The authenticity of the talk was valuable, as the contributions that were made by the participants were reflective of how some members of society experience the elderly, people with disability, and people who do not subscribe to heteronormative ideals (Barker & Murray, 2013; Gray & Cooke, 2018). Children with disabilities were described as a burden to their parents, and empathy was afforded to parents who abandoned disabled infants in their endeavour to maintain a "normal" life. Comparatively, children without disabilities were described as vulnerable, and worthy of protection. This exclusion from the parameters of vulnerability was consistent with participants' perceptions of the elderly, who were regarded as innocent and undeserving of violation – unless they were homosexual. The latter provided insight into how society is still framed by heteronormative ideology. Violence enacted upon a presumed homosexual, elderly man evoked humour. The humour was interpreted to be a homophobic response to his intersections and positionality in society as a white, elderly, gay man. It symbolised the dismissal of human value for people who were violated due to their sexual orientation, particularly if they held positions in society that were considered to be middle to upper class.

As human interaction is not limited to physical space, it was ascertained that there are virtual spaces and *virtual identities* which have the potential to facilitate and legitimise violence and cyberbullying. A disadvantage of virtual spaces was found to be that they are often unregulated (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). It was also emphasised that social media and virtual spaces provide a platform for people to act without caution to consequence as they express themselves with the freedom that one would if they were not subject to scrutiny. Through an artificial identity, people are able to express their undesirable conduct without being held accountable in their everyday lives. In cyberspace, people are also able to present images or profiles of themselves – regardless of how real or imagined they are – in an endeavour to appear socially desirable (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Society has placed emphasis on accountability and systems of governance to maintain

social order, however, this tends not to apply in many virtual spaces. It was discussed that people are able to devalue others through statements or responses that are threatening, derogatory or offensive to identity groups. This was thought to be indicative of society's debilitating moral judgments, as people are able to express their violence more boldly in situations where they presumed that they would not be held accountable for their actions.

Vigilantism is a prevailing characteristic of South African society (Martin, 2012; Schuberth, 2013). It was discussed that collective efforts to curb violence tend to be justified, depending on the identities and geographical spaces in which they take place. It was observed by the researcher that participants converged from different backgrounds, hence their experiences with violence may have differed. This provided a diverse discussion about how and when communities should apprehend perpetrators, and what is acceptable in relation to causing harm to another human being. It was implied that in more affluent areas of South Africa, it was acceptable for the public to intervene when there was a crime taking place in front of them because this would be conducted from a structured and "legal" approach. In lower socioeconomic spaces, there were conflicting perspectives, which were centred on the "attack on" alleged perpetrators. These geographical spaces (e.g. townships) were perceived to be organically violent. This provided insight into how people in lower income communities were perceived to be aggressive, and breaking the law by accosting a perpetrator, whereas people from affluent communities were considered to be acting altruistically by protecting the victims. Considering that identities are socially constructed, the actions of one identity group were interpreted to be predatory, while similar actions by another group of people from a middle-upper class community were reframed, and less criminalised. This further alluded to why society is more responsive and alarmed by violence in affluent communities, while violence in deprived communities tends to be normalised, and attributed as their way of life.

Class and privilege emerged as determinants of human worth in society. The inability to access financial resources and social status was considered by participants to be both violent and oppressive. It was expressed that certain identities were experienced as inferior as a result of exclusion from a life of affluence. The intersections of *race* and class in modern day society presented an image of the type of person that is often considered to be attractive – white and middle to upper class. This was an interesting intersection particularly in the South African context due to

the manner in which the shifts in social class have begun to challenge the superiority that whiteness has previously possessed (Bowman, 2013; Straker, 2013). It was discussed that the murder or a white woman was more outrageous, and therefore more grievable than the murder of a black woman, unless the black woman was attractive and affiliated with middle or upper class society. As South Africa continues to transition in its democratic journey, people of colour are accessing spaces which allow their lives to be more noticeable, more attractive, and ultimately more influential – and valued. This transition further highlights the widening gap in the hierarchies of identities which facilitates a further othering, and concurrently renders less aesthetically appealing members of society as unnoticeable, and forgettable.

Recent waves of advocacy for equality and women's rights have created platforms for discourse about toxic *masculinity*, *womanhood* and victimhood. Comparatively, men were identified as more likely to be perpetrators of violence in society. The discussions about men being victims of violence were mentioned in the context of competing male identities which included race and age. However, it has been established that the most at-risk population for unnatural deaths are emerging adult to middle aged men (Gear 2007). This was not overtly presented in participants' talk. It was often presented that women and children tend to be more prone to become victims of violence. Participants identified men as the most prevalent perpetrators as the dominant actors in patriarchal society, attributing to men a persona of strength and machismo. These notions of masculinity provide an understanding of why (in broader society) attacks and deaths of males are afforded less empathy, as they are typically experienced to be primary instigators of violence, and therefore expected to be able to defend themselves.

Lesbian women were identified as prominent victims of corrective rape. In these situations, it was stated that society is not accepting of their homosexuality or bisexuality, hence they become victims of corrective rape. The perception that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality or bisexuality legitimises these violent actions in the mind of rape perpetrators. It is posited that rape is an act against the female body to subdue women and remind them that men hold more power in society (Brown, 2012; Morrissey, 2013). Corrective rape was framed as a gendered violation i.e. only enacted upon lesbians. This provided insight into the generalisations about men and masculinities which need to be unpacked in order to have a more in depth understanding of sexual violence and masculinity as a central problem in South Africa.

Participants discussed violence in context and it was analysed that there are situations within which violence tends to be legitimised. Violence and torture against sexual perpetrators was justified, predominantly due to the nature of the violence, and moreso when the victim was a child. Violent actions were also overlooked when they were enacted upon women who transgressed the dictates of society by disregarding traditional gender roles. It was discussed that women could be held partially accountable for the violence that was enacted upon them in instances where they contravened the cultural expectations of the female body by being in places that were often reserved for men.

Adopting violence as a lens through which the value of human life can be analysed was ideal as violence is deeply engrained in society. Many people have become desensitised to violence or have normalised it in relation to certain bodies and spaces (Stevens, 2016). Another important consideration that was extrapolated in the themes was that socio-political contributors to violent behaviour tend to be regarded as less acceptable than psychological contributors to violent behaviour, as was the case with the mother and child vignette. It was presumed that an individual has more control over their social environment than they do over their psychological state. Hence, it appeared that participants had more empathy for perpetrators who were considered to be psychologically unwell.

Violence can be conceptualised as a response to a violent society. The judgments that are made about the interactions between perpetrator and victim provide insight into how those human lives are perceived (Fanon, 1963; Schinkel, 2004; Stevens, 2016). It is in these interactions that society tends to sift the desirable and undesirable characteristics of the victim and/or the perpetrator in an effort to make attributions about what may have transpired. Ultimately these judgments are used to decide whether those lives are worth empathising with and grieving over (Butler, 2009). In some instances, those lives may be perceived to have received a violation that was due to them. Yet, other lives are expected to be preserved in their vulnerability through the identities that they embody. The intersections of identity determine one's positionality, and how they are experienced by people in their external world (Crenshaw, 1991; Rosenthal, 2016). This is crucial for appreciating this study as it posits that discourse is pertinent to identity formation and performativity, which ultimately influences when and how violence and power are acceptable. As society continues to evolve, the dominant discourses will influence who is affluent, who is able,

and who is allowed access into different spheres. Acknowledging that there are disparities in human value is fundamental for purposes of addressing how this is perpetuated in everyday talk, and socio-political systems that steer the direction of national and global society.

5.3. Significance of the Study

The value of this study is located in conceptualising the disparities that exist in human life in South Africa. As the country continues to transition out of the apartheid regime, the experiences of previously disenfranchised groups need to be heard. It is through the exploration of violence as a characteristic of South African society that these voices emerge. As society strives for equality, psychologists and advocacy groups should continue to engage with the narratives of various identity groups. It is also vital that the voices of those who were not previously disenfranchised are heard because it is in these dialogues that society can continue to make meaning of privilege and class as facilitators of inequality.

Through the focus group discussions, this study also provided a platform for participants to engage in dialogue with people who embody identities that they may not typically interact with. This was useful for developing a more nuanced understanding of the intersections of one's own identities, and how these relate to the people in shared communities. Furthermore, on a broader scale, this study informs South African society about the underpinnings that have framed different communities, providing insight into how gender, race, class, and ability influence how lives are valued, neglected, or dismissed.

The aim of this study was to investigate the "who" and "why" of violence. The manner in which violent activity evokes emotion is linked to the people involved and the differential value ascribed to their human lives. Incidents that are collectively understood as a tragedy provide insight into which lives matter to society. The other reality is that many incidents are bypassed by the public as insignificant episodes. Therein lie the understanding of when violence is legitimised or delegitimised. It is in these intersections of violence in various communities that society can understand it as a universal language. The thematic areas and the impressions that participants presented in their talk provided insight into the reality that all lives are not equal. Inequality can

often be located in how violence can be experienced by two (or more) people, and their experiences after the fact, are completely different.

Finally, this study has presented a synopsis of how power and violence interact precariously. The factors that contribute towards the enactments of violence are located in who has power and who does not. It is imperative that society engages with the nuances of violence, to interrogate how and why violence tends to be utilised as a form of currency to purchase social and political status. Violence tends to be used as a method to foster a sense of order, when power is unable to achieve this (Foucault, 1980). Through the explications of how human value is ascribed and experienced, this study serves as a foundation for further exploring under which circumstances the use of violence serves to liberate, or traumatise people across society.

5.4. Limitations of the Study

Identity is a vast and complex social construct with multiple identities serving as proxy markers of how people are experienced in society. The terminology that was used to label some of the identities in this study could be considered to be oppressive or exclusionary to some identities. This was not the intention of the researcher, and may emerge as a result of the fluidity of identity, and the researcher's conceptualisation of how identities intersect in the human body. Furthermore, the data that was collected was extensive, and it was not possible to accommodate all of the contributions in this study. Despite that the thematic areas covered the prominent themes, it cannot be ignored that there were other impressions and identities that were discussed in the focus groups that were not included in the discussions section of this study.

An additional limitation to the study was that there was a total of 16 participants in this study. It is acknowledged that the sample size cannot be used as a representation of South Africa's diverse and multicultural nature, and population size (Patton, 2015). However, as this was an exploratory study, the discussions provided rich, qualitative data about the perceptions that some populations in the Braamfontein locality have developed pertaining to the value of human life.

The use of focus group discussions as opposed to individual interviews was observed to facilitate a free flow of conversation. A valuable aspect of this study is presented in the nature of

the discussions, and how participants aimed for transparency in how they made meaning of contemporary South African society. The use of focus group discussions as a data collection method contributed to the success of the study as participants were able to share their insight, while also exploring the impressions of other participants. This is reflective of everyday life where people interact with others and share ideas. However, it can also be argued that some participants may have been apprehensive in their contributions as people tend to adopt different methods of interacting in groups. The sensitivity of the discussions may have caused participants to filter their opinions in order to appear politically correct, and socially desirable to other group members.

It was further conceded that the researcher was an instrument through which the data was analysed. As the FGD facilitator, there may have been comments that could have been probed more in-depth, and other discussions may have been prolonged as a result of the interests of the researcher. Despite that this has been noted as a limitation, it should be emphasised that qualitative research boasts its rigour in recognising that all data is useful data, which can be analysed aptly with the correct methodology (Cannella & Lincoln, 2018).

5.5. Future Directions and Recommendations

As this study was qualitative and exploratory in nature, there is opportunity for an expansion on the quantity and quality of the sample for further studies. This would be beneficial for purposes of obtaining a more heterogenous population, with a more diverse conceptualisation of South Africa's historical and socio-political terrain. A larger sample size from different contexts, and with variable demographics would also provide data that covers a broader spectrum of the people who have participated in and experienced violence. Concurrently, obtaining a more homogenous sample would also produce findings that may be applicable for studies relevant to specific identities. A broader study of how human beings in society value different lives will provide a more in depth understanding of the nuances that underpin the differential value of human life.

A broad topic of discussion was the value of the life of a perpetrator. This is an area that would benefit from further extrapolation based upon the violent culture that persists in South Africa (and globally). It would provide insight into the drivers of violent behaviour, and the manner

in which perpetrators make meaning of their own lives, and the human lives that they have violated. Freire (2005) makes reference to the complexities that emerge when people shift from the role of oppressed to the position of oppressor. Violence causes a psychological trauma that often primes people who have been violated to act in the same manner as those who violated them. Therefore, it would be valuable to explore how the act of being a perpetrator shifts across society, where this role is not limited to the people who engage in criminal acts and violence against the physical body. This would bring an awareness of how violence is enacted in a variety of ways, and that many people are perpetrators in their own communities.

The findings of this study are valuable for purposes of understanding human behaviour particularly when society experiences collective trauma in the form of political instability or a pandemic that causes the inequalities that exist to become more amplified. Acknowledging the positionality that different identity groups hold in society provides a platform for the development of context-specific and inclusive policies. It takes into consideration that a single act or event can be experienced in a variety of ways by the people involved, based on their more dominant identities. Hence, a nuanced understanding of human morality in situations of distress may be integrated into interventions by civil society, private and public sector organisations to predict or prevent harmful human behaviour during periods of ongoing violence and socio-political unrest.

5.6. Conclusion

Society has become accustomed to, and normalised that often violence is exerted upon specific human bodies. There are also unexpected incidents which occur where harm is inflicted on a body that is considered to be "precious". These are the people who do not fit into the spectrum of identities that are typically exposed to violence. These occurrences tend to evoke excessive shock, outrage or calls for advocacy and justice. This is symbolic of an unjust social order where threat or harm is experienced by some, and their voices are not heard (Heider, 1958; Butler, 2009).

Human life tends to differ in value. This becomes evident in violent enactments between the oppressor and the oppressed. Where civil society cannot conceptualise and confront the disparities and inequalities that persist across humanity, the process of weakening cycles of violence continues to be long and arduous. Socio-political and psychological think tanks continue

to explore violence as an action that should be unthinkable, and confront the reality that there are lives that are not grieved as they represent an existence that is subject to the mission and mandate of socio-political and economic development. There is a constant demand for decolonisation and shifting identity narratives as a means of reparation and reform in the aftermath of oppressive systems of governance (Cruz & Sonn, 2011; Mbembe, 2015). As the narratives shift, and dominant identities transition, more socio-political structures may reflect on violence as an act that exists beyond the physical assaults that are observable. Power, violence, human life and the advance of society may always perpetuate inequality. However, the awareness of violence that persists in inequality serves to make meaning of human narratives in a way that may inform policy and conscientise society about the disparities in the value of human life.

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Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 · Tel: 011 717 4541 · Fax: 011 717 4559 · E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Participant Information Sheet

Greetings,

My name is Amina Mwaikambo. I am currently studying a Master's in Community-Based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. The topic for my Master's dissertation is: *The Psychology of the Value of Human Life: Contingent Moralities in Enactments of Violence in South Africa.* I am conducting this research for the purpose of obtaining this degree. This study is aimed at investigating how judgments are made about different forms of violence as either legitimate or illegitimate acts. It aims to conceptualise the value that society has placed on various human identities, and to theoretically explore the perceptions that people have of the value of human life in violent situations in the South African context.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation in this study will involve taking part in a focus group discussion which will centre around violence in South Africa. There will be between five and seven other participants (also Wits students), and I will be facilitating this focus group. The discussion should take approximately ninety minutes. Participation is voluntary, and everything you say during the discussion will be kept as confidential as possible. The discussion will be audio-recorded and only my supervisor and I will have access to these recordings and their transcripts which will be stored in a password protected laptop.

Although I know who you are, and other participants may identify you, confidentiality will be maintained by not disclosing any information that is of a personal nature in the report. I also ask that you respect other participants' confidentiality. I will assign a pseudonym to your information in the report. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence. You also have the right to refrain from answering any question should you wish to do so.

Feedback in the form of a short summary of results will be emailed to you upon request. You may e-mail me if you would like to receive this. My contact details as well as my supervisor's appear below. The feedback will be available approximately 12 months after the collection of the data.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic of discussion, please be advised that free counselling services are available to you from the Counselling Careers and Development Unit (CCDU) at Wits West Campus (Tel: 011 717 9140/32). Emthonjeni Centre (East Campus) also offers counselling at a fee (Tel: 011 717 4153)

Before beginning the interview I will need you to read through and sign the consent form. These forms will confirm that you are aware of everything that we have discussed concerning confidentiality, feedback and privacy. Please detach and keep this sheet.

Yours sincerely,

Amina Mwaikambo – 0815836324

Amina.sword@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof. Garth Stevens

Garth.stevens@wits.ac.za

Appendix B: Consent Form

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 · Tel: 011 717 4541 · Fax: 011 717 4559 · E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Consent form for Focus Group Interviews

I_____, consent to being interviewed within a focus group by Amina Mwaikambo for her study on *The Psychology of the Value of Human Life. Contingent Moralities in Enactments of Violence in South Africa* with the full understanding that:

- Participation in this focus group is voluntary.
- Refusal to participate will involve no penalty.
- I have a right to refuse to answer any questions that I prefer not to answer.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence.
- No identifying information will be used in the research report except for direct quotes. However, through the use of pseudonyms in the writing of the research report, the researcher will keep all responses as anonymous as possible.
- An audio recording device will be used to record the focus group interviews.
- The recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor.
- The recordings and transcripts will be kept in a digital format in a password protected laptop.
- Pseudonyms will be used to identify different participants in the report to maintain confidentiality in the write-up.
- Quotations from focus groups will be used in publications.
- The research may also be presented at a local/international conference.
- The focus group confidentiality agreement should be signed to help maintain confidentiality amongst focus group participants.

Consent for focus group participation:

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Consent Form – Audio Recording

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Consent Form (Recording)

I, _____ give my consent for my focus group interview with Amina Mwaikambo to be audio recorded for her study. I understand that:

- The recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor.
- The recordings and transcripts will be stored in a password protected laptop.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.
- Although direct quotes from my interview may be used in the research report, I will be referred to by a pseudonym.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Focus Group Non-Disclosure Agreement

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 · Tel: 011 717 4541 · Fax: 011 717 4559 · E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Focus Group Non-Disclosure Agreement

I, _____ consent to being interviewed within a focus group by Amina Mwaikambo for her study on *The Psychology of the Value of Human Life. Contingent Moralities in Enactments of Violence in South Africa* with the full understanding that:

The discussions here represent Confidential Information of the researcher conducting this study. I hereby agree to maintain the confidentiality of information disclosed during focus group or observed live as follows:

- To hold in confidence any information which is disclosed, or made available to me directly or indirectly, or information I otherwise receive incident to my participation in this discussion;
- I shall at all times hold in trust, keep confidential and not disclose to any third party or make any use of the Confidential Information beyond those activities that are part of the Focus Group.
- All notes, reference materials, memoranda, documentation and records in any way incorporating or reflecting any of the Confidential Information shall belong exclusively to the researcher.
- Also included as confidential is any participants personally identifiable information i.e. a person's identity or information that might reasonably allow identification of the person. I shall at all times hold in trust, keep confidential and not disclose to any third party or make any use of the identity of any Respondent involved in the Focus Group.
- All information and opinions I provide are solely my own and are in no way reflective of any other party.

By signing and submitting this form I will be entering a Non-Disclosure agreement with the researcher – Amina Mwaikambo

Respondent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Welcome

Good afternoon and welcome. Thank you all for being here and for agreeing to participate. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and experiences. My name is Amina, I'm currently a student in the Masters of Arts in Community-Based Counselling Psychology programme. The topic for my Master's dissertation is: The Psychology of the Value of Human life: Contingent Moralities in Enactments of Violence in South Africa.

The results of this focus group will add to the conceptualizing of human life and the sites of legitimacy of violence in South Africa. I will be facilitating two other focus groups like this.

Guidelines

The focus group will proceed for approximately 90 minutes. Throughout this discussion, there are no wrong answers, and all points of view are valuable. I'm interested in hearing all of your perceptions and experiences. You don't need to agree with others, but I ask that you listen respectfully as others share their views. You may comment once they are done. We're not trying to achieve a consensus; we're trying to gain an understanding of your perspectives. My role as facilitator will be to guide the discussion by listening to what is said and by making sure that everyone gets a chance to give their point of view. Please discuss your thoughts amongst the group. I'm recording the audio of this discussion, so I am requesting that one person speak at a time and that you turn off your phones. We're on a first name basis in this discussion. However, the information and insight that you provide is confidential. I may use quotations in the write-up, but I will not associate your name with anything that you say. Your name will not be included anywhere in the report. I also ask that you all respect each other's confidentiality

Are there any questions before we begin?

Semi-Structured Interviewing Guide Questions

Let's get started by going around the room and introducing ourselves. Just a first name will do.

Questions

1. What are your feelings about the scenarios?
2. What do you think motivated the violent acts? What was the intention?
3. Who would you identify with in any of these stories? Why?
4. What is your understanding of social equality? Has it been achieved in South Africa?
5. Does violence change in different contexts? If scenario X changed and now involved a woman/man/black/coloured/Indian/white/homosexual/heterosexual person, what would your thoughts be? Why?
6. In what types of situations/contexts do you feel that violence emerges in South Africa more? Why do you think so?
7. When is violence justifiable and when is it not justifiable? (Probe)
8. Which type of person do you believe is a more/less likely target for violent behaviour? Why?

Conclusion

Following a brief spoken summary of the main points of the discussion the moderator will ask:

Is this an adequate summary?

Considering that the purpose of this discussion was to gain an understanding of the judgments that people make about the legitimacy of violence in contexts in South African society, is there anything else that anyone would like to add before we end?

That concludes our focus group discussion. Thank you all for participating and for your insights. They will be very valuable to this study. I hope that you have found this discussion interesting. If there are any further questions about the study, please feel free to contact me.

Appendix F: Vignettes

F1: Vigilantism

Around midday, a middle aged man attacked a mother of two, Charlotte, robbing her of her weekly wages at knifepoint. Charlotte took her children home and reported the incident to her brother. As they were talking, she saw the man and alerted her brother, who immediately shouted “juba!” Within moments, a crowd had assaulted the alleged attacker. When he no longer had the strength to try to defend himself, the crowd slowly started to disperse...

F2: Shebeen Killing

Seven women and two men were killed and several others injured when two armed robbers went on a shooting rampage in a shebeen in Cosmo City on Friday night. They had demanded cash from the owner but without warning, they opened fire on about 30 people, killing nine and wounding several others. One woman was taken hostage and later found unconscious with a broken leg and arm.

F3: Mother kills child

The child had fatal thermal injuries and suffered burns on 80 percent of her body, the worst being a radiation burn that penetrated the baby's internal organs and 'cooked through' to her stomach and small intestine. She had been placed in a microwave by her mother who then switched on the timer for 3 minutes. Baby Diveena would have suffered from severe pain throughout the exposure. Rehema has three other children, and at the time of her arrest she was married and worked for a law firm.

F4: Elderly man murdered in Killarney home

Bullets erupted inside a home in Killarney, Johannesburg and woke residents up to a scene which they could never have anticipated. Mr Oppenheimer, a 72 year old male was found dead and tied up in his apartment with gunshot wounds to the back of his head and back, with evidence of severe sexual assault.