

ABSTRACT

Violence is a complex, universal phenomenon. Whilst it has been considered an inevitable part of the human condition, it has nonetheless been difficult to define. However, second wave violence scholars propose that a comprehensive analysis of how risk factors interact with individual and collective subjectivities which enable the enactment of the violence may serve as a starting point for better understanding this phenomenon. With a growing interest into internet-mediated research (IMR), this study aimed to explore the vlogging and polylogal interaction based website YouTube, which provided a rich textual environment to explore how commenters made meaning of the forms of signification portrayed in the video uploads depicting collective violence. These comments served as the units of analysis from 6 naturally occurring data elicitation videos that depicted the raw footage of violence that occurred in Marikana, Rustenburg on 16 August 2012. The Marikana event thus served as a key contextual post-apartheid event that provided the basis for a rich and comprehensive analysis of such online meaning making of violence. The study's research objectives were achieved by adopting the epistemological stance of interpretivism in the analytical framework of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

The findings of this study demonstrate how morally contingent the justification for the use of violence is in contemporary South African life. More specifically, in an environment underpinned by the economic and political discourse of neoliberal capitalism, the sanctity of human life was contested against wealth accumulation and personal greed. In addition to this, racially provoked commentary as mediated by the internet and further incited within the performativity of racial classification and differentiation provided the basis for the development of different orders of morality to impose moral sanctions on the acceptability and justifiability of the use of violence in certain circumstances. The results of this study thus

contribute to deepening current understandings of the moral frameworks that constitute and contest violence in South Africa.

Keywords: Violence; internet-mediated research; YouTube; Marikana; interpretivism; thematic analysis; race; moral frameworks.