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‘Tweeting in Solidarity’: A corpus linguistics-driven analysis of tweets during the South African student protests

By

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A Master’s Research Report submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master’s in Linguistics

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0. Abstract

The social media boom has affected people the world over, allowing them a platform to voice their opinions and sentiments, but also allowing them to create connections with people around the globe. In many instances, these connections have been based on shared political beliefs, effectively creating 'issue communities', which has lent itself to the reappropriation of social media as a space that can facilitate political activism both in the online sphere and in the physical sphere, as well as widening the action opportunities for participation. This work seeks to uncover the different identities, communities, and discourses that were constituted on the social media site Twitter during the student protests spanning from the #RhodesMustFall protest of 2015, to the #FeesMustFall protests that spread like a veldt fire through 26 of South Africa's universities. Collections of 1000 tweets per hashtag (namely #RhodesMustFall, #OpenStellenbosch, #WitsFeesMustFall and #UCTFeesMustFall) were collected and run through the corpus linguistics software AntConc, whereafter findings were analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Overall, users were able to use Twitter for the purpose of information-sharing by reporting on the live events of the protest, requesting resources and for the purposes of organization and planning. While the 'fallist' protests, which are often categorized and grouped under the umbrella as the student protests of South Africa, further analysis exposed that in fact, the discourses that were prominent in the earlier protests, namely the #RhodesMustFall and its derivative protest #OpenStellenbosch were far more aimed at the metaphysical conditions of higher education, where the #FeesMustFall protests focused on the material conditions of student life. Moreover, it was found that Twitter's main function was in fact to behave less as a tool or additional paradigm to traditional participation, in the stead of its use as a means for bringing ideas such as free education into the political imagination, as well as for users to bring their private lived experiences into the public sphere, and thereby creating new types of subject positions and public identities.

1. Introduction

The world is going online - if not to say that it hasn't *already* gone online. Social media has become a popular way of communicating for millions of internet-users worldwide and has become a space for novel communication where participants are expected to 'forsake both body and place and become a thing of words alone' (Jones, 1997, pg. 15), making them an important part of both the online social and linguistic domains (Wikstrom, 2014). Hence, social media can be considered important epistemological sites for those interested in understanding the role played by language in society. In the past, studying offline social networks has been the traditional methodology for sociolinguistic studies –however, this study aims to show, in line with current scholarly interest, that online networks provide a goldmine within which people use linguistic means to establish and perform identities as well as align themselves with different communities, not as excluded from the identities that are being constructed offline, but as complementary to them (Blommaert, 2017a). Twitter, from which I have extracted data for this work, is a 'communicative ecology' (Wikstrom, 2017, pg. 9), that, while not unimodal in nature, prizes text-only, and thus makes it a socially-mediated landscape which is particularly relevant to scholars of communications and linguistics.

The starting point of this study is the observation that 2015 proved to be a particularly politically active year for students within South Africa. From the #RhodesMustFall movement in early March, to the #OpenStellenbosch movement of the same month, until the unprecedented nationwide #FeesMustFall youth movement of students protesting for their right to quality and accessible education in October, of both 2015 and 2016. These protests, and the Twitter hashtags that accompanied them, became ubiquitous in national news. This study will briefly contextualise the movement and give an explanation to the working of social media and the *Twitterverse*. It will then explain how a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis can be particularly apt for studying the role of tweets in protests. More specifically, a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis will help me to identify discourses and ideologies that are constituted and the types of identities and communities that were enacted in the online sphere during the student protests by use of corpora – which are a collection of 1000 tweets each in the categories #RhodesMustFall, #OpenStellenbosch, #WitsFeesMustFall, #UCTFeesMustFall, and #FeesMustFall. These protests occupied both the online and offline space. However, in line with Deumert's (2014) assertion, that the virtual space has its own reality which is able to yield a different dimension of discourse,

identity and community than what might be found in the physical space, this work is preoccupied with the following research questions:

i. What were the overarching discourses that became prevalent online during the student protests?
ii. How did users utilise the online Twitter platform to negotiate identity and community?

2. Literature

Within this literature review, I present a brief history of the Internet and the production of social media, along with some of the larger tenets that play a considerable role in the work to follow- namely, discourse, identity and community, all within the context of digital media. Thereafter, I turn my attention to how the Internet and social media have been appropriated by citizens as a space for politics. Since the focus of this work is on the student protests that took place within South Africa, I go on to dissect the protest culture within South Africa, before ultimately contextualising the protests that took place between 2015 and 2016.

2.1 The Internet as social

Of great importance in the work to follow is the role of the Internet – particularly social media, and how it can be used in the creation of discourse, identity and community. And so, these are all concepts that require clarification. The history of communicative networks and the Internet is one that is deeply entrenched in the accounts of colonialism, capitalism, exploitation and inequality (see Fuchs, 2014). Originally conceived as a product of government and military design in the 1960s, corporations later saw that there was profit to be made in the commercialisation and commodification of information as a primary good. From this, in the 1990s, the Web, which we now know to be key part of modern life, was fashioned. The introduction of communicative technologies, started to change societies the world over, in what is often typified as 'the dawn of the information society' (Bornman, 2016, pg. 264). The proliferation of information and communication technologies throughout the end of the 20th century reshaped the way that people were able to create, store and distribute information; not only within their direct communities, but to almost every corner of the world. The results of widespread use of the Internet was (and continues to be) beneficial to millions of people; but, the ensuing development of the information society and its related changes, has not looked the same in all societies. While some scholars might argue that there is likely to be no society that hasn't been affected in some way by the information society, a grave concern is that inequalities that exist between people within societies, and between the developing and developed societies, have only deepened, creating what is commonly referred to as the digital divide; a divide between the 'information- haves and the information-have-nots' (Bornman, 2016, pg. 265).

Nevertheless, the internet continued, into the 21st century, to rapidly develop. By the early 2000s, social media was launched, in what is commonly referred to as the Web 2.0 phase (a phrase coined in 2005 by Tim O'Reilly) of the Internet. Within a decade, social media would escalate to become a world-wide phenomenon, in so much at least, that they have become a popular way of communicating for millions of internet-users worldwide about their lives, interests, opinions and current affairs, and ultimately, acts as a platform that allows people to share their opinions and sentiments (Pak & Paroubek, 2010). Social media, unlike other more static Web pages, allow Web users to both consume its content, as well as contribute to it, which is particularly characteristic of Web 2.0. While we scroll down our feed, reading status updates made by our contacts, we are able to like, comment, or create our own status updates that actively change the live environment. Social Networking Sites (SNSs) (such as *Friendster, Facebook, MySpace* and *Twitter,* and so on) position their users as both the producers of their respective social media sites as well as the consumers of it in a very much dynamic and interactive environment (whereupon the portmanteau 'prosumer' was appropriately devised). This means that dichotomies such as producer/consumer, as well as 'author/audience [and] amateur/professional are becoming porous' (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014, pg. 3). This echoes the notion of 'participatory media', a term for SNSs first coined by Yochai Benkler (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). Moreover, considerable technological advances have taken place within mobile technology – from the now outdated 'black and white' cellular phones to the more current smartphones that are able to compact various utilities (from emails, daily planners, calculators, music, and so on) within a handy and novel device that easily fits in your pocket. These devices allow people to connect to the internet at any time and in any space. In fact, most websites, if they do not come with a mobile phone application, are mobile friendly. Mobile telephony, as will be discussed further on, is particularly popular in developing countries, such as South Africa. Today however, the internet and social media continues to be for-profit business that is reflective of the commodification of public discourse (Wikstrom, 2017)

For the purposes of this work, I will define what is meant by the label *social media*, and how social media is in fact, *social*. Social media can be defined as 'any digital environment which involves interaction between participants' (Seargeant & Tagg 2014, pg. 4.) as well as 'any digital platform in which users interact textually (with 'text' here understood expansively as meaning alphanumerical, audio and/or iconic visual representations)' (Myers & Hamilton, 2015, pg. 227).

The name itself inherently points to the *social* in so far as it implies that the platforms are user-centred and facilitate communal activities and communication between people. Social theory considers the act of starting up and using a computing system or cell phone in itself a highly *social* activity; as these devices have the ability to store and transmit human knowledge. And since this knowledge originates in social relations, whenever a user uses a computing medium, they are cognising based on objectified knowledge that is the outcome of social relations (Fuchs, 2014). It is also seen that repeated acts of communication between the same people may result in more than just social relationships, as it also extends to belonging and friendship. And so, social media is *social* because it plays a large role in creating affective and identitarian bonds among individuals who might have never met otherwise. While there is an ingrained belief that 'good' communication is those interactions that occur between embodied people, Deumert (2014) suggests that mediated communication, in an era where new media is integral to everyday life, is used for even the most intimate exchanges.

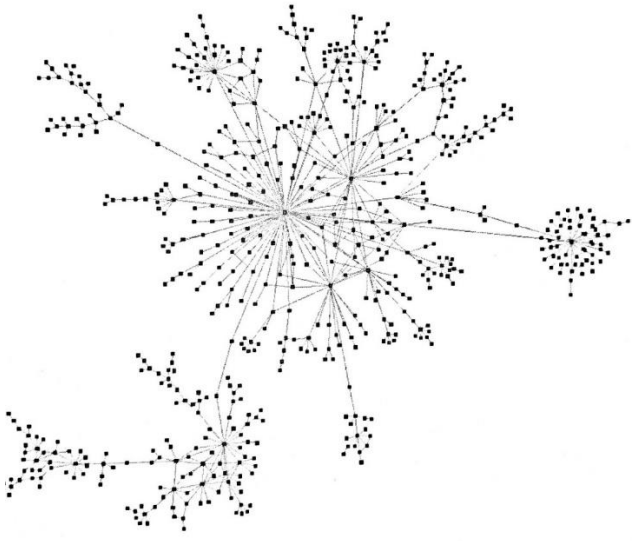
Of much scholarly interest is the notion that SNSs afford people with a space for identity work and friendship maintenance (Bock, Dalwai & Stroud, 2016). Harwood (2015) suggests that cyberspace provides a platform for individuals and diasporic communities alike to construct their identities. Thus, for sociolinguists, it is a pertinent source of research because it provides a platform that enables people to construct identities and communities that make use of linguistic affordances in the manner that Lee (2014) describes as 'writing oneself into being' (pg. 10). Within the social sciences, it is the common agreement that identity is fluid and dynamic, rather than fixed. Social media demonstrates how people are able to foreground different aspects of their online personae depending on the social situation. As in Lee's (2014) case study of an education student at a Hong Kong university, the student that was being analysed (Tony) was, at the time of the study, in the process of his teaching practical which forms part of his undergraduate degree. Hence, he had both the identity of student and teacher. He had two separate Facebook accounts active; one in which he communicates with his friends and family using his native tongue Cantonese which he purports to be able to use slang that has no equivalent in English, his second language. On his other account, which he reports to use only to connect with his students and colleagues, he uses only Standard English with an overall academic discourse tone. It was then concluded that his choice of language and style on different accounts had the ability to project different aspects of his identity.

Individual identities on SNSs are not mediated in face-to-face interaction and so, as we are able to see in Tony's case, must depend largely on linguistic affordances. Harwood (2015) explains that language is central to identity, in that it is a way for expressing and recognising the many social identities that people have. Tony, as a multilingual speaker, shapes his language practices according to *who* he wants to be (Dryer & Davids, 2015). The notion that SNSs afford its users less salient physical aspects of identity negotiation is succinctly stated in Seargeant & Tagg (2014): 'words, language, and discourse continue to serve as key resources in the presentation of self online and in the construction of identities in social media' (pg. 6). Paul Ricoeur's (1992) work on the theory of the narrative in self-construction is explained in Deumert (2014) as:

> We don't have access to our 'selves' through mere introspection, rather we come to know about us through mediation: we construct an image of who we are- for others and for ourselves…Speaking about ourselves *makes* us into a particular person, and can transform the way we feel about ourselves. (pg. 24)

While we negotiate our online identities, we do so in front of potentially millions of other users with whom we share the public domain. We are also involved in mass participation that enables the creation and circulation of discourses (Baker & McEnery, 2015). These types of interconnectivities have been visualised by those interested in networking societies, such as Valdis Krebs, who here looked specifically at connections on Twitter:

Figure 2.1: A visualisation of Krebs' followers on Twitter (Kadushin, 2012)



The visualisation is striking in that we see individuals and how they are networked to one another in a series of web-like connections. Each dark dot represents an individual that will potentially utilise Twitter to not only create individual online identity but also to form online communities and networks with those that they are connected to. And thus, the social network has become central to social integration, as complex relationships ripple from the personal, to friendship structures, families, associations and inevitably entire communities (Friedland, Hove & Rojas, 2006). The highly popularised theory '6 degrees of separation', upon which one of the very early SNSs *sixdegrees.com* was based, endorses the idea that all living things and everything else in the world is six or fewer steps away from each other so that a chain of "a friend of a friend" statements can be made to connect any two people. However, more recent studies on Twitter note that this statement, for its users, can be reduced to a maximum of four steps between any two users. (Bakshandeh, Samadi, Azimifar & Schaeffer, 2011). Social media undoubtedly then enhances and facilitates human networks, while simultaneously connectedness as a value is of social significance (Fuchs, 2014). The idea that community is sociality, and that collaboration and co-operation must exist for social media to function is deeply entrenched in the Web 2.0 concept. However, these claims have deeper philosophical roots, as Marx has similarly argued that co-operation is the essence of society (Fuchs, 2014). The Durkhemian notion is that humans may only exist if they enter into social relations with others. This is arguably what makes social media so efficacious.

Indeed, SNSs rely on networking and conversational reciprocity whereby people interact with each other and form different networks (think back to Krebs' visualisation). Harwood (2015) opines that people strive for group coherence, or to fit in. This is accomplished online when users are able to align themselves with different communities and in so doing, perform identity. SNSs encourage a sense of connectedness and commonality, allowing omnipresent contact (an 'always-on' culture) provided its users have access to an internet connection on a PC or mobile device. Users of social networks build online connections with people, which are visible in the ability to follow people and be followed, as well as the display of these connections. Users are also able to 'like', share or comment on posts by other individuals. Twitter (as well as the popular sites Facebook and Instagram) also allows people to congregate around shared interests, concepts or ideas using the hashtag function (more on hashtagging can be found in 5.2 to follow). This gives users the ability

to join in on conversations with other users that share the same interests. Users are also able to mention other users in order to get their attention by inserting the intended user's Twitter *handle* (screen name) preceded by the @ sign. By combining mentions with hashtags in their tweets, users have created a method with which to link people and ideas (Tremayne, 2014). Zappavigna's (2014) study of a corpus of tweets surrounding coffee not only uncovered three types of coffee drinkers online (the foodie, the coffee connoisseur and the humble coffee addict), but also showed how Twitter users affiliate themselves with others through bonding over shared topics of interest or ideational targets. Users tended to usher themselves into one of these three identities, that forms a collective of people that share a mutual love of coffee. As such, it is concluded that one is able to track the creation of communities that online users form as they rally around shared interests. A collective identity; which comes over time as participants come to share beliefs and begin to see themselves within a community, is important within social movements. This is a valuable idea that underpins the need for uncovering identity within my data.

More so than simply the creation of communities and identities as an end, an important aspect for democracy is the idea of the *public sphere*, and how identity and community is created within it. Habermas (1991) defines the public sphere as a space where all citizens are guaranteed access, and where public opinions can be formed and made topical. I suggest that to a large degree, social media is the pinnacle of what Habermas envisioned for the public sphere some 70 years ago. For instance, Twitter, a popular microblogging site, which is the site from which data is collected for this study, allows for a wide base of authorship in that it enables a great diversity of people – including everyday folk, celebrities, politicians, companies and news outlets – to be connected and 'gather together' online around shared interests. As such, the activity – political and otherwise - that takes place online, as well as the ideologies that become visible are not necessarily constituted institutionally (such as by government or in this instance universities) but are the product of citizen-centred perspectives. That being said, however, many of Habermas' notions on the public sphere are much contested. More specifically, Habermas believed that identity formation belongs solely to an individual's private life, or what he termed 'the intimate sphere' (Calhoun, 1993). In this sense, he believed that identity formation must be settled in the private sphere, completely outside of public discourse and politics. But identity is entangled in the private and public lives of people – and more positive valuations of this notion insist that blurring the distinction between private and public and that engage in identity [re]formation have been vital throughout modernity,

but also have been the basis for what is today referred to as 'identity politics', which is not simply about planning actions or settling disputes, but is intrinsic to a successful and democratic public sphere, and which is discussed in a further chapter (see 5.1: On Identity Politics).

2.2 The Internet as political

It becomes clear then that the internet behaves as far more than an opportunity for people to communicate and to be social. In fact, it acts as part of the public sphere, the basis of which is 'fundamentally about democracy and growing complexity' (Friedland, et al, 2006, pg. 5). At least in the way that a public sphere should change society and shape the state (Calhoun, 1993), as well as shape the flow of public opinion and influence (Friedland, et al, 2006). But an important part of this paradigm is the role of the media, and the media power that it possesses. While the media sits on the periphery of the political, it holds a significant role in politics. This is why it is also referred to as the 'Fourth Estate', as its role is to exercise its media power by filtering public opinion inward, and through its own-decision making process, output and circulate elite discourse back into the public sphere. The media's responsibility is then to remain independent from the state and to preserve the public sphere from heteronomous social and political power. Therefore, a chain of events mean that citizens must use the public sphere to voice societal issues, as well as deliberate elite discourse that is produced from those very issues. If, however, citizens are deprived of information because the Fourth Estate has been colonised by heteronomous power, the public sphere would not be able carry out its proper function. But this is only the requirements for media as laid out by Habermas, and moreover, media has been problematised for the very fact that it is power-influenced – privileging the powerful whilst excluding smaller groups (Schafer, 2015).

In modern day times perhaps, the need for an autonomous and independent media may be dwindling with the up-spool of a networked public sphere. This has proven to be an issue of intense debate, with numerous empirical studies in scholarly circles. A 'digital public sphere' can potentially act as a substitute for older notions of the public sphere, with its many shared commonalities - in that participation is open and freely available for citizens to voice their concerns, but also that the proceedings of these discussions have visibility.

We can see then how social media has 'become the privileged space of politics' (Barney, 2004, pg. 122), where public discussion dealing with the activity of the state infiltrates the public sphere (what Habermas titles 'the political public sphere'). As such, several new types of social movements have been born of the advances and unprohibited nature of social media, not least of all to mention modern day *hacktivists* (see McCaughey & Ayers, 2003). There are several benefits of SNSs to social movements:

i. It is an inexpensive means of publication of information
ii. It is effective in promoting and recruiting support
iii. It allows the establishment and maintenance of communication
iv. It is vital for mobilising action and coordinating events and importantly;
v. It opens democratic dialogue and brings debate about social and political topics to the public sphere (Barney, 2004).

Networked information is a 'tool which enables, and in many cases amplifies, the political voice' (pg. 129). Tumasjan, Sprenger, Sandner & Welpe's (2010) study of over 100 000 tweets pertaining to and prior to the 2009 German federal election found that Twitter was not only a site for political opinions but also a platform for political deliberation. They also found that Twitter can be used as an accurate prediction (or forecaster) of the election results. Bosch (2016) states that the internet, and particularly social media, not only encourages the participation of citizens in socio-political information sharing, but also opens opportunities for citizens to network their perspectives so as to facilitate practical citizenship. Cesero-Ripolles (2017) also notes that, because of social media, the role of citizens within the 'classic triangle of political communication' is being redefined. Where citizens have, in the past, been only passive viewers of the interactions between those journalists and active political actors that controlled the field, they are now becoming involved. McCaughey & Ayers (2003) suggest that SNSs as a political space 'can become agents of social change' (pg. 2), and Earl, et al (2013) argues that SNSs can be regarded as transformational to protests (Earl, et al 2013), take for instance, the Arab Spring. It is considered to be the most notable revolution stemming from social media, and so titled a 'Twitter Revolution', that ultimately led to the end of a 30-year long autocratic regime in Egypt (Harlow & Johnson, 2011). But this is not to say that all communities and social practices have equal bearing in the material world. Blommaert's (2017b) analysis of what he titles the 'Manosphere' – a meeting place

online for men to discuss their experiences of women, imbedded in misogynistic discourse exists only online, and does not result in any movements or protests of even simply men gathering in the physical space.

It has long since been the opinion of scholars that the relationship between the media and protests groups is a complex one. Furthermore, Twitter is known as a quasi-journalistic medium that provides a space for the interaction of politicians, the media, and the larger public (Wikstrom, 2017). Harlow & Johnson (2011) argue that journalists within mainstream media rely on and exercise their media power by choosing to make use of a 'protest paradigm' (pg. 1359) when reporting on protest actions. This paradigm involves a reporting style and narrative structure whereby journalists highlight the spectacle of the protests more than the underlying problems that have wrought the protest actions themselves. Since the media's portrayal of protests and protestors has an impact on public perception of the movement, its main tenants and whether or not they will support the movement, journalism that highlights spectacle (such as violence and conflict), is not only problematic for the movement's proliferation, but can also delegitimise the protest and potentially demonise protestors in the eyes of the public. Harlow & Johnson's (2011) study on media reporting of the Arab Spring showed that acclaimed media publication, the *New York Times*, used a spectacle frame, a tactic that often obscures the underlying issues in lieu of showcasing visible drama, when reporting. This is particularly challenging because the way that media chooses to frame their reports can mould the public's opinion of who is to blame for social, political and economic problems. Mass media acts as a critical agent in policing practices, with its ability to shape and alter the interpretations of its audience members (Lee, 2015). So, from a discourse-theoretical stance, media is not seen to be passive agents, but are considered to be 'specific machineries that produce, reproduce and transform social phenomena' and 'in Foucault's concept – 'systems of dispersion' of discourse' (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, pg. 274).

Moreover, because of social and technological changes, media has become increasingly powerful political actors that effectively offer up information and policy positions to people who are able to make political choices (Heywood, 2002). A further issue that traditional media poses for protestors is that it places them in a double bind; while media can be actively harmful to their movement, protestors nonetheless *need* media to gain traction to their cause by reaching the public and relevant policy-makers. In light of this, it makes conceptual sense then, that protestors would have to turn

to alternative media productions to combat the negative portrayals and perceptions that are the product of mainstream media. In the case of the Arab Spring, there are those news broadcasters, such as *Al-Jazeera* which offer opinion pieces that showcase alternate perspectives in native Arabic languages (Tufeki & Wilson, 2012). But, in the age of technology, potential opportunities for publishing alternative opinions are readily available on the Internet, as it 'allows protestors to circumvent the gatekeeping of traditional media' (Harlow & Johnson, 2011, pg. 1360), but also, as Lai & To (2015) explain; 'using Internet- and web-based technologies, …transform[s] broadcast media monologues (i.e., one-to-many) into social media dialogues (i.e., many-to-many)' (pg. 139), allowing people who may or may not have had any type of activist background, to act as citizen journalists – where they can convey critical information with immediacy. The 'fragmentary aesthetic' of social media (Myers & Hamilton, 2015, pg. 231) – which means that no authorial position exists - undermines the unity of argument that is present in traditional publications. In fact, Myers & Hamilton (2015) go on to say that the fact that social media is multiperspectival, provides a clear critique of objectivity: objectivity is no longer a product of a single interpretation or event, but rather a collection of simultaneously existing understandings of an event.

If social media can be so strongly entwined within protest, then it is a pertinent space of study to garner a greater understanding of modern social movements. Understandably, social media has an appeal to protesting individuals in that it allows them to circumvent autocracy and have a wealth of information instantly at their disposal. On Twitter, users are able to search and open up all relevant tweets regarding certain events by using the hashtag function. Hashtagging is also important to the proliferation of movements because they often create a community of people based on shared political interests, or what Maireder & Schwarzenegger (2011) label 'issue communities' (pg. 177). Social media also constructs autonomous spatial and temporal extensions on the types of activities protestors are able to contribute in, thus varying the meaning of 'participation' to different individuals; in some cases, co-presence is no longer a pre-requisite to participation (Reilly & Trevisan, 2016). This means that while certain protestors participate by occupying buildings or creating blockades, others are able to use social media to engage in 'connective action' (Poell, Abdulla, Rieder, Woltering & Zack, et al, 2016, pg. 996) to legitimise the protest and affect public perception through media channels. Those protestors that are unable to occupy venues or be present at all events because of work or other constraints are still able to

(by 'tweet[ing] in solidarity' (*found in my data*)), occupy the public space. Ultimately, social media can empower activism by granting a larger array of action opportunities for participation (Lee & Chan, 2016). By expressing agency, voice and participation, users are performing linguistic citizenship.

This being said, protest action is multidimensional, at least in that some of these dimensions include online and offline practices, which while they cannot be equated, actively affect each other. In fact, it can be argued that the use of technology and social media has become pervasive in contemporary protests (Earl, et al. 2013, see also #OccupyWallStreet). By creating a community of connected individuals through social media, potential members are easily able to identify with and participate in movements without the rigorous application to a hierarchical organisation. Instead, members are organised into horizontal shared practice, where their solidarity bears similar weight, and decisions are made through collective deliberation and discussion. This has shown to be characteristic of contemporary protest- where SNSs renders formal leadership unnecessary and distinct activist leaders play a minor role (Poell, et al, 2016). Hence, if any core values change, members need only to log out of their social media site to disconnect and end their participation. Alternatively, for those who do not want to participate, they will still be able to instantly follow the events from a distance.

Poell, et al (2016), state that contemporary protest relies on the 'culture of sharing', that is provided by SNSs (pg. 996). Users are mobilised or made aware of events through their 'social awareness stream[s]' within their social media applications (Maireder & Schwarzenegger, 2011, pg. 178). These streams consist of the status updates and posts made by their contacts or the users they follow. So, their self-motivated sharing of their own internalised ideas becomes part of the social awareness streams of the users that belong in their network. Since younger individuals have grown up during the technological and social media boom, it makes conceptual sense that many students would have been informed on the protests, or at least made peripherally aware of them through social media means. Just as we see in the above diagram (figure 2.1), the interconnectivities between networks mean that posts that are shared become part of not only the posters stream, but all streams within which it is shared or retweeted. This then exponentially impacts the circulation of information and discourses.

While certainly some Twitter users are casual participants that are only involved in the online space and others are simply weighing in opinions for or against the movement, Lee & Chan (2016), evaluated user activity during the 'Umbrella Movement', which was a student occupation in 2014 outside the government headquarters in Hong Kong. They concluded that the most active users on Twitter and Facebook about the protest, were in fact those that were most intimately involved in the movement in the physical space. They were most often communicating about real-time events, giving readers first-hand accounts of events or mobilising others. Earl, et al (2013) noted similar such results regarding the hashtag #G20 meetings in Pittsburg. They noted that Twitter is particularly advantageous to protestors, as they are able to use it on the go (*'in situ'* (pg. 461)), during the actual events. These findings parallel those of the #unibrennt protests of October 2009, which involved the occupation of Vienna's largest lecture hall against retrenchment policies in the education sector. These protests used Twitter and Facebook as communication spaces for not only deliberation, mobilisation of other potential protestors or resources. Thinking back to Habermas' vision of the public sphere, SNS users are behaving as a public body when they use online social channels to confer over current politics issues; they are able to confer about shared interests in an unrestricted fashion, with the knowledge that they have the guarantee of association as well as the freedom to express and publish their opinions (Habermas, 1991). Simply put, Twitter, and other SNSs, are a valuable asset for potential studies into media, politics and linguistics because not only do they provide access to a mass of politically relevant information, but also with the plurality of authorship, afford insight into the discourses of a diverse range of people, rather than single authors or editors that can be seen in controlled media- such as newspaper publications (Barney, 2004). Even more so, digital activism is a phenomenon which continues to increase in popularity, and this motivates for research, such as this, to focus its efforts on understanding this phenomenon.

Newspapers have been the traditional originators of discourses, and the main voice reporting, interpreting, and narrating relevant facts, shaping and moulding public opinion (Ferre-Pavia & Garcia, 2015). Widening access to the internet and social media however, dispenses with a unity of interpretation in favour of plurality of comment (Myers & Hamilton, 2015) along with the ability for almost anyone to engage in ambient journalism, the ways in which we encounter discourse is evolving (Baker & McEnery, 2015).

3. Key concepts and definitions

3.1 On identity politics

> *'There is something distinctly idealistic, if not utopian, in the statement that identities are a matter of* becoming *rather than being, a question... not of "who we are" or "where we came from", so much as what we might become.'* (Ang, 2000, pg. 1 – my emphasis)

In her opening sentence on identity, Ang (2000) makes a poignant statement; one which foregrounds the ability of an individual to *become,* a word which signals agency. The concept of 'identity' has made a name for itself in scholarly work in the last few decades, becoming a dominant discourse in both the public sphere, as well as politics (Spati, 2016). Earlier, it was discussed that identity politics – or the identity project of both the individual and the collective – which blurs the lines between the public and private domains, has been a vital part of modernity (Spati, 2016). What is meant by this statement is that Habermas' view that identity construction should belong solely in the private domain is problematic insofar as a private sphere can actively conceal oppression and those who suffer it. This has been the case since as early as the 60s – where identity politics has played a significant role in restructuring the human experience amidst a discourse of various political views and cultural differences, which have been taken up in the struggle to create counternarratives and critical spaces.

While some assertions are that examining identity should be dismissed on the basis of its triviality, identity politics accords it with high value – in as much as it allows subordinated groups a means with which to resist their positioning as 'others' by constructing alternative identities. In fact, it allows formerly silenced groups to emerge from the margins of dominant society so that they may reclaim supressed identities and experiences (Clifford, 2000). Identity politics is a term most frequently used in relation to theories such as queer theory and feminist theory. The basic definition of this term can be the politics in which people engage when they mobilize on the basis of, and when they define their experiences, their political problems, and their aims in terms of the good of an identity-group. Take for instance the feminist movement from which the token 'identity politics' is often attributed (Jacobs & Potter, 1998), which effectively brought to the public sphere the private experiences of the oppression of women. This in turn allowed women to share their

experience and construct an identity whereby they were able to challenge subordination – thus creating a new type of political subject. So, despite it varying criticisms, identity politics remains a persistent feature because it provides empowerment for its participants (Clifford, 2000).

Research that seeks to dissect and analyse protest must moreover understand its key themes, such as identity and community in terms of the political, since the 'personal is the political' (Jacobs & Potter, 1998, pg. 131). This is perhaps where the importance of identity politics comes into attention. Identity politics, in line with current understandings of the operation of identity – recognises that for political activity, there is an importance to the continuous process of creating ourselves, and creating ourselves in relation to others (Bondi, 1993).

Another way that identity politics can empower participants is in the fact that, to reiterate Ang (2000), it relies less on 'who we are' or 'where we come from' but on who we may become (pg. 1). What this means in terms of empowerment, is that we are not chained to an imagined or real past. This is not to say that identities exist out of context, or without history, but that that history can become subject to change. In fact, our identities belong to not only our past, but to our future, with which we are actively able to become political agents. If we are able to *become*, we are able to change our representation and narrative to ourselves and to others. Therefore, identity can become a site for agency.

In many regards, the emergences of SNSs and other online networking has altered the very fabric of society. The implication in this statement would mean that is has also changed the ability for people to engage in identity work. While throughout the literature this far, I have provided instances of identity and community online, the section to follow (4.1.1), will behave as a means to illustrate these concepts and the theoretical directions that it thus yields for sociolinguistics. Furthermore, the focus on identity (and community – because one cannot seek to understand only individual identity without the larger social units which are the reference to which those identities are performed) is, for the purpose of this research, understood in terms of being socially situated in an online context, and thus a fuller understanding becomes necessary.

3.1.1 Identity and community online

Discourse is a concept that has made its way into various disciplines, of which (socio-)linguistics is one of them. While competing definitions for what discourse is stems from its use in these

different disciplines, a basic linguistic understanding of it is that it is the 'language beyond the sentence' and even more simply 'a recognizable way of seeing the world' (Sunderland & Litosseleti, 2002, pg. 9). Fundamental to this is 'identity construction' - the idea that our choice of language or language variety is central to the way we present ourselves, to both ourselves and to others (Wodak, 2012, pg. 216). Through this lens, it becomes possible to perform an identity when it is based on an existing, or 'spoken' discourse – one that has its own set of values. This is not however to say that identities are matched with individual discourse, instead, discourses compete, and exist in relation to other discourses. Thus, linguistic communities are not simply homogenous and consensual, they are instead heterogenous and conflicted, as Homberger & McKay (2010) note; 'the value ascribed to speech cannot be understood apart from the person who speaks, and the person who speaks cannot be understood apart from larger networks and social relationships.' (pg. 350).

By this reasoning, the definitions that have pioneered this work for 'identity', and its equally ubiquitous companion 'community' mirror the current ideas in scholarly work; that language plays a fundamental role in the establishment of identity (Jensen, 2011) and that identity is not fixed and stable, but rather, constantly negotiated, performative and dynamic (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014; Vásquez, 2014). In fact, every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self – with regards to our race, gender, class, among other characteristics. Another manor in which academics have theorised identity is through the notion of subjectivity. This is a particularly compelling term – utilising 'subject' to indicate that an individual's identity is always subject *of* a set of relationships, or *to* a set of relationships (based on their position of power.) Acknowledging that subjectivity is multiple and changing also acknowledges that certain pedagogical practices may be transformative: identity positions may limit, but others may offer an array of possibilities for social interaction and agency. Language and discourse then, is acts as a means for a person to negotiate their sense of self – at different sites and at different points in time. This means broadly, that our identity construction comes about from the way we interpret text - both written and spoken – and how we incorporate those texts in to our own practices, effectively shaping our lives (Sunderland & Litosseleti, 2002). It is for this reason that I have used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is explained in the chapter to follow (see 3.2).

The ways that we encounter and use language are ever-changing. In fact, we no longer communicate only using what is considered as the 'traditional' written or spoken genres, but we also make use of newer forms of communication, such as through Facebook messages, e-mails or tweets (Wodak, 2012). But the shared characteristics of these newer, as well as the more traditional genres of communication is that they both equally enable the social practices of dialogue, negotiation, and so on. Earlier I mentioned that offline social networks were the traditional methodology for sociolinguistic studies. Incapsulated in this statement is the study of identity and its constructions. But more recently, Blommaert (2017a) has argued that those traditional studies have yielded what he terms 'bureaucratic, 'thick' diacritics' of identity – that includes nationality, ethnicity, race, class, and so on (pg. 6.). He goes on to offer a new theoretical understanding of 'light communities', and what is meant by this is that the online realm offers new and interesting ways in which to perform our identities. These lighter forms of identity do not rule out the 'thicker' identities, but instead complement them, implying that 'contemporary identity work is carried over and oscillates between online and offline contexts, creating highly intricate connections' (pg. 6), as well as allowing identities, to feel styled, as opposed to given. The importance then of the online genre to identity, or perhaps *vice versa*, is as he explains thusly:

> The Internet has also become an enormous repository of explicitly didactic and normative material – the 'how to?' genre – in which people can get clear instructions for how to perform specific forms of identity. (pg. 5)

Deumert (2014) explains that the virtual realm has its own reality. Users, while physically rooted in a concrete reality, enter into a virtual context with other users. This dual presence means we exist, both *here* and *there* (both online and offline), interacting with people who are not in our immediate physicality, as if they were indeed present.

The protests of 2015 occupied both an online and offline space, however, the major focus of this thesis is the identity work that was enacted in the online sphere. Vásquez (2014) explains that scholars of online contexts believe identity is in fact an 'interactional achievement- and one that is discursively formed' (pg. 67). The language of microblogging sites such as Twitter is dependent on conversational reciprocity (Zappavigna, 2014). Users of these types of participatory media sites are in a constant state of interaction: while we consume the data, we come into contact with the ideas and representations of others and we simultaneously change the sites by responding to them. In so doing, we create representations of ourselves (Deumert, 2014). This entails that social media

users can, at different times, foreground different aspects of their identity and thus embody different identities, due to the fact that they are less constrained by physical attributes that are always present in their offline realities. They are also able to seamlessly bring different identities to the fore at different times:

> Social media participants constantly present different aspects of identity through careful choice of language according to their audience and the technological affordance of different platforms. This also implies that identity management online is always situated in, and must be interpreted with references to, a particular context. (Lee, 2014, pg. 94)

These contexts are far less physical, and the reliance on text-based interaction promotes identity negotiation using linguistic means (Lee, 2014). Meaning that people are able to create identities for themselves with the language they use to interact with others and to represent themselves, with some opting to use online aliases. This means we might not always be fully aware of who is on the other side of the conversation – and this ability - for users to hide behind an alias online has also been characteristic of the darker side of the online social world (Blommaert, 2017a). Importantly, while Twitter is a multimodal site that allows video and image, it preferences and privileges text above other modalities. In fact, many, if not most tweets are predominantly typographic in nature.

Considering this, it is important to note some basic theoretical points about writing practices. For one, writing is a field of normativity, which can be seen for instance in the ways that written errors are far less tolerated than spoken errors (Blommaert, 2017a). This is very clearly illustrated by the identity of what is referred to in the online sphere as a 'grammar Nazi', which is an identity that is rooted in the practice of finding, sharing and commenting on linguistic norm deviations, and furthermore, scolding others for their language errors, in ways that overtly attempt to police language use and enact standard language ideology. Nevertheless, online writing has yielded some interesting writing practices, which are oftentimes dynamic and innovative. Take for instances the meme phenomenon, or even acronyms such as LOL (which stands for *laugh out loud*), or OMG (meaning *oh my God*). Some of these writing practices have spilled over into the offline sphere – where for instance in my own dialect, the use of the word LOL (said simply as /lɒl/) is commonplace, thus leaving the boundaries between the online and offline spheres particularly porous.

Wikstrom (2017) explains that Twitter allows users to follow other users, or be followed by them, which casts the site as not only public, one-to-many communication, but also the activity of tweeting as a public performance for an audience to view. In Blommaert's (2017a) view, it is also an indication of the type of 'phatic communion' that is predominant on SNSs, which centralises the maintenance of 'convivial' social relationships, along with performance of identity (pg. 6.) – of being a Facebook 'friend', or here, a 'follower'. Another aspect of identity is that it is intersubjective – meaning that our identities don't exist autonomously but must exist within relation to an 'other', and that our identities arise as a result of social life. This accounts for the tendency to use labels such as 'black' or 'middle class' in response to the question of 'who am I?'. These labels are informed by what Blommaert (2017a) refers to as thick communities – which, as previously mentioned, include aspects such as nationality, class, and ethnicity. These become pertinent to the discussion, because one cannot hope to understand an individual's identities, without looking at the social units which those identities are performed in relation to.

In terms of how this affects SNSs, Lee goes on to explain that users 'do not behave as just a single, self-contained identity, but as networked individuals' (pg. 94). Users establish networks in order to align themselves with fellow users that share the same sentiments, interests and opinions. The need to belong to a beloved community, and/or to feel part of a psychological sense of community is one of the most fundamental human motivations (Swatuk & Vale, 2016). The capacity for the Internet to produce communities is vast. Think for instance to the SNS Facebook, which, with its over 2 billion active users is historically unprecedented. These active users are users because they have voluntarily chosen to be so, for the purpose of performing novel social practices. Unbeknownst to many of these users, they form part of algorithms (that are often sold to third-parties for the purposes of marketing) that bring them together with other people based on perceived interests. These activities thus start to become familiar to sociolinguists – in that our voluntary social practices are our *performed identities*, and those connections that are made for us based on what we are perceived to be interested in behave as our *ascribed identities*.

More specialised SNSs such as *Zomato*, an eWOM site where people rate their food experiences, show how self-proclaimed 'foodies' congregate around their shared love of food and fine dining. This is perhaps an easier example on which to expand. This site and users that identify as 'foodies' are in fact part of *Zomato's* micro-population, that while translocal, is very much connected on the

basis that they behave as a community of practice. But on other platforms that are not as clearly demarcated – such as, for instance – Facebook, users have found other means by which to establish communities of shared interests, in the form of specific groups, or fan pages. This is a means for which communities are created, and because of the platform in which they exist, seem to transcend the barriers of space and time, in a phenomenon which Wodak (2012) refers to as the 'globalisation of communication' (pg. 216). This means that, as Jones (1997) suggests; these communities are no longer monolithic and unchanging, based on the clock or geographic proximity, but rather, they are individuals that are 'fundamentally devoted to democratic problem-solving' (pg.10). SNSs and social media allow people to create meaningful relations with others and with communities because, rather than befriending our neighbours simply because they are within a close propinquity, we are able to hand-pick our connections based on shared interests. Engaging in the virtual realm actively lifts users from their local contexts of interaction, where they are able to engage in translocal contexts (Deumert, 2014). Indeed, as Jones suggests, these communities are not simply a 'place to be', but rather a collection of individuals seeking to achieve particular goals.

For Twitter, a means for creating community is done through the use of hashtags, a feature which is fundamental to the use of the site. Sergeant & Tagg (2014) suggest that this is also another means for establishing identity. They suggest that the hashtag function available on Twitter, is a means for people to create ambient affiliations to topics with which they can interact. These are then titled 'hashtag communities'. Hashtagging, which is done by placing a hash symbol (#) before a topic (e.g. #JeSuisParis) is a form of folksonomy, which is a system of tagging online items to easily access them later. Users utilise hashtags on Twitter to show their tweets are associated with other tweets that have the same topic. These allow people to create rallying affiliations around topics of shared interests. These affiliations also tend to be ambient, in so much as there is not a necessity for interaction in order for people to align themselves with those of shared interests (Zappavigna, 2014). In fact, people are able to weigh in on events without having to participate in them on a physical level. However, these online goals can differ from the goals that they parallel in the physical world. The online dimension of events that occupy both an online and offline space allow for ambient affiliation, where users can engage and occupy space through weighing in and talking about events and common values without having to occupy the physical space as well. If we consider, as Deumert (2014) suggests, that the virtual has its own reality, this in turn, means that

the online world yields a different dimension of discourse, identity and community than what might be found in the physical space that these events occupy.

Blommaert (2017a) states that, beside the capacity for the Internet to generate translocal communities, it has moreover enabled the emergence of political community and mobilisation. Twitter has been a site for this, time and time again. With the ability for users to search using the hashtag function, as well as to tag their own tweets with a hashtag label, Twitter has oftentimes seen the trending of politically-motivated or themed hashtags. This too is no small feat, especially since there are whole sites, or segments done by newscasters (such as South African Eye Witness News (ENCA)) dedicated to tags that are trending, which means they are able to affect public discourse. Hashtagging has also proven to be of importance to the proliferation of movements because they often create a community of people based on shared political interests – both online and offline, termed 'issue communities', which have concrete effects on the physical political (think back to Egypt's 'Twitter Revolution').

Having discussed these fundamental and theoretical points, I must now turn to the analytical methods that are adopted in this paper, along with the reasons why they have been selected for analysing my data.

3.2 Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis

This dissertation is informed by Corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS), an analytical method adopted by various scholars. This entails a methodology that makes use of both A discourse analysis of a text is, what McKee (2013) defines as the attempt to decipher the surface meaning that the text offers to the audience that consumes it and enthusiastically to open a window into how '[these] populations make sense of their world' (pg. 56). The definition for CDA and the notion of discourse is seen in Wodak & Meyer (2009):

> CDA sees discourse- language use in speech and writing- as a form of 'social practice… discourse is socially constituted and socially conditioned- it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge and the social identities of and relationships between groups of people. (pg.6)

Discourse is then responsible for constituting our perception of the world. In fact, all social phenomena gain their meanings through discourse. Discursive practice might also 'have major ideological affects' (pg. 6), as the CDA framework emphasises the link between ideology and language (use)". CDA is also significant in that it offers tools for unpacking the implicit

information and discourses that can be found within the author's lexical choices: it 'signif[ies] certain kinds of identities, values and sequences which are not made explicit' (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pg. 30). Indeed, discursive elements play a vital role in the construction of the identity of both individuals and collective agents. Discourse is a result of articulation that can modify the identity of elements (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007). When either individuals or collective agents make use of these articulatory practices, they allow themselves to be identified, or they identify themselves within that discourse. Baker (2006) also defines the incremental effect of discourse as:

> Every word is primed for use in discourse as a result of the cumulative effects of an individual's encounters in the world… repeated patterns show that evaluative meanings are not merely personal and idiosyncratic, but widely shared in a discourse community.

This points toward the idea that language is able to activate stereotypes in different communities. When collective agents or individual agents articulate within a discourse, they position themselves within that discursive structure. By speaking *or writing* about ourselves and others in a certain way, we embody a subject position. However, discourse is not stable and fixed, instead it is 'a structure in which meaning in constantly negotiated and constructed' (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, pg. 267). At the same time, discourse contradicts its own dynamic nature, in that it is partially fixed in what Carpentier & De Cleen (2007) refer to as nodal points. Over time, nodal points may gain social dominance and thus have reifying ideological effects. This entails that different identities become linked together into a common project, by which nodal points form the basis of the social order. If corpus methods uncover patterns within naturally occurring data, one is able to draw conclusions about hegemonic discourses. This study aims to uncover the linguistic patterns in the tweets from the student protest using the corpus methodology, and then analyse them using CDA to uncover the types of discourses, identities and communities that were enacted online during the student protests of 2015.

Corpus methods for data first became popular in the 1980's with the availability of personal computers (Baker, 2006). It has since become a predominant tool that is used by those in the field of linguistics and is well-suited toward a thesis set within the intersections of language use and modern technology. Corpus processes make use of computational procedures that manipulate a collection of large naturally occurring data. As such, it is quantitative in its nature. The choice of a corpus-assisted thesis can best be summed up by Morrish & Sauntson (2011):

> Corpus linguistics enables us to make observations about language which go beyond intuition and allows the exploration of patterns of language use which are not observable to the human eye (pg. 128).

By the same token, however, they explain that qualitative studies that look at smaller samples in depth are able to make useful contributions to sociolinguistic studies. The choice here towards a corpus study is in keeping with the data set for this thesis, which consists of various corpora with a total of 87 876 word tokens, in that it is a fast and efficient method when working with large amounts of text; thousands of tweets captured might only be a ripple in the vast ocean of messages posted daily. Hence, a large corpus can potentially present a goldmine of discourses and identity constructions. Baker (2006) explains that a good corpus study utilises both qualitative and quantitative methods:

> Association patterns represent quantitative relations, measuring the extent to which features, and variants are associated with contextual factors. However functional (qualitative) interpretation is also an essential step in any corpus-based analysis (pg. 15)

CADS favours eclectic methods of data analysis, and so corpus linguistics (which is quantitative) has then been used here in conjunction with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (which is qualitative). Corpus linguistics is a fastidious method of data collection and analysis and is able to reduce the type of cognitive bias that researchers risk when performing qualitative CDA. CDA, although a popular method of analysis, has had many opponents that have pointed to some critiques of its validity, and its shortcomings. Bourne from these critiques, scholars began to apply techniques of corpus linguistics in their research. From these very first attempts of the late 1990s came Paul Baker's seminal work in which he described useful corpus techniques, and how they may be utilised in conjunction with CDA. Since then, various works have been published that make use of this method of analysis – for instance to understand national identity (see Clifford, 2000), problems such as gender stereotyping and sexism (see Jacobs & Potter, 1998), or even to analyse identity and sexuality (seen Morrish & Sauntson, 2011)

Kamasa & Mickiewiez (2015) in their paper *Corpus Linguistics for Discourse Analysis* provide a comprehensive outline for some of the shortcomings of CDA, and how corpus linguistics is able to provide solutions for these limitations. CDA often is criticized as having a fragmentary character in terms of analysis. This means that doubts can be placed on the legitimacy of CDA where it draws conclusions about ideology based on the use of particular lexical items or grammatical

features. However, in this instance, corpus methods are able to amply solve this issue in the mere fact that the ability to create large sample sizes means that it enables a researcher a more exhaustive analysis. This entails that corpus methods highlight lexical regularities comprehensively, rather than selectively. A second critique of CDA is that allows space for a researcher's bias. Alternatively, corpus methods assist by providing results that are based on frequency and regularity – which deletes the opportunity for researchers to produce idiosyncratic results. Instead, since corpus tools are heuristic in nature, researchers are made to account for salient patterns that may or may not conform to their ideologies. Although complete objectivity is impossible, as the combination of the two methods still requires decisions to be made at each step, corpus methods rely on frequency and statistics within large amounts of texts that reduces the possibility 'cherry-picking', whereby scholars might choose texts that support their claims (Baker, 2006), or fit their interpretive framework, thereby skewing results and diminishing the work's credibility (Kamasa & Mickiewiez, 2015). In this area, corpus methods once again present a simple solution as, through frequency, corpus software provides clear criterion for what needs to be analysed. Instead of veering toward what might seem interesting or what might validate a researcher's presumption, corpus software provides the researcher with demonstrably frequent words and the patterns that they adopt. Furthermore, corpus methods also reduce the need for discourse analysts to work based purely on intuition when making decisions of what lexical items to analyse. By providing the researcher with concordances, it guides their attention to lexical patterns that require investigation.

Finally, a last critique of CDA is that it may not clearly indicate audience effect and response. What is meant by this is that caution must be thrown to making conclusions based on the relationship between the lexical and actual social practices. For instance, a singular instance of text may not embody a full ideology, whereas a recurrence, or a high frequency of that particular language use – which is uncovered with ease by corpus software, might be better related to what Kamasa & Miciewiez (2015) term 'cognitive visibility' (pg. 8). The 'tools' that have been so far mentioned, and that affect the analysis used in this thesis are as follows:

i. *Corpus*: A collection or representative sample of a type of naturally-occurring language. The corpora used in this thesis are *specialised,* with the aim of understanding the language used in tweets that contained specific hashtags.

ii. *Frequency*: A central concept in corpus analysis, frequency is the number of times particular tokens occur, which may indicate areas of further investigation.

iii. *Wordlist*: A list of all tokens within a corpus, ranked from most frequent to most infrequent. It allows its user to see how many tokens (words) their corpus consists of. A wordlist is a valuable function as it can assist with determining the focus of a text.

iv. *Concordance:* While frequency may indicate the focus of the text, it does not indicate the ways in which words are used within the text. Concordances are a list of words that appear on both the left or the right of a particular word, and aids in contextualising how that word is used.

v. *Collocates*: corpus methods also make use of *collocates* which show which words statistically appear together most often, which presents insight into the associations that occur between words.

vi. *Keyword*: A list of all tokens but ranked from most frequent to most infrequent based on a reference corpus. This means that it identifies words that occur significantly more frequently (or less frequently) in the main corpus against the reference corpus.

vii. *Reference corpus*: A body of text against which we are able to benchmark the main corpus.

viii. *Score*: When referring to how statistically significant a collocate is. Words that appear together most frequently would likely have a higher score. This will be used throughout the analysis, where *s = score,* and *x=stat* in the following way, for e.g. {s=x}

If corpus methods uncover patterns within naturally occurring data, one is able to draw conclusions about hegemonic discourses. This study, which melds together the quantitative with the qualitative, aims to uncover the linguistic patterns in the tweets from the student protest using the corpus methodology, and then analyse them using CDA to uncover the types of discourses, identities and communities that were enacted online during the student protests of 2015 and 2016.

4. Methodology

The corpora for this thesis were collected from the social media and microblogging site Twitter. Twitter is known as a microblogging site because tweets are short, and oftentimes written in the first person. Twitter's only competitor is Chinese-owned microblogging site *Weibo* with a user-base based predominantly in China. Originally launched in 2005, Twitter is currently estimated to receive 6000 tweets every second, which amounts to roughly 50 million tweets every day (Worldometers' RTS algorithm, 2016). At the time of the data collection, tweets could consist maximally of up to 140 characters. The brevity of these messages is fashioned in the same style as an SMS (Short Message Services), popular on cell phones since the 1990s (Tremayne, 2014). Length limitations also mean that most often these tweets are a single sentence. Twitter also allows extensive mobility with applications compatible to most internet-connected devices. For these reasons, Twitter is used preferably as a site on which users will report events happening in real time (Nahon & Hemsley, 2013). Since tweets are usually only short sentences, this also means that they can mostly be viewed in one concordance line (Baker & McEnery, 2015). While Twitter allows multimodal input (such as video and image), it is much more partial to text-only. Twitter differs from most other SNSs in that it has a public setting pre-set. This means that anyone, even those who are not subscribed to the site, may have access to all posted tweets. Twitter has, to date received much scholarly attention – it provides exceptional data for understanding contemporary life with regards to business, marketing, and politics. (Wikstrom, 2017). Despite the fact that Twitter is a 'communicative ecosystem' (Wikstrom, 2017, pg. 11), there are very few purely linguistic studies on it. However, in more recent years, there has been a significant uptake of linguistic analysis on the site, along with other SNSs, many of which have been used in this work.

Due to the high volume of data required for the study, corpus methods were utilised. Corpus methods involve the collection of large amounts of naturally occurring data that is then stored on computers (Baker, 2006).

The hashtags #FeesMustFall, #WitsFeesMustFall, UCTFeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall, and #OpenStellenbosch were accessed and 1000 tweets under each group were manually captured in order to build my main corpus. While other universities did have their own hashtags and, in some cases, a significant social media presence, the universities were selected as their online presence were the greatest, and as they are previously white universities –continue to be much contested

spaces. While manually capturing the data was time consuming, it did allow me to familiarise myself with the corpus, which Baker (2006) suggests is a good starting point. Through manually capturing my data, I was also exposed to several images that were widely-circulated and retweeted on Twitter, some of which I have made use of in this work, (the image that is watermarked on the cover page is one such image). However, the main focus of this work is text, and a full semiotic analysis of those images has not been performed.

In Vásquez's (2014) corpus linguistics study of 100 negative reviews on the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) site TripAdvisor, also considered to be an SNS, it is explained that the language of social media is not only confined to the allocated 'About Me' section. Users very seldom filled in this section and instead used their actual reviews to share information about themselves and discursively project identity. It can be said that identity work does not belong only in the confinements of those predesigned character bio sections (although this does add a piece to the larger picture) but is rather an achievement of interaction. It is for this reason that I had decided to use tweets with which to build my corpora.

The choice of days in which to collect data was based on decided 'high-points'; March of 2015 for #RhodesMustFall, April 2015 for #OpenStellenbosch and October 2015 for those related to #FeesMustFall. The 2016 data, which was taken in October 2016, showed an inclination to refer to the protests under the umbrella name #FeesMustFall, and so for 2016, I have collected data only under that hashtag. In order to locate the appropriate tweets, I made use of Twitters sorting function, which allows you to set time parameters on which tweets you would like to retrieve. These hashtags were chosen as they were 'trending' at the time. *Trending* hashtags are those which are frequently posted about during a specific time. All tweets were filtered to keep them anonymous, and as such all usernames were omitted from the corpora.

This being said, however, users who sign up to Twitter are presented with terms and conditions with which they are asked to read and accept before they are able to utilise the SNS. Of these terms, Twitter states: 'you have to use the Twitter API if you want to reproduce, modify, create derivative works, distribute, sell, transfer, publicly display, publicly perform, transmit, or otherwise use the Content or Services' suggesting that Twitter allows and encourages re-use of content, since the Twitter API enables this. Other, as of yet unresolved ethical concerns are that

usage of tweets are akin to usage of conversations overheard but signing up for the site and hence sending tweets out into the public domain acts may be taken as implicit informed consent on behalf of the authors of these tweets. Twitter is publicly accessible, and I have taken this as meaning that postings to it can be analysed. Indeed, I view users as empowered authors. To further protect the identity of the users, I have omitted all usernames. However, the tweets which have been reproduced here are easily accessible to any internet users.

Furthermore, I have omitted tweets that are not predominantly in English, as English is the *lingua franca* of the internet. I also found that through my manual capturing, this was by far the preferred language used by posters. However, tweets that involved single non-English tokens (such as *Asijiki,* an evocative Zulu word literally meaning '*we do not turn back'*, which has roots in youth politics during the apartheid Struggle and has since became a catchphrase in these protests), were added to the corpus. Furthermore, links and URLs were filtered out, as well as any retweets (tweets that are re-posted by other users for the purpose of personal endorsement or commentary) that could potentially skew the data. This was done to reduce any clutter from the text.

In building my reference corpus, I used the *Tweetcatcher* software provided by the Chorus Project (Brooker, Barnett, Cribbin & Sharma, 2015), collecting over 50 000 random tweets. I then converted the collected tweets to an excel spreadsheet, which allowed me to use a pivot table to remove all retweets and duplicates that might skew my data. In this process, I also removed usernames and timestamps that are provided when using Tweetcatcher. I then converted the remaining 39 935 tweets from the excel sheet to a .txt document, which is AntConc-friendly. The corpora (my manually captured tweets, along with my reference tweets) were then run through AntConc software (corpus linguistics software) downloaded from the Laurence Anthony Website (Anthony, 2014). This software offers corpus tools for analysing the collected data. This study will use these tools to perform a critical discourse analysis (CDA). The workings of corpus linguistics and CDA can be found in the theoretical section above (see 4.2).

5. Historical Overview

While the history of segregation in South Africa has been well-documented, the purpose of the section to follow is to give a comprehensive historical guide to understanding the move from history, to current protest action. Furthermore, it will contextualise the student protests which are the basis for this work, before introducing how social media was used during those protests.

5.1 Protest within the South African Context

South Africa is fettered to a history of colonialism – first imposed in the Cape during the mid-17th century by the Dutch East India Company and reaching its peak during British rule in the 18th century. South Africa formed a Union in 1910, which was a form of self-government under the British Crown. It is from here that the nature of segregation in this country begins to be shaped. In 1913, the Union passed the Native Lands Act of 1913 – one of the factors that led to the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), the antecedent of the current ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). It was at this time that the Union of South Africa began its active systematic segregation and oppression of black people. By 1948, apartheid became adopted as formal policy upon the election of the National Party (NP).

So, while South African history is one of segregation and oppression, it also has a significant history of activism, of which Mottiar (2013) suggests that protest and resistance is the preferred form of participation across the country. Thus, passive resistance toward apartheid first began in the early 1950s. By the latter half of the 50s, this resistance had developed into more active attempts at disruption – through the destruction of buildings and arson. Calls for defiance and boycotting were made as a basis for the Defiance Campaign.

At the start of the new decade, South Africa saw the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, where police opened fired at protestors outside the Sharpeville police station, ultimately killing 69 people. This signalled a turning point for anti-apartheid activists and icons, resulting in *Unkonto wa Sizwe*, (meaning 'Spear of the Nation'), the military wing of the ANC. This marked the start of the use of more militant tactics in their political action under the guise that violence was a 'justifiable tool against an unjust regime' (Petrus & Isaacs-Martin, 2011, pg.). More so, the apartheid governments continued response of police brutality against popular uprising and protest facilitated increased support for the armed struggle against apartheid. By the 70s and 80s, South Africans, and indeed internationally had taken an active stance against the apartheid regime in the form of civic

movements, under the United Democratic Front (UDF), a party that rejected association and the use of violent tactics against ruling party. However, more policies were implemented, one of which includes the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974, where Afrikaans and English were to be the language of instruction at all black schools. With resentment in the black communities mounting, this spurred on the uprising of 1976, which is estimated to have involved up to 20 000 high school protestors with the support of the Black Consciousness Movement in opposition to the language decree, to which protestors were met with intense police brutality. The aftermath of this protest is believed to have been the tipping point that firmly centred the ANC in the anti-apartheid struggle.

The aims of these protests, which form part of liberation Struggle (often referred to as 'the Struggle' a key word for South Africans), were largely to make the apartheid state ungovernable, and to campaign against the hardships faced every day by citizens within townships; such as rent increases, evictions and poor infrastructure. However, these movements later developed into overtly political mass mobilizations, contesting racially-based government structures.

Nevertheless, the unification of worker and community struggles aided in the later dissolve of the apartheid government's rule, who entered into bilateral agreements with the ANC, until apartheid legislation was abolished in 1991, pending the 1994 elections, which welcomed in the first democratic government in South Africa, headed by Nelson Mandela. While the downfall of the apartheid regime signalled a major political victory and a democratic beginning for South Africans, the structure of capitalism changed very little.

During the presidency of both Nelson Mandela (1994 - 1999) and Thabo Mbeki (1999 - 2008), the ANC adopted neoliberal macro-economic and micro-development policies as a way forward. So, while many black citizens prospered post-1994, most did not. Even for the 10 million Africans that received welfare benefits that were previously, under the apartheid government, available to only poor white, Indian and Coloured families, these grants were not sustainable (Bond & Mottiar, 2013). Furthermore, unemployment and inequality increased; indications for which are among the highest in the world (Alexander & Pfaffe, 2013).

Instead of the achievement of an emancipatory moment at the end of apartheid, South Africans were presented with the total fracturing of society – along both class and ethnic lines (Swatuk & Vale, 2016). The years subsequent to the end of apartheid showed a decline in protest action. According to Pillay (2016), 'the zeitgeist of Nelson Mandela's post-1994 government disabled

radical activism by foregrounding peace, reconciliation, forgiveness and unity' (pg. 156). However, post-democracy, protests within South Africa continued into the 1990s, against continually rising unemployment and inequality. It had become evident to many that the idea of the 'Rainbow Nation' had not fully lived up to their expectations, where class position is still largely determined by the colour of one's skin (Lee, 2016). By the early 2000s, South Africa again saw an upsurge in the number of social movements and urban unrest within most social sectors, reflecting continued citizen discontent and the contemporary struggles on the government's failure to address socio-economic inequalities. Strike statistics from 2004 showed the highest number of days lost per capita per annum (Alexander & Pfaffe, 2013). One such instance of these strikes is the 2012 wildcat wage increase strike in the mining industry, where 34 workers were massacred and killed, and 76 wounded at the hands of police outside a platinum mine is Marikana. Post-democracy protests such as Marikana, which is often compared to the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, are often reminiscent of the types of protests that occurred under the apartheid regime. While this served as a signifier of heavy-handed policing practices leading to violent confrontations, the concluding police reaction, where 270 miners were arrested and charged for the deaths of their colleagues echoed apartheid-era dogmas of 'collective responsibility'. Moreover, Marikana can be seen at the 'first post-apartheid massacre that laid bare the failures of [South Africa's] fairly young democracy' (pg. 38).

Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2011) explain that the reason many post-democracy protests bear such resemblance with protests pre-1994; for instance, burning tyres and creating blockades, is through a process of *enculturation*. This is where culture is transmitted generationally; where children are taught the practices of their elders, which become adopted as their own practices. So, since strike and protest action are considered to have a culture of its own, it can be suggested that any contemporary protest action within a South African context has many practices that are directly taken from the apartheid regime. Furthermore, Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2011) make the point that days marked for commemoration of these significant events of the anti-apartheid Struggle – such as March 21st, a public holiday to commemorate the Sharpeville Massacre - reinforce the values and behaviours that form part of South Africa's culture of protest. I believe, with this reasoning, that the unique historical setting of protest within South Africa makes it a poignant context for any study into social movements.

Contemporary protests within South Africa also usually revolve around lack of basic service delivery (such as water, drainage, electricity and sewage), that are triggered by lack of response to long-standing complaints. These movements characteristically are a when the poorer classes mobilise to contest the state around service delivery (Mottiar, 2013), but also other issues such as housing, quality of roads, and schooling). Since these protestors usually involve disenfranchised lower-class individuals, they often occur in poorer areas such as informal settlements and townships, not unlike apartheid protests. The actors involved in contemporary protests include workers and students. Alexander & Pfaffe (2013) suggest that these protests are not simply service delivery protests, but brand them a 'rebellion of the poor' (pg. 207). They suggest this label due to sheer scale; with more than 1000 unrest incidents every year (for the years 2009-2012), most of which can be credited to a surge of militant protests within informal settlements (Dawson, 2014).

By 2016, South Africa had seen more protests than any other year (Gedye, 2016). These protests are often branded as 'popcorn', a label denoting the fact that they pop up rather frequently, only to subside shortly after (Mottiar, 2013, Bond & Mottiar, 2013). They employ protest and picketing action as an acceptable form of democratic participation. Within South Africa, citizens view protest not only as a bottom-up form of participation, but as vital to having their voices – their views and opinions – heard. Characteristically, contemporary protests aim their demands and discontent at socioeconomic injustice at local authorities rather than at the failed governing of the ANC and its neoliberal policies (Mottiar, 2013). Neoliberal policies, which arguably remain unchanged, are the very source of neglect of poor communities. However, that is not to say that social movement actions are completely ineffective within the political landscape of South Africa: they do bring attention to the issues faced by citizens suffering the far-reaching consequences of apartheid, and the current 'class apartheid' (Bond & Mottiar, 2013, pg. 295). Indeed, while a rather severe view, Mpofu (2017) opines that while apartheid ended in 1994, today it has mutated into an 'unofficial apartheid', whereby the very same marginalized individuals must live in the outskirts of mainstream politics, with lives characterized by poverty and oppression.

5.1 South African student protests

Historically, universities and colleges have been a much-contested space, in many parts of the world – including South Africa. In the decolonisation moment of the 1960s, colonial powers turned

to university education in attempts at creating an elite class that would ensure newly-independent nations would remain under western influence, using models from their own lands (Ochwa-Echel, 2013). In current day, the ramifications of this become visible in that much indigenous knowledge has been stifled, and moreover, that the dynamics of settler colonialism remains deeply imbedded in educational environments (McKoy, Tuck & McKenzie, 2017).

But the 2015 student movements were not the first of their kind. Between the years of 1968 and 1972, South Africa began witnessing upsurges of black-led activism on campuses, moulded by the black liberation ideologies of the Black Consciousness movement, which centred its ideology on a strong sense of self-pride for the black identity, as well as emphasised intellectual consciousness-raising. Black Consciousness, which is often depicted as having been spearheaded by intellectuals, and more specifically Steve Biko, was greatly influenced by the concurrent Black Power movement that was happening in the United States. Both movements demanded for 'Africanization' of university spaces, a term coined by Frantz Fanon. The sentiment that university spaces were crucial institutions to liberation was based on the idea that the institutional culture of universities were 'emblematic of the societies they served' (pg. 21). This accounted for the massive upsurge of student activism that became characteristic of this timeframe – with protests that made demands for greater black staff diversity and for curriculums to be made less white/euro-centric.

Toward the end of 2014, post-graduate students in the politics department at the University of Witwatersrand formulated and published a document titled *WITS Transformation Memo 2014*. This document was the first signifier of disgruntlement at the lack of transformation at formerly white institutions, calling for, among other things, increased racial diversity within the university's staff, and decolonisation of the university's curriculum (Naicker, 2014). Then again in 2015, South African universities once again became sites for radical black activism, under what is collectively titled the 'Fallist' protests (referred to in this manner due to the use of the '*-mustfall*' suffix). A cursory glance at these protests easily emanate remnants of those earlier protests that shock South African campuses in the late 60s. However, over time much has changed politically. With the ANCs continually neoliberal economic framework, it is not difficult to understand at least, one of the reasons why these protests have come about, since, a neoliberal model has serious implications on education, treating it as another service to be delivered – a service that is readily available to those who can afford to buy it. Victor & Segun (2016) cite bad economic state performance, and

low levels of economic development as reasons why citizens of a given state would be likely to protest. Furthermore, protest potentiality is highest in citizens whose participation comes at a lower risk or cost. These are people who have significantly less family responsibilities, aren't married or hold full time jobs. This lends itself to be an almost ideal description of the student demographic.

#RhodesMustFall was the first movement, which marked the start of the fallist protests. #RhodesMustFall was directed towards the removal of the Cecil Rhodes statue at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Impelled by the now (in-)famous Chumani Maxwele, the student who threw faeces at the Rhodes statue on campus (Glenn, 2016), which Pillay (2016) describes as 'Maxwele's visceral material act of disgust at the symbolism attached to Rhodes' (pg. 156); this protest stated that the Rhodes statue symbolised colonialism, institutional racism and imperialism – and that the imperative, some 20 years after apartheid, should be to create new intellectual spaces that prize knowledge originating from the global South. This marked the opening of a dialogue among a new generation of young South Africans and elevated the discussion to the international eye. Between the weeks of 9 March and 9 April 2015, students occupied a building on the UCT campus, renaming it '*Azania House*'. Azania, a black-consciousness inspired name, had been used during the apartheid era by Struggle icons to refer to a liberated South Africa (Naicker, 2016). As a result of the protests, the statue was removed on 9 April 2015, an exhilarating success for protestors.

That same month – spurred on by the momentum of #RhodesMustFall – students rallied around the cause of #OpenStellenbosch: a movement calling to reduce the use of Afrikaans as the language of instruction of the University of Stellenbosch. Student protests in South Africa trigger memories of the 1976 Soweto Uprising - one of South Africa's most historically significant protests, where at least 1000 school children were brutally gunned down by police and army forces for protesting against the introduction of Afrikaans as language of instruction in black-only schools. The #OpenStellenbosch movement's core value – which is the mobilisation of students against Afrikaans as the language of education at the University of Stellenbosch is likely to be the most reminiscent (Commey, 2015). Both contested the use of Afrikaans within Education. Language planning and policy implementation is a way to enhance the social role of certain languages. However, in most situations, language planning occurs in a multilingual setting, and planning for one language inevitably affects other languages and ethnolinguistic groups, and ultimately reflect power relations. It's for this reason that language policies are often under scrutiny, specifically in

schooling, as they have the ability to marginalise some students and thus create further inequalities. #OpenStellenbosch was a call to review language policy within the university, a space that has remained largely unchallenged since the end of apartheid (Naicker, 2016). For this specific situation, making the language of education Afrikaans the language of instruction has the ability to privilege Afrikaans speakers, while actively excluding non-Afrikaans speakers.

By the next year, in October of 2015, the #WitsFeesMustFall movement began at the University of Witwatersrand and subsequently spread to universities across South Africa, snowballing to an unprecedented national shutdown of these higher education institutions, a rallying cry against financial exclusion (Pillay, 2016). The prospect of a large tuition fee increases, to which these protests are a reaction, opened dialogues about access, privilege and exclusionary education, as well as a general lack of social transformation within South Africa (Munusamy, 2015). Commey (2015) explains that this 'fee crisis that recurs every year is part of a broader narrative of black poverty,' (alongside the likes of the service delivery protests) '…and the desperate attempt to use education as a ticket out of that trap' (pg.). Historically, these protests are also a result of continual promises on the part of the ANC-led government that free and quality education would be available to all, which formed part of their election campaign pre-1994, and which has made its way into political discussion and discontent. In fact, the Constitution of 1996[1] states that:

> (1) Everyone has the right - (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

In all, 26 universities partook in the protest, including, but not limited to, University of Cape Town, Rhodes University and University of Western Cape, with students storming various sites of political power such Luthuli House in Johannesburg, and the Union Buildings in Pretoria. The hashtag was a clear follow-on from #RhodesMustFall. This indicates that the #FeesMustFall campaign drew discursive inspiration from the original hashtag. These protests have become important in that they contest existing social disparities and aid in the circulation of decolonial discourse within South Africa; a space marked with inequality (Milani, 2013). The #FeesMustFall protest concluded on 23 October 2015, outside the Union Buildings in Pretoria, with an address by South African President Jacob Zuma stating that there would be a 0% increase in fees for 2016. By October of 2016, upon the announcement by Minister of Finance, Blade Nzimande that in 2017

[1] *Find Section 29of the Constitution: Education attached in the appendices, pg. 75*

there would be a fee increase, protestors became active again, now under what is commonly simply referred to under the umbrella term, the #FeesMustFall movement. The change from various hashtags from 2015, with each university having their own titular hashtag (i.e. WitsMustFall), to the more general and inclusive '#FeesMustFall' suggests that the protests evolved into a more connected and unified protest than had been seen before. However, overall, #RhodesMustFall, which was linked to only one university, contesting one issue had a much more coherent plan than what was seen throughout the #FeesMustFall movement. Glenn (2016) critiques the coherence of the #FeesMustFall movement's coherence and lack of clarity by asking:

> Were students simply asking for fees not to be raised? Or for that and an end to outsourcing of workers, or for a major change of economic policy to provide free education to all? Or for universities to become non-colonial institutions not perceived to be hostile to black students? (pg. 85)

5.1.1 Social media use during the protests

The Fallist student protests in South Africa, which first began gaining momentum in March of 2015, had a strong online presence, as evidenced by the fact that this movement, and those to follow under the fallist bracket are referred to, in both academic and journalistic writing with the hashtag (#) (i.e., #RhodesMustFall). The first hashtag to surface and to trend was #RhodesMustFall, to a large degree, protesters in this movement used social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate – namely, for planning and organisation. Twitter is cited as being used predominantly among the highly-educated, and the most represented age bracket on the SNS are people from the age 18-29, making students most likely candidates (Wikstrom, 2017). As such, social media played a pivotal role in the movement's word-of-mouth diffusion. Protests have been documented as a 'contagious occurrence over space and time' (Bastos, Mercea & Charpentier, 2015, pg.), and social media amplified the process of idea diffusion, resulting in the up-scaling of the protest as a localised incident, to being in full-swing across the nation in a matter of days. It also played a large role in the overall public perception of the movement. The use of the title #FeesMustFall movement that includes the hashtag symbol, which was the common referent on news sites such as *Daily Vox*, suggests a transference from being a system marker on Twitter, to public discourse. This in itself suggests (along with calls for people to 'donate airtime') that there was extensive use of Twitter during the student protests. Many tweets during these

protests were reprinted and embedded in articles by major news sources, such as Mail & Guardian[2], who included a section titled *Anger in the Twitterverse* in an article about #FeesMustFall, reproducing 12 tweets. Since Twitter is already an established social media site, protest leaders did not have to compile mailing lists or popularise other sites to share information regarding the protests. The fact that Twitter is freely available to any potential users, without any subscription fees – making it fast, easy and cheap, also means that a larger number of individuals (particularly students – which made up the bulk of the protest body) are able to utilise the site.

The social climate of South Africa can be described as a 'transitional democracy' (Bosch 2016, pg. 2), in that it has yet to fully achieve democratic consolidation of the effects of apartheid. Moreover, Bosch (2016) states that the country is in a state of juncture, 'reflected by growing socio-economic inequality and citizen discontent' (pg. 2). South African democracy also emphasizes citizen participation as the key to a transformed political landscape (Thompson, 2014). Against this backdrop, student protests are not particularly surprising in such a transitional context. This is evident in the growing participation of South African youth, who previously have shown a lack of partisanship in politics post-1994 (Bosch, 2016). However, Pillay (2016) explains this 'renewed awareness, a mercurial black consciousness' (pg. 156), to be a result of broader disruption of power that can be seen in the upsurge of protest action. More so perhaps, the cries for decolonisation are an idea heralded by Frantz Fanon – the 'prophet of the present' to many of South African born frees and an advocate of anticolonial violence (Leescher, 2016).

Social media sites – with their predominantly young userbases - have presented themselves as tools for fostering political interest and discussion in the younger citizens (Bosch, 2016). This participation encourages people to critically think and speak about current politics and become more intimately involved in them, as is evidenced by the political buzz on all national campuses. With the fact that the authorship of the tweets is inclusive of the opinions of its users, discourses are then created by and internalised by these users. Twitter and other SNSs, provide a common ground that connects the re-appropriated (political) public space with the private autonomous

[2] Mail & Guardian present themselves as 'South Africa's oldest quality news source on the web and Africa's first online newspaper'. For more on the article mentioned, *Crisis opens up crucial transformation debate,* see https://mg.co.za/article/2015-10-24-crisis-opens-up-crucial-transformation-debate

(political) identities of its users. Therefore, it is important to understand how youth politics, social media and protest play out in African societies (Bosch, 2016).

Regarding discussions about access, this study recognises that Twitter, although open to the general public, provides access only to those who own smartphones or computers and an internet connection. This is particularly important within the South African context of poverty. By extension, it is also acknowledged that social media is in itself exclusionary – it is estimated that of the 26% of Africa that has access to the internet (Deumert, 2014), only 9% of Africans use social media (Parke, 2016). Within sub-Saharan Africa, which is one of the least-computerized locations in the world due to a lack of network and basic infrastructure, South Africa is considered to be the most information-integrated society (Bornman, 2016), with 50% of South Africans having internet connections. However, this still entails that a whole half of the population are unable to engage (Deumert, 2014). However, there has been a marked increase in use of mobile phones. In Africa, statistics as of 2005 showed that only 14% of Africans had access to mobile phones. By 2011 however, that number had more than doubled, making mobile telephony the preferred medium for telecommunications on the continent (Bock, et al, 2016).

Cesero-Ripolles (2017) also notes that the ability to use social media is based on educational capital in that it is only possible if the individual has the necessary technical and cognitive digital competency. Furthermore, age, gender and particularly socio-economic factors lead to differences between people's ability to access political information. This digital divide – between those who are online and those who aren't – has the capacity to reinforce categorical inequalities in so much as it creates unequal access, and thus unequal participation. Furthermore, power relations continue to shape our experience of social media- indeed, not all users of SNSs have the same power to be heard, seen or read online. Attention and visibility form part of the political economy online. Social media may promote pluralism and reconfigure certain power relations by allowing more voices to be heard. That being said, even online more powerful actors such as newspaper online publications, or large institutions and universities, are privy to more online visibility than a single political blogger. By this I mean that it is more likely that you will be exposed to Kylie Jenner's lip kits on her Instagram, in which she boasts 105 million followers, than the everyman who has less than 100 followers. Fuchs (2014) draws a parallel between this and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* in saying that 'some users are more equal than others' (pg. 15). Figures that already have a multitude

of followers are more likely to be able to start hashtag trends. United States' President Donald Trump, in a now famous typo, tweeted earlier in 2017. Despite the negative press *covfefe*, which spurred on the #covfefe trend that became an overnight sensation. The trend was so penetrating, in fact, it seemed almost to cause an otherwise Twitter blackout, that allowed political events such as a suicide bombing that occurred on the same day – killing 90 and injuring 400 people in Afghanistan – to fall under the radar. Furthermore, Twitter especially, as privately-owned, has its own capitalist and profitability agendas, allowing individuals and corporations to buy visibility. In this way, 'sponsored' accounts are more likely to appear when users are searching for other users, and/or topics.

While I do not wholly support the cyber-utopian view of the internet as 'the ultimate flowering of democracy' (Jones, 1997, pg. 15), specifically as there is lack of empirical evidence to suggest that social media during protests have a direct impact on the course of events, as is suggested by some commentators who label protests as 'Twitter revolutions' (Marieder & Schwarzenegger, 2011, pg. 173). Questions about whether or not the internet will usher us into an era of citizen participation and political accountability (as can be seen in Hill & Heughes 1998) have been the subject of discussion time and again. While some discussions have led to the idea that social media may be subversive to autocratic regimes, other have suggested that it promotes softer forms of policing (Lee, 2015) and that it can possibly be an effective tool for command, control, and surveillance by authorities (Tremayne, 2014). Concerns regarding surveillance have been something that I have addressed in my data collection (see Chapter 4. Methodology). Other critiques of digital activism are that is allows people to engage in 'slacktivism' (Morozov, 2009, pg. 13) where participants to engage in feel-good – but useless - Internet activism. In response to this claim, however, I follow the line of reasoning in Sanchez's (2016) work – that when oppressed individuals begin to participate in sustained dialogue; documenting the conditions of their oppression, they begin to *understand* the nature of their oppression. The ability for people to freely dialogue, and the fact that new media allows us to experience the mobility of ideas and resources in new ways (Deumert, 2014), is in itself revolutionary. Social media provides a public space that hails citizens into democratic deliberation and linguistic citizenship, *as well as* potentially creates a more engaged and informed populace. In the study to follow, I expect to see not only a more engaged set of citizens, but also, users whom use the space that Twitter provides, to shape their political (and perhaps *activist*) identities.

6. Analysis of corpora

With the main tenets explained in focus, this work moves on to the analysis of the data collected. The analysis is divided into tweet categories. Tweet categories are based on the individual hashtags that were used for the data collection and are below individually analysed and organised in chronological order. The first category to follow will be the hashtag #RhodesMustFall, the pioneering 'fallist' protest for university students in South Africa. After systematically analysing each category, a discussion will follow, wherein overall summations can be made from the data as a whole.

6.1 #RhodesMustFall

'All successful revolutions end with statues coming down' – Viktor Misiano

The data for this category was initially run through the AntConc *wordlist* function, which showed that the corpus consisted of 18 462 tokens in total. A wordlist ranks words in frequency, with the most frequent words appearing at the top of the list. The column below titled *rank* indicates where words are ranked in terms of frequency, with the item ranked as '1' being the most frequent word, with words with less frequency further down the list. Baker (2006) explains that examining frequent words is able to 'uncover specific foci of a particular text or corpus' because 'such words can be indicative of discourse' (pg. 127). In this case, the most highly ranked and most frequent word that appears (a total of 1000 times) is the hashtag #RhodesMustFall. Since each category, including this one, consists of 1000 tweets, this means that this word appears in each tweet. Throughout this analysis, each category will have their respective hashtag 'headings' as the most frequent word, as the hashtags were criterion for the data collection, and thus behave as the cohesive feature. Baker (2006) explains that focusing and examining lexical words are of more interest than grammatical words. In this vein, table 6.1.1 below reflects the 15 most frequent content words.

Table 6.1.1: Top 15 lexical tokens for #RhodesMustFall

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	rhodesmustfall	1000
9	rhodes	202

12	we	169
14	i	166
15	uct	157
20	statue	126
22	you	117
27	students	102
33	people	76
44	black	62
47	white	59
54	south	48
56	university	46
58	campaign	44
61	cecil	43

After compiling the wordlist, the next action was to observe the collocates of each word, which are words that frequently appear alongside each other. The purpose of this activity is to 1.) contextualise the words and; 2.) understand the 'associations and connotations [these words] have, and therefore the assumptions which they embody' (Baker, 2006, pg. 127). The second most frequent word to appear is *Rhodes,* which, with its 22 collocations to *john,* and 38 collocations to *cecil* (both immediately to the left of the word *Rhodes*), the forenames of Cecil-John Rhodes, refers to the actor in these instances. Historically, Rhodes was a man that 'used his considerable power – both political and financial – to make black people all over Southern Africa pay a bloody price for his beliefs' (Mbembe, 2015, pg. 2). Rhodes' actions are described with verbs to the right such as *stole*, *perpetrated* and *exploited,* all of which are negatively connoted words. These are also used as points of argument to support the movement's premise that the statue is symbolic of 'damage', and that we should no longer 'venerate it':

It's not hard. Rhodes ***exploited*** *others for his own gain. No 'contribution' he made could ever trump the damage he caused #RhodesMustFall*
Rhodes ***perpetrated*** *much evil in the name of empire. Time to place that where it belongs...rather than venerate it. #RhodesMustFall*

Rhodes also collocates 34 times with the word *statue* (to its right). The Rhodes statue that stood at the heart of the university (and the removal thereof) was the main tenet of the movement toward decolonisation of the university. Moreover, the statue of Rhodes stands on [*stolen* – 3 collocates] *land*. Twice the word *statue* is referred to as *racist's* [Rhodes] *statue.* The word *Statue* is also able to *represent[s]* ideals. Mbembe (2015) explains that the 'decolonisation of buildings and of public spaces' is 'not a frivolous issue' (pg. 5), because of the ability of buildings, statues, iconography and colonial names to *represent,* and their ability to inhibit a public space, stand in the public gaze, and impose 'particular states of humiliation based on white supremacist presuppositions' (pg. 6). Monuments related to the experiences of the white minority, emphasises history from the white perspective and erases non-white history which effectively cements whiteness as superior. This understanding is echoed in the data, as can be seen in the concordances below:

*Still, it must go. That **statue represents** white supremacy. #RhodesMustFall*
*It's not about the **statue**, it's about what it **represents**. Just pull the damn thing down and be done with it. #RhodesMustFall*

Since this work is concerned with identity, included in the keywords are personal pronouns which occur frequently, such as *I* and *you* (ranked at 14 and 22 respectively). In the regard that understanding community is also a concern of this work, included is the pronoun *we*, which has a high frequency (ranked at 12). If one considers *I* to be an actor, then *I* is capable of being active. English is an SVO structured language. For this reason, this word, and the aforementioned pronouns will be examined by looking at words to its right (which are in the verb position). To the right of *I,* there are emotive words, such as *disgusted* and *awe.* There are also words such as *witnessed, heard* and *worried.* These words pit *I* as an experiencer rather than an agent. In the cases where words are used that set *I* up as an agent, these words are still particularly passive, such as *wondering, suggest, propose* and *reckon.* Less passive verbs include *writing, unlike,* and *unfollow,* words which tend toward social media, which indicates a more active persona that

posters feel they are able to embody on their social media accounts. Users of social media may feel empowered by the ability to be the owners of their social media accounts; where they can decidedly and actively remove items and people they do not wish to see. Alongside this is Blommaert's (2017a) statement that while these seem only to be 'light social practices', they act as a means of maintaining relationships of conviviality, which is crucial to cohesion and integration within social groups. *I* also collocates 3 times with the verb *blame,* such as in the concordances below:

*Poor Water infrastructure in townships that leads to R7billion lost revenue is the apartheid legacy, **I blame** whites. #Rhodesmustfall*

This tweet shows that while it is tagged as #RhodesMustFall, it includes other issues that are part of the legacy of apartheid. In this instance, the user is referring to service delivery in the townships.

Conversely, the pronoun *we*, which is to be treated in the same manner as *I,* is described less emotively, with verbs instead that position it as an agent. Examples of these verbs are *shape, reject, rejected, resisted,* and *plundered.* In this way, it appears that the collective group, or the community group is more aggressive and active than the singular *I.* Furthermore, it seems to suggest that the singular *I,* uses active words that relate to the online sphere, whereas *we* makes references to activities in the physical space as well. A collective group is more empowered to make changes to not only the seemingly ethereal social media accounts that they manage, but also to the corporeal space. *We* also label themselves as *victims* and as the *student Taliban.* Taliban alludes to the Afghan political movement synonymous with violent tactics, waging a civil war within Afghanistan. This seems incongruent with the rest of the data, where violence, for instance, is mentioned only 4 times and where student activities is described to the right (in the verb position) of the word *students* with active, but non-violent words such as *request, mobilize, forge* and *chant*. In terms of identity markers, the word *students* collocate with *black* to the left 9 times. This entails that when tweeters are discussing students, they do so predominantly with the thought that the students of #RhodesMustFall are black, especially since the word *students* does not collocate with the word *white* to its left at all.

The word *white* however does occur as a frequent word in this corpus, but is aligned in its collocations, with highly political and social notions, all of which are negative, or which mark *white* as the dominant social group:

Word	**Collocates to Right (Times)**
White	Supremacy (8)
	Supremacist(s) (3)
	Arrogance (3)
	Ignorance (3)
	Privilege (3)
	Mediocrity (3)
	Disconnectedness (3)
	Racist/m (4)

The notion of white privilege, which has become a hot topic of debate in the public sphere in the last several years, can be accredited to the social media boom, and specifically the Black Lives Matter movement. However, this issue, and some of the associated issues that are drawn on in the above list, have been studied and discussed for decades. Take for instance, McIntosh (1988) who, in her list of daily instances of privilege, cites: 'When I was told about what is positive in our national heritage or 'civilisation', I was shown that people of my colour [whites] made it so' (pg. 32). While these are independent notions, *supremacy,* which is the most frequently appearing word, entails and allows the existence of *white arrogance* and *white privilege.* While the #RhodesMustFall was most certainly spurred on by the statue as its main catalyst, the discussion of issues such as privilege and supremacy, as well as service delivery which was seen in an earlier tweet, show how the movement has also exposed the festering wound left behind by colonialism. What the use of these words also signal, are actors that are aware of the social order, and that are challenging history, and challenging whiteness:

*Cecil John Rhodes stood for racism, plundering, **white supremacy**, colonialism and oppression of black people #rhodesmustfall*

White also collocates with actors such as *white guy/people. Black* collocates with either actors, or with more empowered concepts. Blackness seems to be juxta positioned against whiteness.

Word	**Collocates to Right (Times)**
Black	Academics (3)
	Feminism (2)
	Consciousness (1)
	Domination (1)

The use of the words *black consciousness* act as the first signal that black consciousness acts as an inspiration for this movement, which can be seen in the full concordance: *the black consciousness that is being revived in cpt* [Cape Town] *its beautiful*. This is along with words such as *decolonisation* (appearing 6 times), and other instances which will be discussed further on.

Quite interestingly, the word *campaign* appears in the list of top lexical words, whereas *protest* does not. In fact, in 35 instances, it is referred to as the *#Rhodesmustfall campaign.* The use of *campaign* indicates both organisation and structure. It also suggests that there are clear motives, and that sustainability is ensured. On the other hand, the word *protest* (which appears 32 times in the text) can indicate once-off events and does not necessarily indicate coherence and organisation and connotes violence. When looking at the concordances for the word *protest*, it is evident that users who had an anti-#Rhodesmustfall stance, tended to refer to the movement as a *protest* or to the activity 'to *protest*' rather than as a *campaign*, such as can be seen below:

*"uggh students are always looking for reasons to **protest** ?? " - my lecturer on #RhodesMustFall **protest***

*People with brains will **protest** for jobs, but instead the idiots **protest** for #RhodesMustFall. You are dumber than we thought.*
*I am sorry but this #RhodesMustFall **protest** has gone way too far. We get your point but attacking and accosting ppl* [people] *is unacceptable.*

In contrast, we can see how pro-#RhodesMustFall tweeters or pro-protests users make use of the word *campaign*:

*To those in favor of, and spearheading the #RhodesMustFall **campaign**: be brave brave!!! We are with you in spirit!*
*Our #RhodesMustFall **campaign** will gain more momentum now. We have undivided attention!*

The second part of this analysis (which is done in each category to follow) involved running the main corpus against a reference corpus. As mentioned in the earlier methodology section, the reference corpus consisted of 39 935 tweets collected using the Tweetcatcher Software. In summary, Baker (2006) describes keywords as:

> A somewhat more sophisticated way of ascertaining the focus of a corpus is by carrying out a keywords analysis… a keyword is a word which occurs statistically more frequently in a single text or corpus than in another text or corpus (pg. 134).

This pinpoints which words are excessively appearing in the data. The words are then ranked according to *keyness*. In table 6.2.1 below, both highly frequent words (words that have a high keyness) are noted, as well negative words (that have a low keyness) marked in red, which are significantly missing in the corpus when compared to the reference corpus, as both provide useful insights.

Table 6.1.2: Keywords for #RhodesMustFall

Rank	Word	Keyness
4	statue	880.448

5	students	546.999
10	rhodesowhite	246.365
12	transformation	223.792
18	white	193.593
21	black	169.524
23	apartheid	163.563
237	law	0.736
303	media	0.338
353	policy	0.215
432	gay	0.043
491	government	0.004

The words *statue*, *transformation*, and *students* rank as having high keyness, which means that they appear significantly more in the #RhodesMustFall corpus, than in the referent corpus. This indicates a clear goal for the protest (*statue* and *transformation*), and also clear actors or a collective identity (*students*). However, both *black* and *white* show a high keyness, as not only political concepts for discussion, but also as identities that are embodied (*us as black people, our responsibility as white people*). In a South African landscape, whiteness, which has to do with both skin pigmentation, and also with privilege, power, and authority, emerges as an identity based on historical fact of colonialism – whereby light-skinned settlers colonised large territories, creating unequal relationships between them and the darker-skinned natives. Continued unequal encounters effectively have allowed these relations to continue between the descendants of the settlers and the natives (Nyamnjoh, 2016). In South Africa, at least, history, which includes the likes of *apartheid*, has shaped the realities and construction of whites and whiteness, as well as blacks and blackness. Even over 20 years after the end of apartheid, racial tensions arguably continue to escalate. Moreover, the concern for black and white identities has clear significance when considering that the #RhodesMustFall movement has been inspired by Black Consciousness thinking. For instance, the Fanonian concept of 'decolonisation' synonymous with 'Africanization', is philosophy adopted by Black Consciousness thinkers. Furthermore, the word *apartheid*, which appears 25 times in the text, is aligned with views that signal tweeters understanding of how its legacy continues to fracture contemporary South African society by speaking about *apartheid effects on the born-free generation.*

Another user challenges the much-lauded apartheid icons in the concordance:

> *But though on this #RhodesMustFall debate - why should we praise/worship apartheid heroes who did no good to us as black people ???*

The word *RhodesSoWhite*, also a hashtag, appears as the fourth keyword for this category. This shows the interconnectivity of social networking, as this hashtag bears thousands of its own tweets when selected. The hashtag *#RhodeSoWhite* has clear discursive links to the 2016 hashtag *#OscarSoWhite*, which was used to protest the lack of ethnic diversity of representation of people of colour within the Academy Awards (Angott, 2016). Creating this link highlights protestors views on diversity, implicating Rhodes, who is a signifier of colonialism, as a posthumous instigator of lack of diversity within the university. Moreover, the use of the tag #RhodeSoWhite signifies a use of the hashtag less for the sorting functionality but rather to make a meta-comment on the tweet, and one which discursively represents the ideals associated with the #OscarSoWhite hashtag that bears its own meaning, along with millions of tweets. This is interesting because with the use of 13 characters, this poster has made a statement that transcends the barrier of the character limit that is set by Twitter.

Negative words, which are those that appear significantly less in the specialised corpus than in the reference corpus, include *government*, *policy* and *law*. These words indicate institutions (*government)* and official channels (*law*, *policy*). While more frequent words such as *statue* and *transformation* indicate clear-cut goals, the absence of these negative words implies that these goals are objectives of immediacy. Longer-term goals would likely involve formal structures and change on a structural level, as direct engagement with the heart of state power is the key to successful social transformation processes. This is particularly problematic as it entails that, while protestors speak about transformation, they do so on a smaller shorter-term basis than on a structural-basis, i.e. change to *policy*, *law*, and a *government* that allows the current order to prevail.

Other low-ranked or absent words include gender and sexuality identity markers such as *gay/lesbian, man/men, women/woman/girls,* which indicates that the prevailing actors are *students*, which are only marked in some instances by ethnicity (*black students, white people),* which indicates a racial divide between the communal *student* identity. This is particularly problematic in light of the fact that the official #RhodesMustFall Facebook page's profile picture is of a protest sign reading: *Dear History this revolution has women, gays, queers & trans remember that'* – of which none of these identities are reflected in the data. However, even more lacking are any other ethnic identity markers such as *Indian, Asian* (do not appear), and *coloured* (appears once). The lack of representation of other racial identities in itself poses problems with a protest that '*loudly [calls] for the radical transformation of structural racism*'. The instance where *coloured* appears seems to highlight the black and white binary, and the absence of other racial identities:

> *The #RhodesMustFall debacle once again highlights how difficult it is to be* ***coloured*** *in a* ***black and white country.***

6.2 #OpenStellenbosch

'If you don't speak Afrikaans, you don't belong here' -from the documentary *Luister*

The table below is a word list of the 15 most frequent lexical words that appeared in this category of tweets with a total of 14 939 tokens.

Table 6.2.1: Top 15 lexical tokens for #OpenStellenbosch

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	openstellenbosch	1000
11	we	146
12	you	136
15	luister	122
20	stellenbosch	104
22	university	97
26	students	86
28	rhodesmustfall	78

30	afrikaans	72
31	they	70
32	black	65
34	people	60
36	white	58
39	your	54
41	language	52

The #OpenStellenbosch movement first began gaining momentum in April of 2015, spurred on predominantly by the #RhodesMustFall movement at UCT; their neighbouring university. This is indicated by the token *rhodesmustfall*, which appears as the 8th (eighth) most frequent lexical word. This means that tweeters were using and tagging both topics in their tweets, signalling intertextuality and a connectedness between the two movements. Resembling #Rhodesmustfall protestors who were protesting for the removal of the Rhodes statue and its symbolic meaning, #Openstellenbosch protestors aimed their attention at outdated language policies at the University of Stellenbosch. With the understanding that language is identity, and identity is political, it is not hard to comprehend the basic underpinning of the #OpenStellenbosch movement. During apartheid, language policies were set to ensure the hierarchical organisation of the country would remain in place, 'with Afrikaans and English existing at the top of the hierarchy, and African languages relegated to the bottom rungs' (Botsis, 2015, pg. 16) In post-apartheid South Africa, the dynamics of difference and power are refracted, in that the landscape is one of both historical and contemporary asymmetries. Language is a particularly controversial issue within the country – especially in terms of language education policies, because the ideological value systems set in by both colonialism and apartheid have proven to be so far hard to overcome.

The Twitter account that surfaced in April 2015 (@OpenStellies), self-proclaims the movement's aim as 'purging the oppressive remnants of apartheid in pursuit of a decolonised African University'. Again, we see the use of the word 'decolonisation', which refers to Black Consciousness-inspired thinking, as well as the idea of the 'remnants of apartheid', which alludes to the fact that much of the oppression that persists in contemporary South Africa is a result of this history. The reason that this point has been emphasised both here, and in the previous category will come to light in the following chapters. For the moment, there is clear discussion regarding

apartheid's role in contemporary politics both here and in #RhodesMustFall, a point that is notable absent in later discussions.

During apartheid, English and Afrikaans were the dominant languages through the legislation of them as national languages of learning and teaching throughout the country. Language is often tightly bound to group mobilisation. In post-apartheid South Africa, Leibowitz (2015) explains that:

> High-profile mobilisation around language in schools happens mainly in relation to Afrikaans, partly because of the symbolic links of the language with oppression and apartheid, and partly because, for particular people, Afrikaans symbolises loss of power and voice. (pg. 39)

Stellenbosch University's *language policy* (which collocates 16 times in the data) that was instituted in 2002, asserted that all undergraduate courses were to be taught in Afrikaans. This is notably problematic in a country where language coincides with class and race – and specifically marks privilege in education (Leibowitz, 2015). Further so, it is exclusionary and isolating to those previously-discriminated African language speakers. As mentioned previously, this is in direct conflict promises made by the ANC, and with the 1996 Constitution that states that 'everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions'[3]. However, it is notable that the policy of 2002 had undergone several revisions. By 2007, the revision suggested that English be better instated to be more accommodating to students of varying language needs. This led ultimately to the two different approaches, the so-called 'T-Option', whereby Afrikaans classes would be translated live during lectures, and a secondary option, where separate English classes would be held. In the data, *language* collocates with words such as *exclusion, restrictive*, and more specifically, *Afrikaans* is referred to as the '*language of the settlers'* and the '*language of previous oppression',* which refers to historical events. This also pits the language as being counter-active to transformation, and as belonging to specific identity – that of settlers or previous oppressors. This is particularly pertinent when understanding that much of the #OpenStellenbosch student discontent stemmed from poor implementation of the strategies (more specifically the T-Option) recommended in the 2007 policy revision – in that not all learning material had been translated to English, and that Afrikaans was still being used as the most predominant language.

[3] See again the attached section on Education from the South African constitution in the Appendices

However, beyond problematic language policies and poorly implemented strategies to accommodate non-Afrikaans students, Stellenbosch University had also been in the news only a year before the #OpenStellenbosch movement, where three white students black-faced themselves for a dress-up party, causing an uproar and exposing 'the underlying racial issues that still exist within Stellenbosch' (Pretorius, 2016, pg. 2). Moreover, the choice of the university to not press charges or take disciplinary action against these students, along with a racially-motivated assault on 2 black students by a group of intoxicated white students exacerbated the fact that the predominantly-white university space is a hotbed of hostility to marginalised students.

The word '*luister*' (Afrikaans word meaning 'listen') appears as the 4th (fourth) most frequent lexical token. *Luister,* a short, poignant documentary (collocating with the word *documentary* 10 times, and with the verb *watching* 8 times) that was made in August 2015 candidly exposes, through interviews with several students and a lecturer at the University, instances where students of colour experienced racial prejudice at the university or in the town of Stellenbosch. The film, which can be found on YouTube (a readily-available video streaming site), opens with the line 'The colour of my skin, in Stellenbosch, is like a social burden'. Notably, this film struck a chord with many of the students of the #OpenStellenbosch movement, appearing in the data sample as its own hashtag (112 times out of the 122 times it is used). The word *Luister* can also indicate several meanings; the most seeming of which is that the documentary is an exposé where viewers are able to listen to the stories of the students. In a conversation, in order to *Luister* ('listen'), the listener must be silent. In many senses, this speaks to the idea that students in the documentary are talking to an interlocutor and demanding their listening, which allows them to claim their voices. In a space with imposing language policies, where students struggle to communicate in another language, claiming one's voice and being heard (and understood) has the ability to be empowering. The choice to use the word in the language being contested highlights this fact, and using it as a hashtag, and as a single command, similarly employs the demand for the reader to 'listen'.

While the #OpenStellenbosch movement drew discursively from the earlier #RhodesMustFall movement, the use of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag (collocating 6 times with the word *Luister* and appearing 10 times in the data overall), an international movement that fights against violence and systematic racism against black bodies suggests that the #OpenStellenbosch movement also drew discursively from the latter movement. Moreover, the use of #BlackLivesMatter also allows

the user to garner additional layers of meaning to their tweet, that transcends the written by referencing the tag along with all of the tweets from that timeline, and the discourses that accompany them, while effectively elevating their tweet to the same status as #BlackLivesMatter, one of the most prolific issue communities on Twitter.

When analysing the pronouns of this category, it is notable that it appears to follow the same pattern as is seen in the #RhodesMustFall category. *I* collocates to passive verbs – *I might/doubt/wonder/hope,* whereas *we* collocates with active verbs – *we toppled/actively/occupy/approach.* Protestors appear to, when acting or speaking about themselves, position the collective as far more active than the singular actor. The pronoun *you* is coupled most frequently with accusations from the authors of the tweets – '***you*** *robbed the poor',* and '*how long will* ***you*** *enable and condone racism?'* However, in this category, only *we* and *you* appear most frequently. This implies a deletion of the individual *I,* in the stead of the collective *we,* which is in binary opposition to the accused and othered *you,* and *they.* This creates an 'us and them' dichotomy which Machin & Mayr (2012) describe to have the following effects:

> Pronouns like 'us', 'we' and 'them' are used to align us alongside or against particular ideas. Text producers can evoke their own ideas as being our ideas and create a collective 'other' that is in opposition to these shared ideas (pg. 84).

If the 'us' which collocates largely with *students* is hailing a sense of group membership. With regards to actors, the word *students*, which is a frequently appearing lexical word, collocates with *black* to the left a total of 15 times, to *Afrikaans* 3 times and to *white* only once. Again, this would suggest that when referring to 'students', authors of these tweets are predominantly signifying black students, especially since the instances of *white* and *Afrikaans students* are a means of othering against the *black student* identity. *Black students* are said to *experience racism and other forms of discrimination,* or on a more active level, are said to be *fighting:*

black students *are still fighting against the afrikaans medium decree of 1974 #OpenStellenbosch #WeCantBreathe #Luister*

But moreover than simply *fighting,* the tweet indicates that they are 'still fighting' which indicates a continuation of a fight against a prevailing issue – which in this instance is the language decree of 1774. On the other hand, *white students* are said to *gather,* and their actions are trivialised:

***White students** will gather in numbers for a squirrels movement, but they won't dare show up for black students' rights #OpenStellenbosch*

Afrikaans students are shown to be *privileged* and to *benefit*:

*How can we equally compete with **Afrikaans students** when we only understand 50% of the work in class? #OpenStellenbosch*
*The current use of the t-option privileges **Afrikaans students** only. They benefit while we're struggling. #OpenStellenbosch*

This indicates that *black students* are actors in the movement, whereas *white students,* whose primacy of ideology differs, are judged to be apathetic. This type of argument furthermore draws attention to the indifference of the white population – by implying they would rather 'gather for a squirrel movement' draws attention to the fact that racism goes unchallenged by white students/people, falling part of a larger discourse that white people are likely to act hostile or indifferent to issues (such as racism) that don't affect them, or that they do not experience themselves (Cadden, 2017). On the other hand, *Afrikaans students* are shown to be beneficiaries against a backdrop of other students' *struggling* (*'they benefit while we're struggling'*). Whiteness here, similarly to in the #RhodesMustFall campaign, is understood in terms of power relations:

Word	**Collocates to Right (Times)**
White	Supremacy (16)
	Power (5)
	Privilege (2)

Whiteness is associated with superiority and hegemony, clearly fostering the narrative that racism continues unhindered due to the unchallenged legacy of white supremacy. Stellenbosch University is a particularly problematic space, as it is the institution from which all 7 of the apartheid regime's prime ministers were educated, along with several notable pro-apartheid forerunners, and continues to be an important space for Afrikaners, with most facets of the university's activities – such as meetings for residence and faculty – being conducted in Afrikaans. This clearly disadvantages students from non-Afrikaans backgrounds, which are most often black students When analysing words to the left of *white supremacy,* (which appears 16 times) words that appear are those such as *confronting* (3 times), *tackling* (once), *tackle* (once), and *end* (once). Authors are able to show their dissent against the predominant order. When speaking about *white* as it relates to an actor, *white* collocates with *people* 6 times, in comparison to the one time that it collocates with *students*. By naming *white people,* this affectively dissociates *white* from the identity of *student.* There are 4 cases where *black* collocates with *people,* but the difference in the way *people* are referred to in these cases can be quite clearly seen in the concordances below. This clearly positions *white people* as the occupiers and excluders of space, while polarising and positioning *black people* as the excluded bodies from that space:

#OpenStellenbosch I quiz Duma on the reason for the choice of topic, he replies, basically ***white people*** *feel like this is their space.*
The language issue at #OpenStellenbosch is just another way of excluding ***black people*** *in certain spaces.*

Black collocates in other cases with the symbolic, such as *pain,* and *consciousness.* Also notable is *black voices* which echoes the earlier discussion of listening, and reclamation of power.

Word	**Collocates to Right (Times)**
Black	Pain (4)
	Voices (2)
	Consciousness (1)

	Bodies (1)

Whiteness is ideologically squared with blackness:

#OpenStellenbosch There can be no healing of ***black pain*** *without the dismantling of* ***white power***

Black collocates with words to the left that affectively shows them to be victims, such as *dismiss, discrediting,* and *excludes,* in opposition to the descriptions to the left of *white,* which include active and emotive verbs such as *tackling, dismantling* and *eradicate.* So, while *black* is pitted as victim, the speech toward *white* inadvertently indicates aggressive or offensive agency.

The words *still fighting* in the tweet '***black students*** *are still fighting against the afrikaans medium decree of 1974…'* indicates a continuation and highlights lack of transformation. Many discursive links were drawn between the struggles that were faced during apartheid, additionally to the use of phrases such as 'still fighting', to the struggles currently being faced. Below, image 6.2a is an example of an image that was circulated under the #OpenStellenbosch hashtag.

Image 6.2a



The images have very clear similarities, but quite markedly, the line ‘same struggle, different generation’ is printed on the image. This indicates a continuation of ‘the Struggle’ – that is, for total emancipation from colonialism, apartheid, and oppression - which is echoed in the phrase *Aluta Continua* (Portuguese word meaning ‘the struggle continues’) which appears 4 times in this category. The words *aluta continua* have historical roots as an anti-colonial slogan during Mozambique’s war for independence against the Portuguese during the 60s, and has since been used in other African countries including Uganda and Nigeria. However, its use in a South African context, while lending itself to the original aim of the slogan as a motto of decolonisation, speaks also to the idea of the struggle continuing in terms of the Struggle (which is marked as being the uppercase Struggle because refers to the anti-apartheid Struggle). While semiotic analysis is beyond the scope of this work, this image is a clear representation of the very pervasive discourse within the text that in South Africa, the ‘struggle continues’, which effectively amplifies the frame of a continued ‘struggle’, a discourse which I have named *Aluta Continua*, and which is expanded on in the discussion to follow (see section 7.3). Pudi (2014) explains that while fundamental changes were made after the introduction of democracy, in many ways the Struggle was not over.

Instead, what remained were the negative rudiments of the past and deeply imbedded mentalities within its vestiges. In many ways, it is understandable then, that newer generations would identify with other anti-apartheid heroes and heroines; not only where they were grown up to stories of the Struggle –where they are encultured by previous generations, but also where there are so many clear parallels, such as the 1976 Soweto Uprising and #OpenStellenbosch, which is a result of group mobilisation against Afrikaans in education. By claiming to be activists of the same 'struggle', allows the extension of the identities of the original activists:

> *There is still a fear in 2015 - same fear our parents had in the 70s #OpenStellenbosch*

Table 6.2.2: Keywords for #OpenStellenbosch

Rank	Word	Keyness
6	afrikaans	567.356
7	students	478.848
8	duma	307.318
9	apartheid	288.547
11	language	274.613
15	racism	170.573
16	transformation	160.664
116	women	1.477
133	police	1.033
164	national	0.612
168	community	0.607
245	leader	0.232

Keywords such as *Afrikaans*, *students*, and *transformation* (two of which also appear as keywords in the #RhodesMustFall data), again indicate clear actors and goals. The surname *Duma* makes reference to #OpenStellenbosch spokesperson Sikhukekile Duma. The word *leader* has a low keyness which is characteristic of online movements. Heywood (2002) explains that modern social movements embody the idea that power is fragmented and dispersed. The replacement of more stringent and hierarchical social movement with newer decentralised forms of organisation is the epitome of 'democratic pluralism', whereby people are able to diffuse power more effectively

through the currency of information (Heywood, pg. 285). *Duma* is singled out as an influential individual of the movement. While *students* and *Duma* are clearly pitted as the protagonists of the movement, there are no clear antagonists, except perhaps being *against* (3 times to the left) *racism and Afrikaans* as not only *language* (collocates 5 times), or *medium* (collocates 4 times), but also as an identity:

*where only **white heteronormative Afrikaans men** feel safe. #OpenStellenbosch*

Apartheid also exhibits a high keyness in this category, appearing 40 times in the data overall. Of these, *apartheid* is referred to (to the left) as a *culture* (9 times) and *legacies* (2 times), but also to instil *fear* (5 times). Perpetrators also engage in *apartheid denialism* (5 times). To the right, *remnants of apartheid* occur 4 times.

*#openstellenbosch the **remnants of apartheid** are alive. The fear here is that of **apartheid fear.***

These collocates suggest that present day, students are dealing with the remaining fragments of apartheid that are deeply imbedded. This echoes Pudi's (2014) views that were discussed earlier in this category, who profoundly states that:

> The achievement of democracy after almost a century of oppressive authoritarian rule is not without the negative rudiments of the past. It is this past that will be hard to undo. It is this past that will stand in the path of the new. (pg. 2)

The discursive links that are drawn between conflict and politics of today with those during apartheid by tweeters, will feed into the overarching discourse '*Aluta Continua* – the struggle continues'. This allows protestors to claim and exist as an extension of struggle icons, but also to escalate their current struggle.

However, when viewing the concordances for the keyword *Afrikaans*, some counterarguments become visible. These arguments are in defence of the language, or highlight that other universities have similar language policies:

#OpenStellenbosch you KNEW SU [Stellenbosch University] *has **Afrikaans**-medium:/ A lot like how the University of Zululand has some courses in isiZulu:/*
basically people complaining because some stellies [Stellenbosch University] *courses are in **afrikaans** and they cant* [can't] *speak it, click #OpenStellenbosch*
*No problem with #OpenStellenbosch calling for language options, but saying a use of **Afrikaans** is "racist" is wrong. Unizulu has zulu medium.*

There are several instances that argue towards the idea that students knew that Stellenbosch was an Afrikaans university, and that they should apply elsewhere if they are not happy. Other arguments include sentiments such as '*more black people speak Afrikaans than English'* as well as '*It seems u* [you] *think Afrikaans is not much an African language with its own culture as zulu, sotho, etc.*', or more severe remarks such as '*here we go again fuck up another Afrikaans university'.* It appears that users feel patriotic toward Afrikaans, as this is where the largest sample of counter-discourse appears. One of the users posts in response to this:

Why does Stellenbosch Uni think its their job to safeguard Afrikaans? #AskMmusi #OpenStellenbosch

6.3 #WitsFeesMustFall

#WitsFeesMustFall is the prevalent hashtag that surfaced from the student-led protest following an announcement of a proposed 10.5% increase on university fees for 2016. The protest action started on 13 October 2015 at the University of Witwatersrand, a university with a long-running reputation for its opposition to apartheid. Later, protest spread to universities across South Africa leading to an unprecedented national shutdown of these higher education institutions. Inspiration garnered from the title of the #RhodesMustFall movement led to the reappropriation of it for the #WitsFeesMustFall campaign. The prospect of a large fee increase, to which these protests are a

reaction, opened dialogues about access, privilege and exclusionary education and a general lack of social transformation within South Africa. The protest concluded largely on the 23 October 2015 upon the announcement by South African President Jacob Zuma's address from within the Union Buildings that there would be a 0% increase in fees for 2016. Although this was a great victory for the movement, the day saw protesters, unhappy that they were not addressed directly by President Zuma, attempt to enter the Union Buildings (Bongani, 2015). Below is a list of the 15 most frequent words in the #WitsFeesMustFall category, which consists of a total of 14 759 tokens:

Table 6.3.1: Top 15 lexical tokens for #WitsFeesMustFall

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	witsfeesmustfall	1000
4	we	278
5	feesmustfall	265
9	nationalshutdown	198
10	students	197
12	i	149
18	you	108
21	wits	102
33	education	64
35	witsfeeswillfall	58
38	protest	54
43	fees	48
45	uctfeesmustfall	46
51	blade	39
67	house	30

Within this list of most frequent words for the category, 5 of them are hashtags (*#WitsFeesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, #NationalShutDown, #WitsFeesMustFall, #UCTWitsFeesMustFall*). These either align with the overarching tag (*#FeesMustFall*), or hail students from other universities to join the movement (*#UCTFeesMustFall* – specifically since the University of Cape Town was the second university to begin protesting*)*. The tag *#NationalShutDown* is a call to students across the country to partake. This tag did not appear in either the #RhodesMustFall or #OpenStellenbosch frequency tables, suggesting that

#FeesMustFall is intended to reach and affect or appeal to a wider array of students, whereas the earlier protests were event-based and locational.

Pronouns such as *I* and *we* are used frequently, along with *you* and the word *Blade* (referring to the Minister of Higher Education and Training at that time, Blade Nzimande) as actors. Once again, individual actors, as in the previous categories are emotive (*I wish, I wonder, I believed, I get so emotional*), as opposed to the collective group which are active, and whose actions mirror (or describe) physical activity (*we walk, we stood, we sing, we soldier[ed]).* Individual identities, marked by the use of *I*, don't refer to actions made to physical space or use verbs connoting action, and are instead emotive, or supportive (with the collocation of *I support* appearing 5 times), whereas the communal identity and use of *we* tends to be proactive:

***I wish**, today, I could be personally involved in the #witsfeesmustfall #WitsFeesWILLFall #JHBShutDown #NationalShutDown*
*My heart is still bleeding due to yesterday's events, but **we soldier on** today #WitsFeesMustFall #FeesMustFall #NationalShutDown*

The protagonist identity for this category is marked as *students.* Interestingly, students are never marked by race, class, or gender, and are referred to as *Wits Students* (25 times), or between each other as *fellow students*, indicating a united student front not seen before in the earlier two categories, where the racial markers *black* and *white* were not only used as a division of the student category, but were listed in the most frequent words (Here *black* is found in the data 17 times overall and *white* 9 times, ranked at 125 and 261 respectively). Unlike earlier categories, here black actors are infantized, as in *black kids* (collocating 3 times) *child* (collocating twice), and *children* (collocating once). This effectively pits them as victims, or as unable to change their situation. The earlier categories instead used empowering motifs when referring to black actors. On the other hand, *white* is collocated with *people* (three times) in the same tweet, which praises them: *white people this white people that BULL!!!! Bravo White People*, and in one instance, black and white appear in one concordance line to suggest that the issue is not to do with race, but hails a collective student body:

this is not about the colour, black \ white let's all unite #FeesMustFallForAll #WitsFeesMustFall #Ibelieve #viva.

However, this statement seems to contribute to a discourse of colourblindness. This has been a pervasive part of post-apartheid narrative, which allows the perpetuation of an ahistorical approach to understanding identity, in so far as it denies the culpability of racism in the distribution of power within institutions. A colour-blind view is thus deeply problematic – in that it removes the blame from race as a contributing factor in social interactions – allowing colour-blind racism to effectively go unchecked. The sentiment of '#FeesMustFallForAll' (a hashtag that can be found 11 times in this category) is imbedded in this colour-blind racism in that, while all students are entitled to an equal education, the legacy of segregation as well as the stratification of resources are accountable for the distribution of power to the privileged, as well as for reproduction of racial inequality. This also seems to be in contrast to the earlier #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch movements, which, with their emphasis on race appears to be very much rooted in the understanding that race relations as a result of the apartheid regime affect social exchanges in the post-apartheid era. For instance, the #FeesMustFallForAll appears alongside tweets that imply all South Africans must stand together [equally], which hides under the guise of unitedness: *we as South Africans must join*, and *there is power in unity*. Blommaert (2017a) also refers to contemporary students as having a lack of homogeneity, for the particular reason that, while they may have shared practices, one should not conclude that they have identical experiences or even a collective experience. This line of reasoning is more pertinent in the South African backdrop, where several factors affect the ability of students to share the identical 'student experience'. Moreover, the word *apartheid* appears only twice in this category, and both instances are to make statements that the ANC resembles the apartheid government, in for instance, the concordance which asks: *what is the difference between the ANC and the apartheid government?* Furthermore, pervasive notions in the earlier protests, of black consciousness, and decolonisation/colonialism do not appear at all in this portion of the data.

The main antagonist of this category appears to be *Blade Nzimande*, indicating a clear shift from fractures within the social world to more tangible political issues. Users speak negatively about him by making a play on his name, effectively ridiculing him (*This blade is blunt, Blunt Blade* and

With a name like Blade, he should be able to CUT those fees), by questioning his abilities (*Blade's inefficiencies)* or by insinuation that he is a criminal (*Blade and his cronies*). The reference to Blade Nzimande escalates the issue to a national scale – as he is the minister that governs higher education and training across the country. This category then indicates that othering is done less between white and black identities and inequalities between the two, but more directly at the state's inefficiencies, and the identified issue of *fees,* with users demanding that they be made *cheaper*, be *cut,* or *reduced. Education,* which appears 64 times in the data can be marked as the goal of the protest. The word *education* collocates with words such as *commodity, key, weapon* and *privilege,* as for instance, in the following concordances:

*"**Education is the most powerful weapon** which you can use to change the world." - Nelson Mandela. #WitsFeesMustFall*
*Dear **privileged**: you took our **land**, we will take your **education**!.. Please and thank you #FeesMustFall #WitsFeesMustFall*
*The whole country is coming together #WitsFeesMustFall and all #FeesMustFall! We'll no longer be marginalised! **Education is not a commodity***

Lines such as *education is the most powerful weapon,* and *education is the key to success,* indicates a belief that education is a means to success, wealth and empowerment, in line with Commey's (2015) suggestion that it is believed to be a 'ticket out of [the] trap [of poverty]'. The use of a quote by Nelson Mandela, a heralded ant-apartheid icon is used to justify this thinking. By referring to *education* as a *right* (collocating with education 9 times as either *education is a right,* or *my right to an education*), and not a *privilege, luxury* (collocating twice)*,* or *commodity,* users are commenting on how access to tertiary education is due to exclusions based on financial means. While #RhodesMustFall overtly seeks to initiate a decolonialisation process, just as the Rhodes statue stood overtly in the public gaze, #FeesMustFall speaks more to the deeply embedded financial inequality, which is a result of both colonialism and apartheid. However, these terms are never spoken about or discussed. This indicates that the #FeesMustFall protest borrowed the

pretested frame from the earlier movements, namely the notion of exclusionary education issues – which appears as a familiar prognosis between the two protests. Johnston & Noakes (2005) labels this a 'Master Frame', whereby protests may overlap in time, and are linked together. However, it becomes evident that the thinking in these protests differ drastically. Further concordances of *education* which remark on the class inequality and the commodification of tertiary education are seen below:

We all want education, why should ***only those that can afford be educated****?*
lack of funding for education is a crisis, ***but because it doesn't affect the rich, it's not taken seriously*** *#witsfeesmustfall #FeesMustFall*

The word *house,* which appears 30 times in the data overall showcases how the protest and protestors used Twitter for the purposes of planning and organisation. In 16 of the 30 appearances, it collocates with *Luthuli* to the left (as in *Luthuli House),* in 10 other appearances it collocates with *Solomon* to the left (as in *Solomon House)* and in another 2 to *Senate* (as in *Senate House).* These are information-related tweets that indicate when and where protestors must gather, referring to locations, and times. This clearly indicates that while some tweets are more emotive, political, or opinion-related, a large portion of tweets are used for planning purposes. Further collocates to the left are words related to events and planning, such as in the examples below:

students-we planning to occupy Luthuli House today #WitsFeesMustFall #NationalShutDown #FeesMustFall
Dear Wits students, we have a mass meeting happening at Solomon House today at 11h00 #WitsFeesMustFall #FeesMustFall
Strategizing at Solomon's house! Come through. #WitsFeesMustFall
To clarify, we are still mobilising in Solomon House. Will update when we actually start moving. #WitsFeesMustFall

Table 6.3.2: Keywords for #WitsFeesMustFall

Rank	Word	Keyness
4	students	1274.349
9	education	297.187
10	fees	293.084
11	protest	280.543
12	blade	269.282
13	mcebo	237.112
15	solidarity	163.459
16	anc	145.250
17	uprising	142.269
19	comrades	134.363
318	public	0.011
331	change	0.005

The keyword list for this category significantly only contains the subject position *students*, instead of race or class markers which were evident in the earlier categories. Further, the protest seems to call for unity amongst all students, with words such as *comrades*, and *solidarity* among them, which also refer to the student body across the whole country: *pledging solidarity to students across South Africa*, and *we stand in solidarity with our South African brothers.*

Furthermore, the word *Mcebo*, referring to then-SRC president (and the now-infamous for his controversial statements praising Hitler) Mcebo *Dlamini* (collocating 11 times to the right), is positioned as counter to the antagonist *blade*, which signifies clear leadership for protestors. Tweets toward Mcebo include praise and salutation:

> ***mcebo*** *leadership is EVERYTHING!! he is definitely going to be a future leader of this country!! #WitsFeesMustFall*

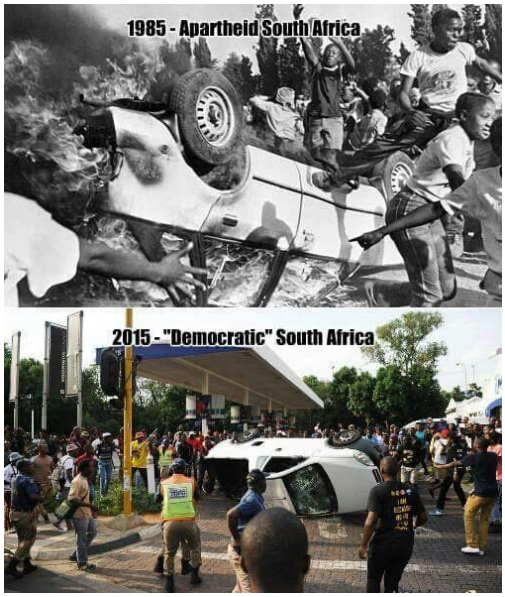
As can be seen for instance in this tweet, protestors are speaking about the future, as well as making references to the past. The word *uprising*, which is used in the form of a hashtag *#Uprising*, refers to both the University of Pretoria (UP) but also discursively to the Soweto Student Uprisings. Further references to historical protest and politics are seen in the concordances for *ANC:*

Apartheid regime + ANC = Another June 16 event #witsfeesmustfall #NationalShutDown
What is the difference between the ANC and the apartheid government? #NationalShutDown #FeesMustFall #WitsFeesMustFall #witsfeeswillfall

Not only do users refer to other past protests (such as June 16 – the Soweto Uprising), but also draw parallels between the ANC and the apartheid government. This indicates a continued struggle – against an unfit government, by asking '*what is the difference...?'*. This sentiment is echoed in various images that were frequently shared under this hashtag, such as image 6.3a and 6.3b below:

Image 6.3a/b





6.4 #UCTFeesMustFall

The University of Cape Town, which had seen major protest action only a few months before on behalf of the #RhodesMustFall movement, became the second university to partake in the FeesMustFall national protest. From here, protest action spread to neighbouring universities such as Stellenbosch University, and the University of Western Cape. Below are the 15 most frequent keywords for the category #UCTFeesMustFall, which consists of 15 092 word tokens.

Table 6.4.1: Top 15 lexical tokens for #UCTFeesMustFall

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	uctfeesmustfall	1000
4	feesmustfall	312
5	students	228
6	we	217
12	nationalshutdown	164
15	uctshutdown	142
16	i	117
20	police	104
23	they	99
24	you	98
35	witsfeeswillfall	67
37	parliament	61
46	people	47
49	max	42
51	education	41

The second most frequent word in this category is the hashtag #FeesMustFall, which appears at a frequency of 312, indicating that almost a third of all tweets contained the tag. This indicates a shift from individual to national-scale, with the concurrent hashtag *#NationalShutDown* (the fifth most frequent word, appearing 164 times overall). *Students* continue to be the highest ranked actor. While action verbs such as *mobilize* appear to the left of *students*, as a category they are marked predominantly as *uct student* (appearing together 20 times). Unlike in #WitsFeesMustFall, here *students* are marked by race as *white* (6 times) and *black* (4 times) to the left. It is also accompanied by the word *fellow* (3 times) to its left. But this category, *white students* are neither trivialised or excluded. Instead, when speaking about *white students,* users are referring to the incident where white students moved forward in the crowd to create a barricade to protect black students from aggressive police. This is the case for 5 of the 6 instances, each of which places *white students* in opposition to *police*:

White students *moving to the front to form human shield against police #UCTFeesMustFall*

White students *and allies form a human barricade shielding police from us #UCTFeesMustFall #UCTSHUTDOWN #FeesMustFall*

There are several points of interest that stem from this commentary. Firstly, this appears to be a type of role reversal, where protestors create a 'human shield' against police, where it is commonplace to see images or footage of riot police creating a human shield against protestors. Secondly, this makes clear inference to the idea that the currency of the white body is of higher value than the black body. However, the 6th instance of *white students* is the tweet: *White #students everywhere should know and understand that #FeesMustFall is also for them!* Lastly, an instance where *black students* is found to be in opposition to police, with regard to white bodies in the tweet: *So BLACK policemen arrest BLACK students and the only form of protection is a WHITE human shield.* The emphasis the user has placed in this tweet (as marked by the use of capital letters on BLACK and WHITE) indicates that the user finds this state problematic. However, first it is important to understand the role police played in this protest.

As we can see in these instances, as well as the frequency list, this category also introduces *police* as a new actor and is the first category so far to contain this word as one of the highest frequency words; indicating that the police played a significant role in this protest. This is perhaps on part of the fact that the changing and emerging tactics of activists in light of new media, have been met with a similar amount of changes on part of the state in terms of its strategies for controlling national protests. Lee (2015) defines the state as 'a human community that (successfully) claims *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory' (pg. 378). This notion is profound, in that it entails that the state has dominion over delivering and regulating legitimate violence with the goal of maintaining social order. In this way, the state can police citizens through physical and coercive tactics, such as in the form of arrests and physical assault, but also softer policing practices such as obstructing the flow of funds and resources, information gathering of activists, as well as stigmatisation and criminalisation of protestors. This being said, the state, and its apparatuses are the most visible agent in policing. But however, this is a particularly sore point for black activism in South African history, where the apartheid government would use physical force against protestors – and when thinking about students, it is particularly painful when thinking back to 1976, one users makes this very link in the tweet: *South African police pulling 1976.*

In the verb position (to the right of the noun *police*), are negative words such as *hurting, hitting, firing, shooting, brutalizing* and *brutality.* These actions are committed against *[student] protestors, kids,* and *children.* Adjectives for *police* (words found to the left of it) include *riot police,* when indicating a juxtaposition to the feel of the protest, as in '*riot police at a peaceful protest',* or as *black police* to critique a rejection of their blackness, as in '*dear black police men who arrested our brothers and sisters. you are what would have been referred to as sellouts in the 90s'.* By referring to them as 'sellouts' further emphasises the idea that they are considered as betraying their identity as black, as well as their role in this renewed struggle.

Despite the fact that during the early 1990s the South African Police Force (SAPS) embarked on an internal reform – to become depoliticised (Rauch, 2000), it is evident in these protests that there remain embers of excessive force against instances of dissent, both a culture and a reputation that has delineated the police force during the apartheid regime.

The word *parliament* (appearing a total of 61 times) behaves in the same fashion as *house* in the previous category, in that it is a location and words that collocate with it are instructional and/or informative, such as:

Parliament *we are coming for you! #FeesMustFall #UCTFeesMustFall*
UCT and CPUT students have joined together and are marching to ***parliament****. #UCTFeesMustFall #sabcwc*
Mobilize, en route ***parliament****. Go to lower NOW. Those with cars, plz* [please] *go help out the shuttles #uctshutdown #UCTFeesMustFall #NationalShutDown*

Other instances where *parliament* is used is to live report on what is happening at the location:

Students have burst through the gate of ***PARLIAMENT****. I repeat,* ***PARLIAMENT*** *#UCTFeesMustFall*
Stun grenades being fired at ***parliament****. Protesters continue to shout "fees must fall!" #FeesMustFall #NationalShutDown #UCTFeesMustFall*

This indicates that users are utilising the Twitter feed for the purpose of quasi-journalism, repurposing the site to claim a narrative of the events.

Table 6.4.2: Keywords for #UCTFeesMustFall

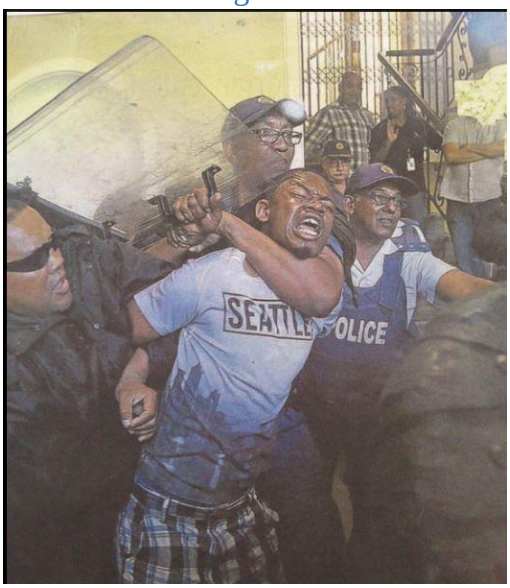
Rank	Word	Keyness
16	comrades	211.419
18	academics	180.957
19	protestors	172.505
20	arrested	171.115
27	endoutsourcing	141.479
30	solidarity	134.203
36	grenades	102.180
40	treason	100.216

The keywords that are evident in this category (such as *comrades* appearing 28 times overall and *solidarity* appearing 23 times overall*)* again incite inclusiveness, and hail users to join, or to feel a part of a community. This is the category wherefrom the title for this thesis was garnered, with the message *tweeting in solidarity,* which implies that Twitter is used as a site of resistance and participation.

Words such as *arrested,* and *grenades* are indicative of police presence, which became much more predominant throughout the progression of the #FeesMustFall protests. However, more so than this, the fact that these items fall into the keyword list, as well as that the word *police* appears as the highest ranked actor (apart from the personal pronouns *I* and *we*) signifies that the police presence effectively acted as a means to eclipse some of the greater issues that are the aim of this protest. What becomes notable is the fact that violence from police and private security was a tactic used by the apartheid regime to quieten dissent. Here however, it becomes more problematic that a black-led government would use those same tactics on young black bodies. Marikana, for instance, was a signifier of this, in so far as it showed how the ANC would turn to violence against black people to protect white interests. In two instances, police are referred to as *Marikana police,* and this fracture, of seemingly conflicting identities of being both a policeman and being black – an Orwellian notion of the oppressed becoming the oppressors, is echoed in the tweet, as well as the image of a particularly violent altercation between a black protestor and black police officers (6.4a):

This man broke into tears speaking 2 [to] *black police. Our dads are entrusted with a task to shoot @* [at] *us #UCTFeesMustFall*

Image 6.4a



6.5 FeesMustFall

'*The young and the restless take charge of a new revolution'* -from the data

Below are the highest ranked words for the corpus collected which consists of 24 552 tokens in total. The more general hashtag #FeesMustFall came into use in 2015, after the protests had become national, and so, appeared as a co-hashtag to many of the other individual hashtags such as #WitsFeesMustFall. By 2016, however, this hashtag became the predominant hashtag used to refer to the protests regardless of their location, but rather as a unified issue community on a national scale.

Table 6.8.1: Top 15 lexical tokens for #FeesMustFall

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	feesmustfall	1000
4	we	278
12	students	74
18	you	108

20	us	104
21	wits	102
23	our	90
27	tomorrow	41
31	education	34
33	nationalshutdown	32
39	people	26
41	union	25
46	student	22
47	protest	21
48	police	20

Frequent content words include *students* as well as *police*. The wordlist introduces these two participants as the most prominent social actors. This is a continuation of the last 2 categories, where police were posited as the most evident antagonist actor.

Words that appear near s*tudents* are sometimes descriptive as in *shouting* or *protesting*, but overall tend to be positive, such as *innocent* and *inspire*. Words that employ a sense of community or an invitation to join include *united* and *unite*. Students are also pitted as the victims, collocating with *victimisation*. On the other hand, *police* collocates with negatively connoted words such as the active words *hurl, stun, arrest, force* and often with the word *brutality*. Machin & Mayr (2012) argue for an 'ideological squaring' (pg. 40) that pits two opposing social actors against each other. Here we see students against police:

*We will be marching at Union Buildings and yes we are trying to get buses for our radical and energetic **students** #FeesMustFall*
*If you haven't #FeesMustFall in South Africa. Incredible! Revolutionary. Peaceful. Our brave **students** march on Union Buildings*
*Can **police** officers stop the victimisation of **students.** #FeesMustFall #WitsFeesMustFall*

Below we see the concordances for police, and how these are in ideological opposition to the positively portrayed students:

*#FeesMustFall More **police** brutality reminiscent of the apartheid regime*
*I really hope this unwarranted behaviour by the **police** does not culminate into another marikana / Andries Tatane situation. #FeesMustFall*
*BREAKING: South African **police** hurl stun grenades as student protesters march on #parliament #FeesMustFall*

Police are not only pitted negatively, but their actions are compared to past poignant events. These tweets utilise intertextuality to reference the Marikana massacre, Andries Tatane and apartheid, which all reflect on underlying racial issues. These statements are aimed at drawing parallels between the current police as a wing of the state to the police during the apartheid regime. Arguments are further created to set the police and their actions as 'unwarranted' in the face of 'revolutionary' students.

Furthermore, as in the previous category, police are viewed as having fractured identity, in tweets such as: *Father how do you brutally shoot at me when I'm trying to change the situation at home? Are you a Parent or a Police man* and *be a PARENT 1st and not a police personnel.* These are emotive tweets because they refer to police as fatherly figures, and as rejecting those identities to embody the identity as a policeman. They also remark on the issue as being 'a situation at home', which implies that the policemen reject their heritage as black, and thus are pitted as betraying their 'family' – the collective black identity. Another argument is based on the rejection of the class to which they fit into by stating that *some police officers can't afford to pay high education fees for their kids but work requires them to stop the protest.* The parent/child dichotomy that is being built up between police/students respectively are indicative of both a clear power dynamic – wherein police and parents hold a significantly authoritative position. It also entails a generational divide. Students/children would be children because they hold a less authoritative position, but also because they are the children of the generation that make up the police. Thus, by

stating that police officers should 'be parents first', indicates that they hold this role. Moreover, it reduces their credibility as being black, parents, as well as being part of the generation that fought against the Struggle.

Students is collectivised, being described most often as *protesting*. However, the word *people* collocates with the descriptions *white* or *black* 4 times each. This suggests that *students* remain intact as a generic group, where people are more freely able to be defined by other qualities, such as their race. This is seen in the example below:

*I will NEVER forget the image of **white people** acting as a black human shield. Thank u sane **white people**, u saved our siblings #FeesMustFall*
***Black people** take your future. No one must stifle the revolution. #FeesMustFall*

The reference in the first tweet regarding the fact that white people were able to act as 'black human shield' is interesting. For one, this signals that white bodies are considered to be of more value and to be less likely to be attacked by police, but also that there is an awareness of these differences, so perhaps less than being subject to a colour-blind discourse, it showcases a consciousness of the racial inequality that plagues the South African landscape.

The pronouns *us* and *we* are predominantly written from the perspective of students. This entails that the larger quantity of the tweets is written by students explaining perhaps the positive connotations made towards students. This pronoun deixis invokes a sense of group membership that invites students to feel a part of a greater body:

*#FeesMustFall **we as students** are defeating ourselves by seeing SASCO/PASMA/EFF.. We should only see students united*

They is used to refer to police in one instance. In other places, this seems to be used to refer to a non-specific and omnipotent participant:

***They** thought we didn't have it in us **They** thought we an ungrateful bunch! Think Again! #SouthAfricanYouth #FeesMustFall #UWCShutDown*
*Our parents must protest with us... Maybe **they'll** hear us then #FeesMustFall*
*When **they** wake up they will fire Blade as if that will appease us. Way past that point. #FeesMustFall*
***They** keep saying Education is the most important thing it is the key to success yet they making it so unaffordable #FeesMustFall*
*We demand free education, and **they** say we are dreamers. Well, dreamers are in good company here. #FeesMustFall*

This suggests although there is general coherence amongst the protesters regarding what is being protested for in terms of education (of the 34 times the word education appears, it is collocated 17 times with *free*), there seems to be a lack of shared blame-placing, or who the protestors are protesting against. However, the idea of free education, which was a promise made by the ANC upon them becoming the ruling party has been a very much important part of these protests. This is seen in tweets which refer to these promises, in tweets such as *we were promised a free education. Delivery time is here.* The words *free education* collocates with *promise[d*] 6 times overall. It also appears in tweets that suggest that free education is feasible, and uses analysis to imply its validity, as in the line *Analysis showing Government CAN afford FREE university education.* These statements are important in terms of bringing the possibility of free education into the political imagination.

The data seems to suggest an identity for the 'us' within the data that leans toward a unification of a student/protestor body, but conversely, it directs its attentions towards a non-specific 'they', which lends itself to Glenn's (2016) critique of lack of coherence. This may also be a result of a neoliberal model that absolves the state's responsibility in guaranteeing the right to education – making the right to education contingent on the ability of the individual to pay for it.

The data suggests that most users take a decidedly pro-protest approach, with the word protest seeming to be interchangeable with *movement* and *revolution*. In the earlier half of this thesis, it was acknowledged that Twitter potentially has limited access. The pro-protest stance that is evident might be as a result of this limited access. If students are more active users of the social networking site, it is within reach that this might delete any chance for counter discourses appearing within the data. It might be significant to consider that Twitter creates an opportunity for subversion of mainstream media in that it allows protestors an opportunity to voice a narrative of the events from this pro-protest position.

Table 6.8.2: Keywords for #FeesMustFall

Rank	Word	Keyness
2	students	1524.320
4	fees	939.755
7	zuma	501.606
9	free	366.283
12	movement	291.875
13	anc	289.086
14	takewitsback	276.447
162	community	2.151
460	economic	0.061

Keywords for this category suggest again that there are clear actors, where *students* appear as the protagonist, with the goals of *fees*, and *free* against *ANC* and *Zuma*. However, while *free* appears to have high keyness, the word *economic* occurs only once in the data, which suggests a superficial understanding of the ramifications of requesting *free education*. One of the high ranked keywords is *takewitsback*, which appears as a hashtag a total of 60 times. *Takebackwits*, which is the same sentiment but worded slightly differently, appears as a hashtag 40 times in the corpus. #TakeWitsBack/#TakeBackWits arose as an anti-FeesMustFall movement which propositioned that protestors be removed so that students would be able to resume their studies and exams. This is evident in the data, where #TakeWitsBack collocates with *vs* (versus) *#FeesMustFall*, effectively polarising the two stances. So, while #FeesMustFall is the predominant view, this

corpus also represented not only counter-opinions, but counter identities (they are described as *protestors, activists, cadres)* behaving in a communal manner. More so, these protestors are described as being *white, the privileged minority* where #FeesMustFall protestors are marked to be *black*, deepening the polarity between the two.

*Why is it that most of the #**TakeWitsBack** protesters are **white, white people** never loved us yo..#FeesMustFall*
*Folk running around with #TakeBackWits #TakeWitsBack are helping to illustrate that white privilege is why #**FeesMustFall is for black students***

These views represent the opinions of the #FeesMustFall protestors – who view *white* to be '*the privileged minority'*. However, also present in the corpus are the views of the #TakeBackWits protestors, who call their opposition *anarchists* and *racist*, but never expressly identify them as black:

#FeesMustFall run by a group of dictators and anarchists hell bent on sabotaging the country. #FeesCommission #TakeWitsBack #TakeBackFreedom
Just reading the responses to #TakeWitsBack, you realize how toxic and racist some of the #FeesMustFall protesters are.

The hashtag #TakeBackWits/#TakeWitsBack is in itself revealing. If we imagine that the protestors of this hashtag are mostly white students, it might be considered that while they are implying that Wits must be reclaimed for education, it might also connote even deeper-seated privileges. Not only are their views entrenched within Western ideological views of African protest action as hooliganistic, the implication that one is able to take something 'back', the implication is made is that it was owned by this group originally. Are the #TakeBackWits/#TakeWitsBack protestors taking the university back to continue the academic year? Or are they taking it back from those who threaten to destabilise their power and privilege and claim their space?

Moreover, this turn of discourse, seems to allow the data to make a full circle. While originally the #-FeesMustFall data seems to suggest South Africa as a colour-blind society, with students across the country coming together based on shared experiences of student life and exclusion, the #TakeBackWits/TakeWitsBack protest shows that that was and could only be short-lived. What is meant by this is that in fact, the South African political and social landscape is far from utopian, and the lived experiences of students vary based on those 'thick communities' that Blommaert (2017) made reference to. In essence, while 'student' remains an identity, and forms the basis of its own community, it is only a lighter form, simply because the thicker communities that South African students belong to – which are ethnicity and class – have a greater impact on their ability to engage in a singular experience of the student identity. In short, this has come full circle because words such as *white privilege* are once again in the spotlight – highlighting the need for transformation, and a voicing of issues that a colour-blind discourse would seek to conceal, which have once again boiled to the surface.

6.5 The protests as a whole

In order to identify any discourses that emerged across the student protests as a whole, tweets from all categories analysed above were run together, along with additional categories that I had originally intended for individual analysis, but which were far beyond the scope of this work. These categories include tweets from #RhodesFeesMustFall, #UWCFeesMustFall and #StelliesFeesMustFall – each containing 1000 tweets. Together, this made a final corpus, which consisted of a total of 87 876 word tokens. The hashtags that were the criteria for each category were amongst the most frequent words, however, since a hashtag could be found in more than one category (for instance, where users ended a tweet as both '#WitsMustFall #FeesMustFall), this meant that in all cases, these hashtags exceeded their original cap of 1000 each. The new figures for these hashtags were:

feesmustfall	2009
rhodesmustfall	1087
witsfeesmustfall	1060
uctfeesmustfall	1048
openstellenbosch	1002
nationalshutdown	*394*

This indicates that across all categories, the tag *#FeesMustFall* was by far the most used and most popular. Also apparent was the tag *#NationalShutDown,* which was not a category that was analysed in this work but had a significant amount of uses. What is also apparent is that the tags *#RhodesMustFall* and *#OpenStellenbosch* had only 87 and 2 tags outside of their original categories respectively, which shows that though they were the originator of the fallist movement as a whole, the #FeesMustFall protests were self-contained.

While many of the frequent words that have been analysed in previous categories once again appeared in the highest ranks of frequency when running the corpora together (which consisted of no less than 100100 word tokens). To avoid this section of the work from becoming circular, this analysis will deal with tokens based on frequency, but not only in terms of *most* frequent. There were indeed a few interesting words that appeared with significant frequency that the analysis up until this point have not yet dealt with. These words appear in the table below:

Table 6.6.1: Frequent lexical words across the protests

Word	Frequency
Support	164
Solidarity	135
Struggle	108
Revolution	100

The word support, appearing 164 times in the data is used to show that individual users are *lending,* or *extending* their support to the protests. This is seen by the fact that *I* collocates with *support* 27 times {s=4.14762}. These collocations are usually in lines such as: *I fully support the movement, I support the cause.* This is a means of showing solidarity with the movement, but also of positioning oneself in a pro-protest stance. Furthermore, tweets like this, which are usually accompanied by reasoning as to why an individual is in support of the movement are usually accompanied by reasoning. One could suggest that this is to sway and influence public opinion. By showing support as an individual 'I', instead of as part of the collective 'we', users

position themselves as autonomous beings outside of the protest ideology, which effectively positions them as unbiased. On the other hand, *we* collocates with *support* 24 times {3.49034}. When the pronoun *we* is used, users position themselves as immediately part of the protest. This is indicated by the fact that when *we* and *support* appear in concordance, they are positioned in lines such as: *we need your support, we want more support,* or *we need internal support.*

Another word that appears frequently throughout the corpus is *struggle*. As has been engaged with in earlier chapters, the Struggle has significant historical connotations, specifically when used with the determiner 'the', and is an instance that demonstrates that in some places function words should not be omitted as unimportant. The corpus and use of *struggle* is demarcated as *the Struggle* 43 of its 108 appearances. This indicates that the student protests are largely seen to be part of a continuation of the Struggle – which is in other instances narrowed down simply as *the apartheid Struggle* or *the education struggle.* While I have used the slogan Aluta Continua as the header for the fact that students discursively tie these protests to the protests seen pre-democracy, its English variant 'the Struggle continues', also appears within the data 16 times.

7. Discussion

7.1 'South Africa is a black and white country'

Within the data, discourses are both pervasive and made available as a source for which to constitute the identities of those social actors that are considered pivotal to the protests. Within the corpora is a strong 'us and them' dichotomy between students/protestors and Blade/Zuma/Police. Protestors/students are found to be framed in a positive light, collocating with positively connoted words. This indicated a general pro-protest stance, in for instance the fact that these protests are referred to as revolutionary (with *revolution* appearing across the protests as a whole). This is perhaps in part due to the fact that the authorship of the tweets is of mostly protestors, or of pro-protest users – which is even further concretised by the fact that first-person pronouns such as *I* and *we* are written to be in support and solidarity for the protest.

The data presents *students* as both an identity and community to join signified by the use of words that employ an invitation to join such as *united* and *unite,* and as a collective by creating a sense of comradery using words such as *comrade*, *cadre* and *solidarity.* But moreover, when behaving

as part of the collective student body signalled by using plural first-person pronouns such as *we,* users tended to make use of far more active language than when referring to themselves in the singular *I*. Although, in the singular form, they also tended to use words that related to social media and the social practices thereon, in for instance, saying things such as *I unfollow*. While some might consider this as not of value, it is a means for maintaining relationships and this is crucial conduct to creating social cohesion within social groups.

When markers were used to further define qualities of the students, in all categories, there were few to no instances of racial identities other than *white* and *black.* This was particularly the case for #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch which strongly emphasised a black and white dichotomy. But in these protests, unlike the #-FeesMustFall protests, the student identity that was constructed consisted predominantly of black users, as was made clear in that *black students* occurred, where *white students* did not. Further however, this suggests a discourse that South Africa is black and white; and this polarised view further challenges the already-problematic notion of 'the rainbow nation'. While there were evident protagonist identities with sufficient resources for users to engage discursively – there was an even more evident absence of identities outside of these strict binaries. Where then, do people who are not black or white fit in? The tweet *The #RhodesMustFall debacle once again highlights how difficult it is to be coloured in a black and white country,* was the starting point for this particular point of discussion.

This arguably leaves no discourse available to people who do not fit into the identities of either black or white. However, what has been noted is that online *black* identities are empowered ones, which actively seek to destabilise and contest the position of white hegemony. However, a cursory thought on this might beg the question of why users needed to refer to both black and white identities – when a black identity should, and could seek to define itself independently, and not as in relation to a white identity.

This is particularly emphasised again in the earlier protests of #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenenbosch. In that sense, the ability for students to freely speak about issues such as white supremacy and privilege is evidence that Twitter, more so than being useful to the protest in terms of organisation and information-sharing (although there were clear instances in the data to support the idea that Twitter was a useful tool for this), allows black identities to be empowered

and valorised, whilst fragmenting and contesting whiteness, or by showing white people to be indifferent to issues that they do not experience (as evidenced in the tweet: *white students will gather in numbers for a squirrels movement, but they won't dare show up for black students' rights.* This is perhaps what is meant by Pillay's (2016) naming of a 'mercurial black consciousness' (pg. 156), and moreover, shows that these protests clearly adopted Black Consciousness-inspired thinking. This quite clearly represents how Black Consciousness has affectively transcended the Struggle generation to become inspiration for the current youth in so much as the youth are embracing positive ideological formations of black identities while contesting whiteness. In this vein, in these two protests, whiteness was juxtaposed and ideologically squared blackness, in the form of, for instance, *white power* and *black pain,* as well as *white supremacy* and *black oppression.* Therefore, the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy, for these earlier protests were mostly between black and white identities.

But this was not the case for the all the protests that were analysed. In fact, as we moved toward #-FeesMustFall-based protests, the prevalence of black and white actors began to wane, leaving space only for a collective student identity. We can see then that the earlier protests (#RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch which is a derivative of it), have clear differentiations to the later #FeesMustFall protests in this regard. Perhaps this is as Luescher (2016) opines that:

> However, whereas #RhodesMustFall and its derivatives represented a Black intellectual rage against the ideological superstructure of South African higher education and its whiteness, the #FeesMustFall movement captured the imagination of students nationwide, as it brought things to the grassroots' level of the material conditions of student life (pg. 23)

What becomes increasingly evident when moving from the earlier protests to the #-FeesMustFall protests is that the emphasis on race has dissipated almost entirely, to the point that these protests seem to employ a completely different ideological framework upon which they are organised. In both #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch the identity marker *students* refer almost entirely to *black students.* The only instances of *students* in these categories applying to anything other than *black* is in the #OpenStellenbosch category, where reference is made to *Afrikaans students* (3 times) and *white students* (once). In all four cases, non-black students are pitted negatively, and fall part of the 'them', who are able to *benefit* as a result of the 'us' as black students *suffering,* to the point where a user exclaims *I blame whites!*

In this way we can see that much greater emphasis was placed during the #-FeesMustFall protests to hailing a collective student identity. For instance, users employed different tactics when constructing this identity: keeping the student identity undiluted by race, class or gender markers. In the #FeesMustFall data, words such as *comrade* and *solidarity* were ranked amidst the highest keywords for that category. In the other two categories, words such as *unite, fellow students,* or even *Wits students,* marking them as students of the university appear in the stead of black and white categories. This was also done amidst descriptions of the student body as *united* and *unified.* At the same time, both #WitsFeesMustFall and #UCTFeesMustFall had tweets that praised white actors in the lines *Bravo White People* and *to the white students who formed that human shield at UCT, we thank you,* respectively. This is quite clearly a great leap from #RhodesMustFall's *I blame whites.* So too it was found that in the #-FeesMustFall protests, black identities were predominantly infantized, in instances referring to them as *black kids,* or *black child.* In this sense there are very clear differences of both ideology and identity, and indeed what the community consists of.

7.2 Disunity of the 'fallist' protests: Black Consciousness to a Colour-blind Discourse

From the conceptualisation of the topic for this thesis, I, like many others when talking about the student protests of South Africa would speak of the *Fallist protests* as those spanning from #RhodesMustFall, to the later #FeesMustFall. However, upon further analysis, these protests, while having stemmed from a similar place of citizen discontent, are otherwise conceptually un-alike, specifically in the narrative and thus identity positions which are available to users. The earlier protests of #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch deal more predominantly with inequality and exclusion as a result of racial fractures. In this vein, the language that is used in these two categories deal with destabilizing white hegemony in the stead of empowering blackness. The #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch protest's ideals are far more embedded in black consciousness-inspired lines of reasoning and with the goal of decolonisation, indicated by the naming of an occupied building as *Azania House,* as well as the polarisation of blackness to whiteness. On the other hand, the #FeesMustFall protests deals more with exclusion as a result of class inequality and the commodification of tertiary education to those who are able to afford it. This is evident in the shift, where black and white identities were the major point of discussion in the #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch movements, appearing in the list of most frequent words, the #FeesMustFall protests both did not include these as frequent words, replacing them instead with words that behaved as the motives for the protest. Indeed, the #-FeesMustFall protests

had clear cut goals, with words such as *fees* and *education* appearing most frequently. In so doing, it did indeed 'captur[e] the imaginations of students nationwide' (Luescher, 2016, pg. 23).

However different these protests may be in terms of their primacy of ideology, the #FeesMustFall movement would not have come into being without the earlier protest to bedrock the upset of existing power relations, which is a crucial criterion for spurring on further social movements and opening political opportunity (Johnston & Noakes, 2005). What becomes increasingly problematic when analysing the data for the #FeesMustFall protests is that this shift away from race appears to be that issues are deemed to affect all South Africans – regardless of race. The journey through the data, from the #RhodesMustFall movement to the later #FeesMustFall movement felt, in many ways, like a summation of pre-democracy Black Consciousness, on to Mandela's post-apartheid envisioning of a colour-blind 'rainbow nation'. Ironically, this unravels earlier protests that emphasise issues as a result of racial inequality. The tweet that appeared in the #WitsFeesMustFall, which stated '*this is not about the colour, black \ white let's all unite #FeesMustFallForAll #WitsFeesMustFall #Ibelieve #viva',* embodies what is symptomatic of a colour-blind discourse that has been plaguing the post-apartheid narrative since Nelson Mandela's constitution, which envisioned a non-racialised society for the country. This thinking is particularly problematic because it allows colour-blind racism to remain covertly buried. To insist that economic – and indeed other – issues are equally experienced by both white and black bodies is an instance of this. This is often why the phrase 'born-frees' is held with so much contention. The title of being a 'born-free' touts the notion of a generation of South Africans who have been raised outside of the lived experiences of the apartheid regime. However, this thinking, along with the colour-blind narrative effectively negates the role of race as a major contributor to the different lived experiences of black and white people within the post-apartheid landscape. Indeed, apartheid is an embedded part of this country's history, but also is a reason why race continues to be an organising principle for South African society, even in the post-apartheid, democratic era. In a colour-blind framework, there can be no challenge to whiteness and white spaces, which continue to house wealth and power as a reifying effect of apartheid infrastructure.

However, all of these protests have had their clear victories. For #RhodesMustFall, the statue that was removed is only the cherry atop the larger theme that seeks to highlight the slow rate of transformation. But moreover, it heightened the consciousness of South Africans to both the issue

of transformation, as well as the continued oppression of black students. This was particularly evident for the #OpenStellenbosch movement, which while protesting the language policy at the University, moreover brought attention to the problematic racial inequalities that are deeply embedded in the landscape of the Stellenbosch.

At the same time, the #-FeesMustFall protests, beyond preventing the tuition increase at the end of 2015, essentially brought the tuition and access to higher education crisis into the public sphere, forcing its way into the attention of the government. Moreover, it successfully brought the idea of free tertiary education into both the public sphere, as well as the political imagination. Additionally, what can be considered as revolutionary is the fact that these issues – spanning from racial inequality, citizen discontent toward financial exclusion.

7.3 'Aluta Continua'

Very frequently in the corpora, the phrase *aluta continua* ('the struggle continues') is made use of. This indicates a continuation of the apartheid Struggle in a new form, as part of the historical reversals that define our age. This is enforced by continual parallels being drawn between the current protest action and situation, to historical events and 'the Struggle' of pre-liberation times. For instance, the poignant line – which was found in the #FeesMustFall protest – '*It's time you take your place in the struggle Dear Black child'* indicates a continuation of the Struggle, as well as an enculturation of what it means to be a black person in South Africa. This line entails also a hailing into a certain identity, by an authoritive or nurturing voice (indicated by 'dear'), to a less authoritive child. Branch & Mampilly (2015) assert that the history of protest in the African context is a history of collective action shaped by, and in attempt to overcome fragmentation – in terms of social, economic, and political lines. The types of actors that exist within the framework of fragmentation are recursive in so much as the 'usual suspects': the economic elite, the middle class, and the rural population recur with identity shifts subject to the temporal. Perhaps than, the Struggle does, in fact, continue – in at least so far as divides along racial and economic lines are as rife as ever, and remain the foundation for inequality within the country.

While a full semiotic analysis is beyond the scope of this work, the images that were circulated under the various hashtags, of which some have been added to this dissertation, are worth a cursory glance. They all showcase images which are placed in a 'then and now' manner, effectively commenting on how in many ways contemporary youth struggles draw parallels to the struggles

faced by pre-democratic youth. What was also interesting was the fact that most of the images that were circulated all represented images of police force. However, the identity of police, which also appears as a frequent word in 3 of the categories that were analysed, is very much challenged by users. While I have discussed this in greater depth already, it is worth mentioning again that the identity of police is contested. Especially by calls from black student protestors that black police officers are betraying their identity as black, as a part (or as the fathers) of the collective black 'family'. Users tended to build a dichotomy between themselves as students/children, to the police as policemen/parents, which indicates both a dynamic of power or authority, but also challenges their credibility as being part of the generation that fought the Struggle, in that they now stand opposing what users consider to be a continuation of the Struggle.

7.4 *The hashtag as the message*

A large concern when conceptualising the data for this work was the limitation that 140-characters, which is the length restriction of a single tweet, poses to the ability to create meaning. However, in each category, tweeters tended to use not only the hashtag that was the criteria for that category, but also other hashtags based on similar, or discursively relevant issue communities. Hashtags are hyperlinks that users generate to link their tweets to a timeline of tweets that contain the same hashtag. This means, that by default, hashtags are were engineered to be used for the purpose of organisation and categorisation of tweets. So, while the categories I have used in the analysis are topic tags that users have made use of to join in on the conversation on that given topic, the use of additional hashtags can be understood as an element of interaction. Twitter behaves as waves of information and meaning. The use of several hashtags (i.e., tweets that include both #WitsFeesMustFall and #UCTFeesMustFall) indicate that issues effectively draw from each other discursively, but also, that users are able to draw relevant connections between political issues and ideologies.

By using an existing hashtag, users immediately employ the virtues of that hashtag and all of the meaning that comes with it. So, while tweets may be limited in length, the use of several hashtags, which are each individually linked to the voices of millions of other users and tweets, allows these short messages to not only be profound, but to effectually engage with an abundance of meaning. When a user tweets and includes the hashtag, for instance #BlackLivesMatter, they reference not only the millions of tweets pooled under that hashtag, but also a unified meaning wherein identities

and discourses exist, and whereby users joins in on that issue community. In this manner, hashtags which were originally engineered for the purpose of sorting, have been appropriated by users to create meaning, or to be the message (Wikstrom, 2017).

In order to understand how a simple element – such as a short hashtag – is able to convey extensive meaning (to the point that it might encapsulate thousands of other tweets that have been posted under that hashtag), one must engage with the Bahktinian concept of the chronotope. In this work, it is suggested that hashtags can be considered as chronotopes (or *chronotopic devices*). Chronotopes are semantic elements, but also behave as cognitive strategies that specific readers, and writers, apply to their text. The Bahktinian notion is that literature is conceived as a dialogue between mutually interacting texts whereby the prior knowledge of the text producer and its consumers interact. This cognitive invariant thus allows "writers and readers to structure historically and textually divergent semantic elements" (Keunen, 2000, pg. 2).

In another instance, users made use of tags such as #RhodesSoWhite. While the dominant hashtag where this subsidiary tag was found was #RhodesMustFall, users also made use of the tag less for the purpose of joining it through the sorting functionality, but rather, the illocutionary point was to make a meta-comment on their post. This tag is emblematic in that it makes reference to #OscarSoWhite, a cause challenging lack of diversity, thus making the appropriated tag an evocative statement that refers to the same issues, reappropriated and recontextualised. This again makes a case for Bahktin's chronotope – whereby the newly created #RhodesSoWhite engages with a reader's previous knowledge and understanding.

7.5 Is participation an illusion?

There are many successes to the use of Twitter in these protests, in that there are clear signs that students used the platform for planning and organisation. The data is speckled with mentions of locations, and postings that were for directing students on where to be, and when to be there. As has been discussed, Twitter is known as a quasi-journalistic medium, so alongside organisational aspects, there are clear instances where users were making use of the site to report on real-time occurrences. It is clear then that Twitter allowed users to circumvent the gatekeeping of traditional media, allowing people who may or may not have had any type of activist background, to act as citizen journalists – where they can convey critical information with immediacy.

It also created a space wherein students could [re]claim their voices and actively author their narrative, which tended to be more of the aim of the earlier #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch movement, where lesser attention was paid to instructional messages, but rather in the use of the platform for users to deconstruct and debate the metaphysical conditions of higher education, as opposed to #FeesMustFall, which was far more grassroots in its approach of dissecting the material conditions of student life. In all categories however, users made use of the opportunities for publishing alternative opinions. The media's portrayal of protests and protestors has an impact on public perception of the movement, its main tenants and whether or not they will support the movement, but the ability for users to opine freely on an accessible site such as Twitter means that they too are able to sway public opinion.

The fact that social media discourse has also managed to penetrate traditional media – in that trending hashtags can commonly be heard as part of most news broadcasts, means that users were able to gain traction to their cause by contributing to the online discussion and effectively ensuring that the hashtags were trending. In light of the contributions that Twitter has made to the dissemination of information and opinion, the argument that the online platform gives a false sense of participation and that these tweets were little more than an attempt at virtue signalling in order to gain favour and acceptance with the protesting community, becomes moot. Even more so, one of the main tenets of Black Consciousness is consciousness raising. Earlier I discussed how identity politics had importance in the ability for it to allow subordinated groups a means with which to bring their oppression into the public sphere. These protests and the ways that users made use of Twitter, while I believe them to be different, were both transformative in the mere fact that issues of being black and blackness as well as the issues of white hegemony were able to penetrate the public sphere. This allowed more than a collective identity – but a collective experience. The #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch movements were transformative just in the empowering ways that black students were able to speak about themselves in empowering ways. While the later protests were problematic in some ways, they were able to activate class-conscious subjects, and still make successful use of the public sphere, by penetrating it with issues of financial exclusion, as well as by bringing the idea of free education into the political imagination.

8. Conclusion

As of the 7th of November 2017, Twitter announced that its tweets would no longer be limited to 140 characters – instead, users are now able to make use of double that amount, with tweets of up to 280 characters each. While users have become accustomed to making use of trending hashtags to make discursive links, and thus convey additional meaning by referencing those hashtags, they will now be able to make use of more character space with which to create and negotiate communal and individual identities, and discourses. This may encourage future research into Twitter, where this work has been very much limited. Further studies could also perhaps be inclusive of more languages, as this work looked at English tweets, where I found through my data collection, a wealth of other South African languages.

Overall the data contained a pro-protest stance, in for instance the fact that these protests are referred to as revolutionary (with revolution appearing as one of the most frequent across the protests as a whole). This is perhaps in part due to the fact that the authorship of the tweets is of mostly protestors, or of pro-protest users – which is even further concretised by the fact that first-person pronouns such as I and we are written to be in support and solidarity for the protest.

When plotting the research questions for this thesis, my focus was on what types of identities, discourses and communities were pervasive within the online sphere of these student protests. What I was presented with, was in fact a wealth of discourse and dialogue wherein users constitute the identities of those social actors that are considered pivotal to the protests. This thesis has then demonstrated the ideological framework from which Twitter users – specifically pro-protest users and students – are operating. While it is clear then that Twitter allowed users to circumvent the gatekeeping of traditional media, the findings in this thesis only portrayed one side of the story. A study with a broader scope may have endeavoured to understand and comparatively analyse the different discourse and framework used by social media users, *as well as* traditional media in reporting on the protest.

In terms of identity and community, the most pervasive identity that became visible was the student identity – which, while present in each category, underwent much reshaping throughout the longitudinal span of the protests. The collective and individual student identity was particularly checkered with racial markers in the earlier #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch movements. Although, in all cases the races that were made visible were very much white and black identities

– which were oftentimes placed in stark contrast with one another, which led me to the title of the first discussion point that 'South Africa is a black and white country'. However, by the time the #-FeesMustFall protests came into action, the emphasis on racial fragmentation and its ability to affect the living conditions of black students in the contemporary South African landscape had dissipated, introducing a utopian community of students from all ethnicities and classes standing together to fight against financial exclusion. In many ways these tactics proved to be invaluable, in its ability to at least capture the attention of the nation and bring most of the country's institutions to a standstill. In my journey through the data, from the #RhodesMustFall movement to the later #FeesMustFall movement felt, in many ways, like a summation of pre-democracy Black Consciousness, on to Mandela's post-apartheid envisioning of a colour-blind 'rainbow nation'.

The student identity was held in opposition to various antagonist identities. However, the identity of police – which became the primary antagonist - appearing as a frequent word in 3 of the categories that were analysed, was a contested identity. This was made visible in the calls from black student protestors that black police officers are betraying their identity as black, as a part (or as the fathers) of the collective black 'family'. Users tended to build a dichotomy between themselves as students/children, to the police as policemen/parents, which indicates both a dynamic of power or authority, but also challenges their credibility as being part of the generation that fought the Struggle, in that they now stand opposing and even apathetic to what users consider to be a continuation of the Struggle.

But even so, the views that financial exclusion is experienced by all students as a collective experience, without considering the country's history and the ramifications of that history, is adopting a colour-blind discourse that has plagued the post-apartheid landscape. By 2016, however, that utopian dream seemed to have come to end, with the #TakeBackWits/TakeWitsBack hashtag that had begun to surface, showing that racial differences and tensions still exist, even among the much-lauded 'born-free generation', which even more indicates the need for the type of consciousness raising that was found in the #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch movements. This is how, in many ways the protests appeared to have gone full circle – and in a short time, from #UCTFeesMustFall's tweet proclaiming that *white #students everywhere should know and understand that #FeesMustFall is also for them*, to the 2016 #FeesMustFall's tweet proclaiming instead that *white people never loved us.*

Earlier in this thesis (particularly toward the end of chapter 3.1.1), I suggested that I expected to see 'not only a more engaged set of citizens, but also, users whom use the space that Twitter provides, to shape their political (and perhaps *activist*) identities'. What has been seen in the #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch categories is that citizens were able to successfully dialogue about the lived experiences of blackness, as well as voice their demands and concerns, bringing to the fore a populace of informed and engaged citizens. The documentary *Luister* highlighted the need for people of colour to document the conditions of their oppression. This however, was very much contextual – based on the experiences of students at the University of Stellenbosch. So while there is clear evidence of Twitter being used as a platform that enables planning and thus in that manner facilitated the physical activity of the protests, what was of more importance was the fact that with its free access, anyone was able to access the site – thus allowing them to come in to contact with the identities and discourse that were made available to them – as well as add to the pool of tweets by sharing their understandings and experiences. It effectively created a space wherein students could [re]claim their voices and actively author their narrative. For instance, while statues hold a sense of pre-existing symbolism and meaning, it was not until #RhodesMustFall that the repercussions of the symbolic meanings of a statue associated with Cecil John Rhodes became a point of debate and discussion in the public sphere. So, in many instances, Twitter acted as a means for the oppression that lie silently buried in the private sphere of those affected by it to erupt in to the public sphere, thus allowing society to be reshaped.

It becomes a hard pill to swallow when revolt and uprising toward financial and racial inequalities come from the 'born-free' generation, acting as a reminder of not only the slow rate of transformation, but the greater injustices that have been so characteristic within this country's landscape – and which continue to cause fractures in class and race relations. It is in this vein that I believe the youth have so tightly grasped to the call of *Aluta Continua* - indicating a continuation of the apartheid Struggle in a new form, enforced by continual parallels being drawn between the current protest action and situation, to historical events and 'the Struggle' of pre-liberation times. Moreover, the fact that the Struggle continues acts as a means of concretising and signifying state failures, a government that rules on unkept promises, and a once-revolutionary generation that has been ushered into apathy.

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10. Appendices

a. Appendix A: The Constitution of South Africa

Section 29 Education

(1) Everyone has the right - (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

(2) Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account - (a) equity; (b) practicability; and (c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

(3) Everyone has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions that - (a) do not discriminate on the basis of race; (b) are registered with the state; and (c) maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions.

(4) Subsection (3) does not preclude state subsidies for independent educational institutions.

b. *Appendix B: MA Research Report Release Form*

Department of Linguistics

School of Literature, Language and Media

University of the Witwatersrand

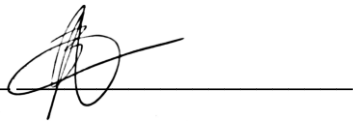
Student Name: Amé Bolton

Student Number: 674657

Title of Research Essay: 'Tweeting in Solidarity': A corpus linguistics analysis of tweets during the South African student protests

■ I agree
□ I disagree

that one hardcopy of my essay, as well as its electronic version, will be kept with the department, and that it shall be available for unrestricted consultation by students and staff in the department. I also understand that the Linguistics Department is entitled to make my essay available for consultation by third persons.

SIGNATURE: 

DATE: 30/03/2018

c. Appendix C: Plagiarism Declaration Form

Plagiarism Declaration

I declare this Research Essay is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this essay, from the work, or works of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

SIGNATURE: 

DATE: 30/03/2018

