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A photovoice project:

An exploration of Wits students' experiences of protest

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A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Community-Based Counselling Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

2019



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Plagiarism Declaration

I declare that this research paper titled "A photovoice project: An exploration of Wits students' experiences of protest" is my own, unaided work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters in Community-based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Date……

Signature……

Janeé Caboz

Dedication

This research paper is dedicated to all students who have taken part in protests over the years, in whatever capacity that may be. It acknowledges your bravery and courage in standing up for a cause and allowing others to also begin a journey of critical consciousness to create change.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Prof. Tanya Graham and Prof. Maria Marchetti-Mercer for their guidance and support. I am grateful for all the time and energy that you have put into helping me make this project a reality.

I am grateful to my family and my friends for their support and their belief in me. Thank you for encouraging me when I needed it the most.

I would also like to thank the participants for agreeing to take part in this research project, for dedicating their time and for sharing their thoughts, feelings and stories. Thank you, I recognise that without you this project would not have been possible. The following participants have given consent for their names to be included so as to acknowledge their valued engagement and participation: Alex Freeman, Avri Spilka, Elli Saayman, Lindani Ntshangase, Matthew Matthysen, Megan Sly, Melissa Bennett, Musa Mukansi, Nkululeko Mhlongo.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANC: African National Congress

CBPR: Community-Based Participatory Research

CP: Community Psychology

CSVR: Centre for the study of violence and reconciliation

EFF: Economic Freedom Fighters

FMF: Fees Must Fall

HWU: Historically White University

PAR: Participatory Action Research

PYA: Progressive Youth Alliance

MACC: Master of Arts in Community-based Counselling Psychology

NDR: National Democratic Revolution

RMF: Rhodes Must Fall

SAPS: South African Police Service

SRC: Student Representative Council

TRC: Truth and reconciliation commission

TUT: Tshwane University of Technology

UCT: University of Cape Town

UJ: University of Johannesburg

UP: University of Pretoria

VC: Vice Chancellor

Wits: University of the Witwatersrand

ABSTRACT

South Africa can be described as a land of protest. Protest action has not only become common in recent years through protest movements such as the Fees Must Fall movement, but it is also a poignant part of our country's history with its use being crucial in the struggle against apartheid and other such injustices. In 2015, the Fees Must Fall protests began at the University of the Witwatersrand and were initiated by students and youth who had something powerful to say. However, power structures and issues of misrepresentation have prevented students from having sufficient platforms to share their stories and experiences from their point of view. A qualitative-based participatory action research method called photovoice was used which asked Wits students to take photographs of their understanding and feelings of protest action and share their experiences through these images and their explanation. The project aimed to create a safe space where students could metaphorically 'shoot back' in a non-violent form of protest using photographs. It provided an opportunity for 11 participants to share a wide array of viewpoints and perspectives on protesting and to develop a mindset of critical consciousness about the topic. It also functioned as a protest in and of itself, in that it acted as an avenue through which participants could have a voice and explore their views through the themes of Voice, Change and action, Violence and disruption, Power relations, Protest culture and Equality and justice. Furthermore, it acted as an avenue through which the researcher could protest about aspects of the field of psychology, research and knowledge production which are arguably outdated, exclusive and perpetuate a discriminatory and colonial agenda. The intention is that more research of this nature, which challenges conventions in research production, is more democratic in its approach and distribution and which values indigenous South African knowledge is produced in future studies.

Keywords: Community Psychology, Participatory Action Research, Protest, Protest Action, Photovoice

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In October of 2015, a group of students at the University of the Witwatersrand barricaded access to the entrances of the institution (Booysen, 2016). Symbolically this emulated the experience of thousands of young South Africans who are oppressed by institutions of power which maintain discriminatory and unjust practices (Pillay, 2016). It was a protest that began from a seed of discontent regarding exorbitant university fee increases, financial exclusion and the outsourcing of poorly treated university workers (Luescher & Klemencic, 2016; Naicker, 2016; Pillay, 2016). From this seed it gained momentum and spread to institutions of higher learning across the entire country with students calling for the abolition of university fees in its entirety (Booysen, 2016; Habib, 2019; Naicker, 2016; Pillay, 2016). On the surface the protests were about fees, but on a macro and ideological level they were about so much more. Students were successful in creating a dialogue about who has access to (and who does not have access to) resources such as education, who controls and influences knowledge production, and why university curricula are still shackled to colonial, Euro-Western (and at times anti-African) discourse (Luescher & Klemencic, 2016; Pillay, 2016). This action of protest sparked the beginning of a nationwide movement which has become known as Fees Must Fall (Naicker, 2016).

The movement has permeated news headlines in the last few years and brought to the fore questions regarding broader systemic issues of discrimination, oppression and power imbalances (Chikane, 2018a; Naicker, 2016). Furthermore, it has catapulted the use and role of protest and protest action into the minds and consciousness of many South Africans. All of these concepts and processes have been playing out in the wider societal sphere, impacting

many citizens of this country in a multitude of ways. While it is known that students succeeded in ensuring a 0% fee increase for the 2016 year, and stimulated a national dialogue about the role of tertiary institutions, decolonization and many other pertinent issues, there has been a ripple of lesser known changes specifically relating to the students themselves (Luescher & Klemencic, 2016). This report seeks to understand the experience of protest action from the point of view of students based at the very institution where the Fees Must Fall movement was initially sparked into action.

Aims

The voice of the students

An increase in protest demonstrations in recent years and greater awareness around the practice and the problems it has highlighted, has brought to the fore a myriad of viewpoints about the function of protest action and the way forward for our country post-1994. Twenty-five years into our democracy, it is evident that many of the same issues that were present during apartheid continue to plague the minds and bodies of our citizens (Von Holdt et al., 2011).

The research method employed in this study is called photovoice and was developed as a way to provide participants with an opportunity to engage in observation and dialogue about pertinent and current socio-political issues in their communities and broader society (Roger, Migliardi & Mignone, 2012; Suffla, Kaminer & Bawa, 2012). The purpose of its use in this instance was to construct a platform through which experiences, opinions and stories could be shared about Wits students' perceptions, thoughts and feelings of protest action.

Many students have expressed a sense of frustration and anger that the ideas and causes that they have been advocating for during the Fees Must Fall movement and other such protests, have fallen on deaf ears. It is well documented that student's voices are often marginalised, ignored, distorted or overpowered resulting in a sense of powerlessness (Everatt, 2016). To this day much of the coverage of the protests has been through the mouthpiece of major media corporations, government and/or management (of tertiary institutions), and as such, minimal opportunity has been given to students to express themselves. Media representations of the protests have also been riddled with inaccuracies, single stories and biases that have succeeded in exacerbating and sensationalising the use of violence and potentially delegitimising the cause (Duncan, 2016). It is particularly troublesome that it is during a time when major local news giants are under investigation pending charges of excessive corruption with claims of propaganda. The recent rhetoric of 'fake news' and other such notions have propelled questions about the accuracy and legitimacy of the information received by the public into the spotlight. In her book titled *Protest Nation: The right to protest in South Africa*, Jane Duncan refers to the media coverage of protests in South Africa as "riot porn" in their biased focus on the negative and destructive nature of protest action (Duncan, 2016). She explains that protests receive negative press coverage as they focus on violence and this has the consequence of the public being led to believe that it is a typical component of most protests (Duncan, 2016). However, she clarifies that the vast majority of protests are indeed peaceful and occur without negative incidences (Duncan, 2016). What this indicates is that information that is shared about protests and protest action tends to be one-sided and fails to provide a full and comprehensive account of the events that took place, particularly from the viewpoint of all stakeholders involved.

When it comes to protests, it is students or youth who can be considered to be the most vulnerable stakeholders with minimal opportunity to express themselves. This conjures up a storm of questions, echoed by the students, about who has access to knowledge and knowledge production and in what form knowledge is disseminated (Pillay, 2016). It questions how institutions with power have control over the information that has been carefully chosen to be disseminated to the public, and which in turn has the power to shape public perception (Pillay, 2016). The students, who initially spoke from a marginalised point of view, have been further silenced. Pillay (2016) questions whether such instances of silence can be more appropriately described as forms of violence (Pillay, 2016). When you purposefully silence someone who has something to say are you perpetrating a violent act?

It has to be asked whether the depictions of the protests have neglected to focus on what students think and feel is important and a failure to address the experiences of the student body specifically. The Fees Must Fall protests in particular, and other more recent protests, have highlighted the need for a platform for youth voices to be engaged with, heard and shared. Protests in our country seem to have reached a point where protestors and fallists (Fees Must Fall protestors) need to fight harder than ever for their cause not to be stifled and misrepresented or mischaracterised. As such, it seems imperative that a platform is created for students to be able to share their experiences of protest. Thus, the aim of this project was to focus particularly on the experiences of students and provide an avenue through which their stories could be told and their views could be expressed.

Rationale

A safe space to share: preventing the effects of violence

In 2016, a year after its inception, the Fees Must Fall protests became overshadowed by the presence of violence (Booysen, 2016). Police and security guards were often summoned to campuses to quell activities, rather than foster a situation in which students could voice their concerns and feelings, and be heard and listened to (Pillay, 2016). The result of this is that there has been a great deal of negative psychological consequences borne from the student´s involvement in, and witnessing of, these acts of violence.

In a study conducted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) on community protests in South Africa, the authors acknowledge that many protests manifest in a violent manner and that violence is often the only language that is heard (Von Holdt et al., 2011). They explain that our country is burdened by our apartheid past in that many extremely painful and emotive memories remain in the psyche of our society and resurface in the form of violence during events such as community protests (Von Holdt et al., 2011). According to statistics produced by the South African Police Service (SAPS), as many as 3542 protests of a violent nature were recorded in 2015 alone (Bond, 2016). This begs the question of whether further violence and destruction of property, perpetrated by the protestors themselves, may be considered the only way for protestors to ensure their message is given due attention. Perhaps violence is the outcome when people feel as if they have no other choice or manner of expressing themselves. However, the physical and psychological impact of violence has long lasting effects on the minds and bodies of citizens (Swart, 2013). Furthermore, protests that involve shows of violence are associated with collective trauma which can have a major impact on protestors and our youth and therefore its prevention should be a key priority (Von

Holdt et al., 2011). As such, an alternate avenue should be a matter of urgency so as to prevent further pain and trauma associated with such violence.

It is clear that there is a dire need for safe spaces to be created where people, and particularly students, can talk about their experiences of protests, as well as their wider life experiences so as to continue to foster the project of reconciliation. As such, it is necessary that students and youth are provided a space that is safe and non-violent and the photovoice method has this capacity and intention. With photovoice, the use of photographs can provide a potential sanctuary where people can deal with and share experiences, thoughts and feelings in a safe, productive and expressive way. There is something powerful in the act of using a camera to metaphorically 'shoot back' in a non-violent form of protest.

The democratisation of research: greater accessibility

Photovoice makes use of photographs as its primary mode of communication (Fernandez & Langhout, 2014) and as such has the capacity to democratise the research process and the availability and dissemination of information and knowledge (Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001; Sanon, Evans-Agnew & Boutain, 2014). This is because photographs are visually-based and are thus accessible and understandable to more individuals who may be marginalised by language, educational or literacy boundaries (Sanon et al., 2014; Wang & Burris, 1997). Furthermore, it questions the dominance of journal articles as the main vehicle of reporting findings to patrons of knowledge in mainstream psychology and other such social science fields. The issue with journal articles being so prominent is that they harbour complicated language and are written in a particular format that can only be accessed with certain resources (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In order to read a journal article, a reader needs to have acquired a

certain level of education and knowledge and they need to have access to computer facilities and the internet. As the Fees Must Fall protests have made clear, these are requirements and privileges only available to a small percent of the population and therefore they remain inaccessible to most. Furthermore, journal articles are also commonly written in English, the main medium of instruction at Wits and the main language utilized in research and publications (in comparison to other official South African languages). English is also a language imported through the colonial project and which continues to uphold power structures that favour certain interests and certain individuals. If journals can only be accessed by an exclusive elite then their use continues to perpetuate oppressive systems and the consequence is the exclusion of many people from the research results, often it is the participants themselves (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Challenging the status-quo in social science research

It is part of the call by the Participatory Action Research paradigm, of which photovoice is derived, to challenge who has and should have access to information, what is considered to be 'good' research and to interrogate the hegemony of scientific-based mainstream research that disregards the value of more creatively based research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Lazarus, 2013; Rappaport, 2005; Strack, Magill & McDonagh, 2004; Suffla et al., 2012; Tolan, Chertok, Keys & Jason, 1990). At present, the quantity of positivist, quantitative-based research methods outweigh that of qualitative methods, and in particular methods which are more art focused such as photovoice (Graham & Ismail, 2011; Larsson, Brooks & Del Loewenthal, 2012). This indicates the higher regard placed on studies which pursue more scientific and empirical data to the detriment of studies which focus on data more realistically influenced by social factors and creative fields (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Sanon et al., 2014; Tolan et al., 1990). Furthermore, it is in line with one of the key issues raised by the student protests regarding the

commencement of a project of decolonisation whereby a key institution of higher learning in South Africa interrogates colonial structures and begins to actively engage in a process of decolonising. This process which challenges not just the knowledge that is produced and its value, but also the manner in which knowledge is collected and disseminated to the broader public.

There is an acknowledgement that this very description is hypocritical as it has been written in a traditional research format thus moderating its intention. However, by including the actual photographs taken by each participant in this report, along with an explanation of the photographs in the words of each participant, perhaps this can be somewhat mitigated. While it is common practice for articles to include direct quotes from participants who have been interviewed, the same cannot be said for photographs taken in a photovoice project. Thus, the photographs are included, and the aim is to challenge the status-quo when it comes to the presentation of data in research.

Furthermore, by including the photographs themselves it opens up a space for each image to have multiple interpretations based on the subjective opinion of the reader. This is in accordance with postmodern philosophy, as well as the works of Foucault (1976) and Derrida (1990) which acknowledges the existence of multiple realities of equal importance constructed within historically and culturally specific situations (Larsson et al., 2012). This essentially aids in democratising the dissemination of information because the reader does not have to rely on the single explanation of the researcher as the sole interpretation of the image, but rather can apply their own understanding/s to each image. Thereafter, the reader can decide whether they agree with the researcher, or even the participants, and determine their own interpretation and understanding.

Photovoice as a group method: the value of collectivism

Photovoice is a method that involves a group discussion aspect (Rogers et al., 2012) and in a country like South Africa this has particular relevance. A great deal of mainstream psychology has a strong focus on the individual and many methods of assistance are individual and person-focused, a perspective inherited from psychology's conception in the Western world (Bhana & Kanjee, 2001; Kasese-Hara, 2009; Naidoo, Duncan, Roos, Pillay & Bowman, 2013; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Orford, 1993; Watson & Stead, 2002). However, this individualistic view of people may not be entirely applicable in our local context where a philosophy of collectivism is common and people often have an understanding of who they are because of, and in relation to, others (Bhana & Kanjee, 2001; Hook, 2004; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Stevens, 2013). This is evident when we consider the meaning of the isiZulu word *ubuntu* which loosely translates to: I am a person through other people (Claire et al., 2007). In many of our local cultures there is a belief that we exist in interconnected social systems and entering into a process of healing needs to be a collective effort (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). This was the premise on which the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings were based (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). There is power in a group and in sharing ideas and stories with other people who have been through a similar struggle, as it creates a sense of group cohesion and strengthens social support systems (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Visser, 2013).

Photovoice provides this support as a group-orientated method and as such becomes active in contributing more indigenous-based ideas and methods to the global psychological knowledge bank. In his article titled *Global psychology,* Berry (2013) discusses the need for more research and concepts to originate from cultures outside the West and he implores that this is necessary in order to counteract the dominance of Euro-Western-ism in psychology

(Bojuwoye, 2006). He argues that the discipline of psychology is currently culture-bound in that its origins, concepts and empirical findings are limited to a small portion of the world, and therefore, is in dire need of a more universal representation (Berry, 2013; Graham & Ismail, 2011). MacLeod (2004) adds that it is vital to develop a trained critical eye that can constantly, and consistently, interrogate psychological theories developed in other contexts, and re-examine them through a local lens and understanding.

Producing local and indigenised research

While a more universal representation is an admirable goal, Sher and Long (2012) have produced research which suggests that psychology should go beyond universalism and become indigenised. There is a dire need for the production of information which emphasises emic and local concepts and accords the same meticulous focus to Non-Western countries and cultures. As such, there is a criticism of Western psychology's applicability to a local South African context (Sher & Long, 2012). MacLeod (2004) argues that generating new indigenous and emic theories is optimal and necessary, in addition to maintaining that critical eye. As such, there is a greater need for research that focuses purposefully and intentionally on the experiences of South Africans and adds to our understanding of our unique identity. By using photovoice the intention is to attempt to challenge the status-quo in research in psychology and contribute towards collecting and building more information that is relevant to a specifically South African context.

Chapter organisation

The following is an outline of the structure of this research report. Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature relating to the key concepts included in this report. It

begins by giving an explanation of protest action in our South African context and how protests have become part of the fabric of our society. An explanation of what constitutes protest action, the causes of protests and a summary of protests in recent years is then provided. Thereafter a more detailed history of protest action is provided by looking at the 2012 Marikana massacre as well as the apartheid-era 1976 Soweto Uprisings. This is followed by a closer examination of the Fees Must Fall protests, as well as the philosophy of Fallism and the state of higher education in our country, both of which influenced its inception. To conclude the chapter, a contextual understanding of the method of photovoice is provided. This includes the influences of critical consciousness, community psychology and the importance of a critical consideration of research methodology.

Chapter Three begins with an outline of the research questions, followed by details of the methodology of the research report. As such, the method of photovoice and Participatory Action Research (PAR) is discussed more in depth. The identifying details and demographics of the participants involved are provided as well as a justification for the use of student participants and the setting of the research at Wits University. The method used to collect data, namely the photovoice method, is further defined and described as well as an explanation of what constitutes the data. This is followed by the procedure of data collection, how the process unfolded and how the photovoice method was implemented. The data analysis method of Thematic Content Analysis is explained as well as the paradigm that is used. The ethical considerations of this specific study are discussed and then the chapter concludes with a consideration of the researcher´s self-reflexivity.

In Chapter Four the results of the research report are explained. The data is organized into six broad categories and further divided into subcategories. The six main categories or themes are Voice, Change and action, Violence and disruption, Power relations, Protest culture and Equality and justice. Each theme is discussed in depth with the subthemes that fall into

each category. The photographs captured by the participants are included, along with a brief description of each one in the direct words of each participant.

Chapter Five provides a discussion on the limitations and challenges of the study. This is followed by some key reflections about the process, results and research report. It also includes a discussion of the researcher's role and potential influence in the research process. Lastly some directions for future research and recommendations are outlined with overall concluding comments.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter will provide an introduction and explanation of key concepts related to this research report. In addition, a comprehensive overview of the literature related to these concepts will be discussed and examined. The first aspect which requires in depth discussion is that of protest and protest action and this will be contextualised specifically within the South African context. An understanding of what constitutes a protest will be discussed as well as potential cause of protests in this country. Thereafter, the use of protest action from a historical standpoint will be undertaken and how issues and events which played out during apartheid may be replaying in the present. Protests in recent years will be examined along with a more detailed focus on the Marikana miner´s protest as well as the Fees Must Fall movement. Events and ideas which contributed to the inception of Fees Must Fall will be explored including Fallism, the Rhodes Must Fall movement in Cape Town and the state of higher education in South Africa. The method of photovoice will then be discussed along with the influences of critical consciousness and community psychology. A critical consideration of research methodology will complement the examination of the photovoice method followed by closing comments for the chapter.

Literature Review

Protest Action

South Africa can be described as a landscape of protest as occurrences of protest action are overwhelmingly frequent. According to statistics obtained from the South African Police Service, there is an average of 8000 demonstrations of protest per annum (Alexander, 2010;

Mottiar & Bond, 2012). This equates to a national average of over 600 protests a month and nearly 22 protests per day. These statistics relate to the Gatherings Act of 1993 which stipulates that a protest involves a public gathering of more than 15 people at any one time (Alexander, 2010; Duncan, 2016; Mottiar & Bond, 2012). The Regulation of Gatherings Act is a law stipulated within our Constitution which protects every citizen´s right to the freedom of assembly (Duncan, 2016). Duncan (2016) describes protests as an essential form of democratic expression which acts to highlight grievances through a disruptive activity.

An understanding of what constitutes protesting can be difficult to illustrate as it is a broad term that encompasses a range of different activities. Acts of protest can vary and may include mass meetings, strikes, marches, stay-aways, toyi-toying, destruction of property, looting, blockading access to roads or buildings, petitions, boycotts, disrupting meetings, drafting of memoranda, burning of tyres or confrontations with police or authority figures (Alexander, 2010; Atkinson, 2007; Duncan, 2016). Toyi-toying refers to a uniquely South African method of communicating defiance through a display of protest dance (Chinguno et al., 2017). As such, protesting can comprise a whole range of activities which go beyond the conventional and traditional view of protest as a mass march.

Causes of protest action

Due to the frequency of protesting in our country hearing about the occurrence of protest action is common and there are numerous reasons and issues which spark their initiation, continuation and escalation. Atkinson (2007) proposes three main causes for the mass protests of recent years in South Africa. These include municipal ineffectiveness in the provision of service delivery, the lack of adequate responsiveness by municipalities and

government to the grievances of citizens, and a feeling of frustration regarding perceived self-enrichment, corruption and conspicuous consumption displayed by municipal councillors and government officials (Atkinson, 2007). Booysen (2016) suggests that the main reasons for youth involvement in protest action are related to issues of poverty, marginalisation and exclusion. Vice Chancellor of Wits professor Adam Habib makes reference to the ANC government as incompetent and a realisation by youth that the then president Jacob Zuma had lost credibility and was steering the country astray (Habib, 2019). He describes Zuma´s presidency as marred by a "rudderless leadership and corruption scandals" (Habib, 2019: pp123). Even though Zuma has since been dethroned and replaced by Cyril Ramaphosa, the inadequacies of the ANC government are still in question and continue to influence the occurrences of protest. This list is by no means exhaustive and there is an acknowledgment that these reasons can vary drastically and depend on the community or problem in focus at the time.

South Africa´s history of protest action

The examples of protests which have been mentioned have all happened in more recent years subsequent to our transition into a democratic system. Yet our country has a rich history of protest in a land scarred by injustice through discriminatory projects such as colonialism and apartheid. Protest has been used through the years as a mode of defiance against injustice or to stand up for a message, belief or cause. The use of protest was particularly frequent and salient in the fight against apartheid and was a method often utilized during the liberation struggle. Yen (2008) discusses how there was an increase in insurgent political and protest action in the 1980s in resistance to and defiance of the apartheid regime.

A major protest that stands out and is often mentioned when considering the use of protest during the apartheid years against the oppressive white supremacist government is the 16 June 1976 Soweto uprising (Bhana, Peterson & Rochart, 2007). It is a day that stands as a beacon of change and its importance has solidified its commemoration as a public holiday every year. The Soweto Uprising, as the protests are now commonly known, are often mentioned in relation to the Fees Must Fall protests as numerous similarities can be drawn between the two movements (Booysen, 2016). The common denominator as outlined by Booysens (2016) is the demand by youth for quality education and the recognition of the salience of education in the quest for liberation. This comparison between two key protests occurring some forty years apart signal the importance of understanding the history of protests in South Africa when trying to understand present day protests such as Fees Must Fall.

In 1976 an estimated 10 000 to 15 000 school children and youth protested against the language of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction (or the language of the oppressor) and the government's implementation of an inferior education system for anyone classified as a '*non-white'* under the Bantu Education Act (Booysen, 2016; Chikane, 2018b; Everatt, 2016; Simbao, 2007). The protestors were met with police force and brutality, resulting in hundreds of deaths and an estimation of up to 2000 people, mostly school children, left injured (Booysen, 2016). From this event the photograph known by many of Hector Pieterson was captured by photojournalist Sam Nzima (Simbao, 2007). It depicts an image of a frightened Mbuyisa Makhubu running in panic while carrying the body of a fatally shot young Hector Pieterson, alongside his distraught sister Antoinette (Simbao, 2007). The photograph is iconic and is considered by many to be one of the most important images to emerge from the struggle (Simbao, 2007). It became a national symbol of protest and was able to spread awareness of the injustices of apartheid across the globe. As a result, the protests orchestrated by the youth

of our country are often credited as a turning point in bringing about the demolition of the apartheid system (Simbao, 2007). This is just one example in which the use of photography has had a major role to play in world events and a demonstration of the potential power that an image can have.

Protests in recent years

The frequency of protest in our country means that it has become part of the fabric of our daily society. As such, it would be a futile endeavour to list each and every protest that has occurred in recent years. Furthermore, as each day passes new protests take place and garner public attention and so the list continues to expand infinitely. However, some examples of key protests which have transpired in the last decade stand out and deserve mention. These include the countless service delivery strikes, OpenStellies campaign at the University of Stellenbosch, Afrikaans Must Fall at the University of Pretoria, Patriarchy Must Fall, Zuma Must Fall, ANC Must Fall, Outsourcing Must Fall, taxi, bus and transport strikes, Black Monday, teacher strikes, anti-state capture protests and so on (Alexander, 2010; Booysen, 2016; Chikane, 2018b; Luescher & Klemencic, 2016).

Marikana massacre

While the Fees Must Fall movement has grasped the attention of many in recent years, it is by no means the only protest movement that has occurred or gained nationwide and international coverage (Luescher & Klemencic, 2016). Another key protest in recent years which deserves mention is that of the Marikana protests which occurred in August of 2012. This protest has left a deep scar in our national consciousness due to the manner in which violence was used by police in our seemingly democratic society. It was a protest that

developed due to wage disputes of mine workers who felt that their remuneration was inadequate. When police were called in to tame the protestors, their response was a lethal shooting and killing spree resulting in the death of 34 people and the incident being described as a massacre (Bond, 2016; Duncan, 2016). What was so poignant about this protest was the callous manner in which the protests where dealt with, which to many seemed strikingly reminiscent of the apartheid era and the then racist police state. Many South African´s refer to an idea of ´post 1994´ as an assumption that our country has shifted from an apartheid system to that of a free and fair democracy, but yet protests such as the Marikana massacre and even Fees Must Fall, create doubt about such an assumption.

Fees Must Fall

While each of these protests have had an impact, one protest movement in particular has arguably had a far greater effect on students based at Wits University. What's more is that it has amassed the public´s attention to a greater degree and initiated a wave of change across our country that will continue to be felt for years to come. This protest movement is the Fees Must Fall movement and deserves a more in-depth analysis.

The 14th of October 2015 is credited as the official commencement of the Fees Must Fall protests, the day on which students initiated a systematic shutdown of the university of the Witwatersrand (Chikane, 2018b, Chinguno et al., 2017). This shutdown presented in the form of blocking university entrances to deny entry and exit options to the various stakeholders within the university community. This later transformed into the occupation of Solomon Mahlangu house and various mass marches across campus.

These protests were sparked in response to the announcement by Wits management of a 10.5% fee increase for the following academic year and were orchestrated by the then Wits

SRC (Student representative council) (Booysen & Bandama, 2016). In addition, they were a continuation of a protest which had commenced a few days prior advocating for the abolition of outsourcing at Wits (Booysen & Bandama, 2016).

The actions of the 14th of October 2015 instigated a ripple effect of protests across the entire country with protests spreading to many institutions of higher learning including UCT, the University of Stellenbosch, the university currently known as Rhodes University, UP, TUT and UJ to name a few. The movement became multi-campus, multi-university, cross province and even initiated a response internationally (Booysen, 2016; Eddo-Lodge, 2018). It is a movement that is often sited using the popular banner or hashtag of #FeesMustFall which makes reference to the use of social media platforms which were used extensively to communicate and spread awareness of the cause (Booysen, 2016; Luescher & Klemencic, 2016; Naicker, 2016).

The protests across the country each had a structure of their own and were expressed in their own way but were all connected by their overall message of a demand for a 0% fee increase for 2016 and ultimately the attainment of free, quality, decolonized tertiary education (Bond, 2016). The Fees Must Fall movement has often be described as a leaderless movement (Satgar, 2016). While certain individuals have stood out and become household names for their key contributions to the struggle, no one single leader was ever chosen or elected to represent the movement as a whole (Booysen, 2016). Furthermore, the movement was never championed by one particular political party and comprised a collection of students who affiliated to a range of political parties including but not limited to the ANC affiliated PYA and the student division of EFF (Booysen, 2016).

While a comprehensive and detailed timeline of the Fees Must Fall movement is beyond the scope of this report, it is nonetheless relevant to mention a few key events which stand out

and shaped the trajectory of the movement. As mentioned previously, the initiation of the protest is sited to have occurred on the 14 of October 2015 (Chikane, 2018a). Other significant protest events stand out in 2015 and include students marching to ANC´s Luthuli House in the Johannesburg CBD, marching to the gates of Parliament in Cape Town during the finance minister Pravin Gordhan's budget speech and a demonstration at the Union Buildings in Pretoria (Chikane, 2018a; Luescher & Klemencic, 2016). In early 2016, protests continued at Wits with students disrupting the registration process (Booysen, 2016). In late 2016, following the announcement of a fee increase of 8% for 2017 by the then minister of higher education Dr Blade Nzimande, protests again erupted at Wits and other institutions (Habib, 2019). It is now four years later and sporadic occurrences of Fees Must Fall linked protests are still taking place. Furthermore, it is impossible to predict whether a resurgence is imminent in the future and whether such protests will continue.

Even though the Fees Must Fall protests may not have reached their end date, the events that have taken place so far have played an integral part in shaping the history of our country. The impact and changes that they have succeeded in initiating are arguably immeasurable, influencing policy, management, government and even the collective discourse within our national community. In 2015, the students were triumphant in securing a 0% fee increase. In 2016, Wits announced its commitment to formalising the termination of the outsourcing of its workers, a move which followed a succession of similar agreements promised by other institutions of higher learning (Ntshingila, 2016). Furthermore, changes have been witnessed in university governance, curriculum content and structure, the manner in which teaching is conducted, support structures provided for black students and marginalised students and the appointment of a greater number of black staff members (Godsell, Lepere, Mafoko & Nase, 2016; Habib, 2019).

Fallist ideology and Rhodes Must Fall

While the Fees Must Fall movement is sited as commencing in October of 2015, numerous sources and the explanations of students has contextualised this beginning not as an event that arose out of nowhere but rather as a movement which mobilised and developed from a pre-existing philosophy of Fallism, as well as in response to both previous protests (Rhodes Must Fall) and a particular political and economic climate within our country (Godsell & Chikane, 2016; Moyo, 2017). Fallist ideology is an idea which developed from a series of MustFall protests (Booysen, 2016). It is connected by a similar agenda and borne from a period in time where youth are becoming disillusioned with the promises made by the "Rainbow Nation" rhetoric (Chikane, 2018a). Furthermore, the youth are experiencing a general feeling of discontent with regards to the slow pace of change and transformation post 1994 and a succession of unfulfilled promises made by government (Booysen, 2016; Chikane, 2016). The philosophy of Fallism rejects the dominant ideologies of managerialism, neoliberalism, colonialism and commodification (Godsell & Chikane, 2016). Furthermore, it represents a critical examination of various intersecting issues important to the youth population and minorities including race, radical black feminism, black consciousness, the LGBTI+ community, pan-Africanism, gender, sexuality and intersectionality (Godsell & Chikane, 2016, Habib, 2019).

Fallist ideology can be traced back to the Rhodes Must Fall protests which originated at the University of Cape Town in March 2015 (Booysen, 2016; Godsell & Chikane, 2016; Mpofu-Walsh, 2016). These protests focused on the Cecil John Rhodes statue situated at the UCT campus at the time (Chikane, 2018a). The presence of the statue represented the persistence of white supremacy and the continued oppression and discrimination of

underprivileged and black students and staff (Mpofu-Walsh, 2016). A student leader, Chumani Maxwele, drew national attention when he hurled faeces at the statue, faeces which according to Mpofu-Walsh (2016) became symbolic of black pain. The act of throwing the faeces came to represent a belief in the failure of management and the government to adequately transform and decolonise the institution (Chikane, 2016; Mpofu-Walsh, 2016). The Rhodes statue was eventually toppled on 9 April 2015 in a symbolic show of defiance (Godsell & Chikane, 2016) and initiated a domino effect of fallist movements across the country.

Higher education in South Africa

Fallism developed from a particular sense of discontent within the higher education system and within university settings which acted as a microcosm for the discontent brewing in the wider societal sphere. In his recently published book titled *Rebels and rage: reflecting on #FeesMustFall*, Professor Adam Habib details how according to his view there were two major challenges facing higher education in the wake of these protests. The first issue was the problem of alienation experienced by people who do not identify as white within a university institution classified as historically white and therefore designed and engineered to privilege white people (Habib, 2019). Secondly, there was the issue of access, and the lack of such by historically disadvantaged individuals such as black people (Habib, 2019). A decrease in support and subsidies from the government over an extended period of a decade became the impetus which raised the temperature of the water to boiling point. Institutions of higher learning were faced with the insurmountable challenge of escalating financial pressure and according to Habib (2019) it was student fees which had to give way, a decision which incited extreme discontent amongst students and sparked the protest movement.

Photovoice

Photovoice is a qualitative data collection research method developed within the Participatory Action Research (PAR) paradigm (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Dakin, Parker, Amell & Rogers, 2015; Lichty, 2015; Sanon et al., 2014; Suffla et al., 2012; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). It involves the use of photography and images, captured by participants, with the intention of expressing or communicating an aspect of their lives or experiences (Fernandez & Langhout, 2014; Mortensen et al., 2014; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). Photovoice is a research method that allows for the potential power of a photograph to be utilized and aims to empower participants through concepts such as critical consciousness (Fernandez & Langhout, 2014; Suffla et al., 2004; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006).

In the South African context, action research is considered by Lazarus (1983) to be well-suited to our political situation as it is congruent with mental health aims of self-determination and independence. Furthermore, Foster-Fishman et al (2010) detail how PAR is a method which gives a voice to the concerns of young people and jumpstarts their engagement in society. As such, research which falls into the PAR or CBPR tradition is seen to be both relevant and needed in our local context with students and youth (Elliot, 1991; Lazarus, 1983).

PAR also includes a fundamental principle of expanding modes of representation so that a greater range of voices can be heard, thus aligning to the core aim of this research study (Suffla et al., 2012). Furthermore, one of its key principles is its endeavour to question and interrogate traditional power imbalances in research (Dakin et al., 2015; Fawcett, 1990; Rappaport, 1990; Orford, 1993; Viljoen, Pistorius & Eskell-Blokland, 2013). This is because in conventional mainstream research the researcher is often considered to be all-powerful and knowledgeable (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The researcher/s make/s all of the decisions and

upon completion are deemed the sole contributors of the research that is produced (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Dankin et al., 2015). Furthermore, when it comes to influencing the results, they are considered to be neutral bystanders and acknowledgement of potential biases are omitted through measures of 'control' (Bhana & Kanjee, 2001; Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001; Sanon et al., 2014; Willig, 2001).

In PAR, an effort has been made to question these conventional research assumptions (Lazarus, 2013; Viljoen et al., 2013). There is an acknowledgement that power imbalances exist in any research relationship but there is also a concerted effort to mitigate these effects by establishing a collaboration between researcher and participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001; Lazarus et al., 2014; Newbrough, 1997; Yen, 2013). The partnership sets up a goal of continual consensus throughout the research process (Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001; Lazarus, 2013). There is also the recognition that even though the researcher brings their knowledge about the research process to the table, they are not the most important or sole contributor (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Bond, 1990: Fawcett, 1990; Lazarus et al., 2014; Orford, 1993; Lazarus, 2013; Strack et al., 2004; Viljoen et al., 2013). Rather there is a shift in emphasis, in accordance with the postmodern perspective, towards the idea that multiple interpretations exist from all those who interact with the work and that each interpretation should be considered from an equal standpoint (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Barthes, 1977; Bertens, 1995; Lazarus, 2013; Viljoen et al., 2013).

In addition, the researcher openly and reflexively acknowledges how they can and do affect the process and results of the research (Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001; Sanon et al., 2014; Tolan et al., 1990; Visser, 2013; Whyte, 1991; Willig, 2001). In fact, the researcher is seen as entwined with the research because they do not merely observe but become active participants,

and as such, are given the role of change agents (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001; Sanon et al., 2014; Strack et al., 2014; Viljoen et al., 2013; Visser, 2013). By attempting to consider how I effect the research, by exploring my own thoughts and feelings about the protests and by establishing a collaborative partnership with those who have chosen to work with me on my research endeavour, an intervention is already taking place. The intervention attempts to break the confining and hegemonic mould of traditional hierarchical relationships in psychological research.

The influence of critical consciousness

Photovoice was developed in response to the critical consciousness teachings of the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Baker & Brookins, 2014; Suffla et al., 2012). His ideas have permeated critical theory since their dissemination in the early 1970s (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Baker & Brookins, 2014; Suffla et al., 2012). Freire advocated for a process of *conscientizacão*, *conscientization* or *consciousness raising* which referred to the development of a critical awareness (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Baker & Brookins, 2014; Freire, 1970; Fryer, 2008; Rappaport, 2005; Stevens, 2013; Yen, 2013). Freire understood that the human condition is characterized by an innate desire to progress towards becoming more fully human. However, this desire can be thwarted by injustice, discrimination and violence, tactics utilized by those in power to maintain the subjugation of the oppressed (Freire, 1970). Oppression can manifest in various ways, is entrenched in the everyday behaviour of modern society and relates to the maintenance and perpetuation of power differentials (Coleman, 2011; Deutsch, 2006; Freire, 1970). Oppression acts to dehumanize and stunt the achievement of true human potential. Freire believed that the dehumanization of the oppressed resides from within, as it is both a material and psychic condition and as such it

becomes the task of the oppressed to liberate themselves (Glass, 2001). Freire suggested that there is the potential for empowerment (and the resistance of oppression) simply by taking a step back and reflecting critically on the surrounding social and political forces that influence our lives (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Freire, 1970, Strack et al., 2004; Suffla et al., 2012; Yen, 2013).

Freire posits in one of his most well-known publications *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that oppressed or disenfranchised people are in their current position as a result of accepting and adapting to structures of domination (Freire, 1970). Consequently, these structures inhibit the oppressed from striving for freedom and achieving their true potential (Freire, 1970). He explains that to break the shackles of domination, the oppressed must reflect and gain awareness of their own situation and from that clarity, liberation will follow (Freire, 1970; Strack et al., 2004; Yen, 2013; Zimmerman, 2000). Gaining awareness is an understanding of the relationships between varying oppressive structures which evolves into a willingness to take risks to question and fight the system (Glass, 2001). Thus, critical consciousness is followed by the transformation of social structures and ultimately the commencement of change and progression towards humanisation (Roberts, 1996). Photovoice has as one of its fundamental goals the aim of eliciting critical consciousness and initiating the betterment of the human condition (Foster-Fishman et al., 2010).

The work of Freire echoes that of South African born Steve Bantu Biko, one of the most iconic activists of the anti-apartheid era. Biko is known for being instrumental in pioneering the Black Consciousness Movement which essentially demonstrated how racism and discrimination were about far more than just physical oppression (Booysen, 2016; Everatt, 2016; Mangcu, 2017; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Stevens, 2013). He explained that being black is a reflection of a mental attitude and that black people should resist negative connotations

associated with being labelled as black and 'hold their heads high in defiance' (Biko, 1978, p. 52). Like Freire, he believed that people were trapped within a mental cage and in order to emancipate themselves they needed to become aware of their own problems, develop a critical consciousness or a 'manifestation of a new realisation' about their situation, and ultimately empower themselves (Biko, 1978, p. 53). According to Biko, 'the interrelationship between the consciousness of the self and the emancipatory programme is of paramount importance' (Biko, 1978, p.53). The French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault, who wrote extensively on the topic of power and freedom, also believed that we should challenge mainstream thinking in order to become critical subjects and achieve liberation (Viljoen et al., 2013). Participatory action research and the method of photovoice emulate these ideas and put them into practice.

The influence of community psychology

Photovoice (and PAR) is a method that has its roots in the psychological sub-disciplines of community psychology (CP) and liberation psychology, and as such, espouses many of its values and principles (Carolissen, 2006; Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001; Lichty, 2015; Serano-García, 1990; Viljoen et al., 2013; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). While a comprehensive, all-encompassing definition of community psychology is elusive due to its multifaceted, varied and broad description, there are certain key features which are essential to its understanding. One of the main aims of community psychology is to reach people who require help in the fields of mental health, preferably in the form of a preventative services. As such, community psychology can be described as a field which focuses on the prevention of psychological issues prior to their commencement and attempts

to engage mass intervention so that larger numbers of citizens can have access to psychological services (Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed, 2001; Seedat, Duncan & Lazarus, 2001).

Community psychology began (allegedly as its exact origins are disputed) in the USA in the 1960s during a critical point in the country's history (Bishop & Brown, 2006; Kofkin Rudkin, 2003; Lazarus, 2013; Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed, 2001; Stevens, 2013; Toro, 2005). It was during a time when questioning and interrogating dominant power structures gained momentum, and marginalised people began to take a stand against such structures (Bishop & Brown, 2006; Kofkin Rudkin, 2003; Lazarus, 2013; Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed, 2001; Stevens, 2013; Toro, 2005). It has been aligned with liberation movements and commenced alongside the civil rights movement, the feminist movement and the anti-war movements occurring in America at the time (Fryer, 2008; Lazarus, 2013; Stevens, 2013; Toro, 2005).

When community psychology found a home in South Africa, it was during a fractured and turbulent time when the apartheid regime had succeeded in institutionalizing oppression and discrimination (Stevens, 2013). Community psychologists played a role (and continue to play a role) in questioning not only the injustices of apartheid, but also the complacency, and unfortunately in certain cases the perpetuation, of such injustices by mainstream psychology and psychological discourse prior to the advent of our democracy (and still to this day) (Hamber, Masilela & Terre Blanche, 2001; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Stevens, 2013; Yen, 2013; Yen, 2008). Community psychology thus aims to critically respond to the shortcomings and injustices perpetrated by traditional mainstream psychology through its elitism and inaccessibility and to address (or redress) and interrogate political systems of repression (Larsson et al., 2012; Stevens, 2013; Yen, 2008; Young, 2013).

Community psychology has a rich relationship with protest movements and with interrogating power dynamics and political structures (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Stevens, 2013). Therefore, it feels essential that such a relationship with the protests, and the thoughts and feelings about our current political climate, is fostered and strengthened by researchers as a political responsibility. Furthermore, through conducting research which espouses the values of community psychology, this report stands as a symbol of protest against the outdated theory and practice of most mental health services in our country which are clinically and individually focused, target the private rich white sector of our population and are inaccessible to most (Bhana et al., 2007).

Photovoice is a method developed within the PAR paradigm and falls within the field of community psychology. Many of the values and principles employed by Photovoice mentioned above form part of a wider sphere of the subdiscipline of community psychology. This research project aligns to the philosophy, processes and goals of community psychology. As such, this theoretical concept, the framework of community psychology, formed the foundation for the practical implementation of the project.

Critical consideration of research methodology

Using the method of photovoice and its underlying principles creates a shift in what is important to focus on when it comes to communities. Ultimately there is a need for a paradigm shift in how research is conducted *with* and *in relation to* communities rather than *on* communities (Yen, 2013). Often when psychologists approach a disadvantaged community they do so with the assumption that such a community is deficient in some manner and is in

need of rescuing (Yen, 2013). However, what is often not acknowledged is that even though a community may lack resources or power it does not mean that they view themselves as inferior to those who have power and money. Photovoice is unique in the sense that it allows individuals to start a conversation about the positive aspects of their community and their daily lives rather than the same sad story of deprivation (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). It can alter the dominant story that is being told, from the viewpoint of the outsider (or the privileged), to that of the personal story of the participants themselves and in this very act initiate a process of emancipation (Rappaport, 2005). In an article titled *On the Africanization of psychology* Long (2016) discusses how the process of decolonization and the interrogation of these discourses cannot be given mere lip service but rather that there needs to be a genuine examination of conditions of oppression. Photovoice emulates this call through action from the grass roots level. Imagine the power inherent in having an opportunity to tell your own story.

In addition to questioning our understanding of the concept of community, researchers and research needs to be more critical about the language that is used to describe a community (Naidoo et al., 2013; Pillay, 2016; Yen, 2013). The term ‘community’ is not a neutral word in our post-apartheid era and usually has racist and classist connotations (Butchart & Seedat, 1990; Carolissen, 2004; Ngonyama Ka Sigogo & Modipa, 2004; Naidoo, et al., 2013; Pillay, 2016; Yen, 2013). Often, using words such as ´underprivileged´, ´oppressed´ and ´disenfranchised´, even when questioning what these words represent, can have the unintended consequence of perpetuating the very stereotypes that one is attempting to overturn (Naidoo et al., 2013; Pillay, 2016; Yen, 2013). So, if the term is not interrogated and questioned it can have the effect of re-entrenching the othering process and can have the consequence of delegitimizing the field of community psychology (Butchart & Seedat, 1990; Naidoo et al., 2013).

South Africa (and Africa), is a place that is still yoked to a negative image inherited from colonial times that the citizens who live here are helpless, deficient and in need of saving. There is a dim narrative that has been created of poor people and the supposed inferiority and lowered intellectualism of Africans by the rest of the globe (Mbembe, 2001). As Achille Mbembe explains in his book *On the Postcolony*, 'all struggles have become struggles of representation' (Mbembe, 2001, p. 6). The way to alter this misconception is to avoid using language that pathologizes and enter into a continual process of checking assumptions. There is also the very real danger of a researcher adopting a condescending attitude which can only be countered by maintaining a state of constant self-reflection. Furthermore, it seems imperative that a counter-narrative is established which questions these negative assumptions and stereotypes. In addition and to go one step further, it is salient that in this process of producing and stabilizing a powerful pro-African counter-narrative, an increased amount of quality and decolonised knowledge is produced and disseminated to the public. As such, the aim of this report is to fulfil such a purpose and contribute towards building such a counter-narrative.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed overview of the key concepts and ideas explored and interrogated in this research study. Past and current literature has been surveyed in order to produce an account of the knowledge that is currently available on the main topics of protest, examples of protest, photovoice and key ideas related to the method of photovoice and its implementation.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Introduction

This chapter begins by listing the research questions addressed by this research project. This is followed by an outline and explanation of the research design used in the study namely photovoice. Information about the participants involved in this study is discussed as well as an explanation and justification for the setting chosen to conduct the research. Thereafter an explanation is given of the data collection method of photovoice, the procedure of how the data was gathered and how the photovoice project was implemented by the researcher. The data analysis method of Thematic Content Analysis is described and then the section concludes with the ethical considerations that needed to be deliberated throughout the course of the research project.

Research Questions

1. What are Wits students´ experiences and opinions of protest and protest action from their point of view using the photovoice method?
2. What are the different, similar and opposing viewpoints about protests and the socio-political issues in our society that the protests support or oppose?
3. How does the use of photographs and images allow an exploration of the idea of the archive and in turn allow a reflection of how the issues of the past affect and replay in the present?

Research design

Photovoice and Participatory Action Research

Photovoice is a relatively novel research method developed in the 1990s by Mary-Ann Burris and Caroline Wang (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Fernandez & Langhout, 2014; Roger et al., 2012; Sanon et al., 2014; Strack et al., 2004; Suffla et al., 2012; Wang & Burris, 1997). It falls within the Participatory Action Research (PAR) paradigm and is also occasionally considered to be a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) method (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Dakin et al., 2015; Lichty, 2015; Sanon et al., 2014; Suffla et al., 2012; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). As the name suggests, PAR or CBPR aims to encourage collaboration and partnership with communities and participants, community empowerment as well as produce tangible and meaningful social action, community dialogue and change (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Foster-Fishman et al., 2010; Graham & Ismail, 2011, Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001; Lichty, 2015; Suffla et al., 2012; Viljoen et al., 2013).

Photovoice is an applied research method that attempts to emulate these core values of PAR and CBPR. It has been used in a variety of settings and locations across the world with different demographic groups but is most commonly used in under-served communities or with disempowered groups (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Lichty, 2015; Strack et al., 2004; Suffla et al., 2012). Essentially it is a method that involves the use of photographs taken by a group of participants with a digital or disposable camera (Mortensen et al., 2014; Wang & Burris, 2006). The photographs are captured in response to the social context and community of each participant which aims to enable a process of critical consciousness and awareness about their surroundings, as discussed earlier in reference to the ideas of Freire and Biko (Hanlin et al., 2008; Suffla et al., 2012; Wang & Burris, 1997).

The goals of photovoice

The photovoice method was initially proposed with three main aims or goals in mind which have been retained to the present day (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Mortensen et al., 2014; Sanon et al., 2014; Strack et al., 2004). The first aim involves a process that could document both the strengths and weaknesses of a community (Lazarus et al., 2014; Strack et al., 2004; Suffla et al., 2014; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). This is so that the positive aspects of a community are highlighted rather than a continuous focus on just the negative aspects, as seems to be the norm for research (Strack et al., 2004; Suffla et al., 2014; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). Lazarus et al (2014) discuss how this is important in terms of refraining from framing the intervention in a deficit mentality characterised by pathologies or problems and instead reframing it in terms of strengths and empowerment. If we relate this to the current discussion of protest action, it is far too common that the negative aspects of protesting are highlighted and focused on without a balanced account of the positive aspects.

The second goal is to enable a rebalancing of the power between researchers and participants into a more democratic partnership (Oja & Smulyan, 1989; Orford, 1993; Rappaport, 1990; Strack et al., 2004; Suffla et al., 2014; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). In the context of this study, this was done by including participants throughout the research process, during each stage and not just during the data collection phase. Furthermore, participants were invited to contribute ideas, to suggests alterative courses of action and to provide commentary on the final report (this will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter under the subheading ‘participant involvement’).

Finally, the third aim involves an end goal of meaningful social action that culminates in tangible real-world change and policy making (Schein, 1985; Strack et al., 2004; Suffla et al., 2014; Tolan et al., 1990; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). In the lifespan of this research report it has yet to be determined if this last goal will reach fruition. However, the intention is for the findings to be accessible to a larger audience, to provide a richer account of students' voices and to hopefully illicit a greater sense of critical consciousness in those who engage with it.

Although previously discussed, it is worth reiterating that photovoice is a method developed within the PAR paradigm and falls within the field of community psychology. Many of the values and principles employed by Photovoice mentioned above form part of a wider sphere of the subdiscipline of community psychology. This research project aligns to the philosophy, processes and goals of community psychology. As such, this theoretical concept and the framework of community psychology formed the foundation for the practical implementation of the project.

Participants and setting

Participant demographics and background

Eleven participants were recruited from the University of the Witwatersrand using purposive non-probability convenience sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Posters inviting students to participate were displayed across the university campus (included in the appendices) and once the process commenced more participants were recruited through word of mouth and snowball sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Participants ranged in age from

20 to 37 years at the time of data collection and the group included 6 men and 5 women (in the more binary conventional understanding of gender). All participants were members of the Wits student community, being students who were registered at the time of data collection. In terms of first language, there were 7 English speakers, 2 Zulu speakers, 1 German speaker and 1 Tsonga speaker. The race categories were divided into 7 participants who identified as White, 3 who identified as Black or African and 1 who identified as Coloured. The participant's area of study was also captured and distributed into 4 students in the field of Psychology, 3 in the field of Fine Art, 2 in the Engineering field, 1 in Marketing and 1 in Politics and International Relations.

The focus on a student sample: youth activism

Using a student population may be considered a 'safe' and convenient sample as it is usually the 'automatic' go-to option in psychological research. A great deal of research has been criticized for using university student samples as it usually provides skewed results that are difficult to apply universally. Through the lens of the PAR method and the principles of community psychology, the issue with using a student sample is that the research produced can become quite removed from the South African community context (Berry, 2013). This is because students who attend university have usually had access to greater opportunities than the general population and they have more advanced levels of education, thus not accurately capturing the experience of the average South African citizen. Therefore, there is a tone of hypocrisy in doing a photovoice project with university students. However, in this regard the concerns raised by student protestors, and those raised by PAR and photovoice research align so harmoniously that it warrants accepting a convention that would otherwise be challenged.

Furthermore, this research looks specifically at the experiences and perceptions of students, who have been inspired to speak up and demand change in the wake of the Fees Must Fall protest movement and other such protest movements. Youth groups such as students, which Everatt (2016) defines as individuals between the ages of sixteen and thirty, are considered to be a potent site for activism as they are often at the forefront of instigating protest and organising protest action (Suffla et al., 2012). Throughout history, the young generation has been known to challenge the status-quo and their active involvement has been shown to be influential in affecting social and political issues (Libby, Rosen & Sedonaen, 2010; Mortensen et al., 2014; Suffla et al., 2012). This is also true in South Africa where youth movements have defined key moments in liberation history, such as the Soweto Uprising protest which were youth-led (Everatt, 2016; Suffla et al., 2012). Furthermore, Mortensen et al (2014) points to research which suggests that youth are aware of problems within their community years ahead of the older generation and have important insights about how society can be changed and improved. Everatt (2016) elaborates that youth have consistently led progressive movements for change. As such, the creation of a space for youth and students to have an opportunity to voice their concerns through critical dialogue is paramount within the community psychology and PAR tradition and in relation to an increase in student led protests (Suffla et al., 2012).

The setting of the University of the Witwatersrand

There is a particular relevance in conducting the photovoice project at the University of the Witwatersrand with students aligned to the institution, as it is the site where the Fees Must Fall protests physically began (Booysen 2016; Pillay, 2016). Wits is considered to be an Historically White University (HWU) (Habib, 2019) and stands as an emblem of the ivory tower (a white space which favours white interests and is implicit in the protection of white

privilege). Yet it is also well known for being active in anti-government protests during the apartheid era (Naicker, 2016). Thus, there is a rich history of protest action on at Wits but also a history (and continuation) of discriminatory practices.

Furthermore, it is relevant to mention that Wits University is an institution of higher learning and this also has great relevance. As a tertiary education institution, Wits plays a role in knowledge production. In recent years, Wits has shifted towards a greater focus on postgraduate studies and the production of research (Habib, 2019) which thus imbues the institution with power in its role as torchbearer of knowledge production and therefore using photovoice in this context is meaningful. In accordance with the values of community psychology, it is important to conduct research that can be self-critical about the power base from which it works. The student protesters and Fallists are essentially pointing a critical magnifying glass on the institution that they are enrolled at, and I as a fellow student am doing the same through my research.

Data collection

Photographs

There are two main types of data that were collected using the photovoice method. The first is the photographs taken and selected by the participants. These are in the form of digital visual images with corresponding titles and captions. They were taken by the participants using digital and cell-phone cameras. 10 of the participants contributed a total of 24 photographs with some contributing a single image and one contributing as many as 6. One participant who was interviewed misunderstood the photographing process and erroneously downloaded images from the internet which he did not capture himself and so these were excluded from the analysis due to copyright and ownership issues.

Interviews and group discussion

The second aspect is the explanation of the photographs by the participants as well as responses to broader questions relating to protest and protest action. These were obtained through in-depth, face to face, semi-structured interviews as well as a group discussion. These were all audio-recorded and then transcribed. The transcribed text was then analysed.

Procedure of data gathering (photovoice implementation)

Approach to the research project

One of the key features of qualitative and PAR research is that even though the researcher has a broad research topic in mind and a faint agenda, they do not enter into the process with a predetermined course of action (Rappaport, 1990; Serano-García, 1990). The specific choice of topic, the process and the outcomes develop naturally in collaboration with the participants. This is essential within the photovoice method in its endeavour to establish a non-hierarchical research partnership (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The procedure of data gathering for this photovoice project developed and changed in a malleable manner through dialogue with participants and as a result of various circumstances encountered through the research process. As such, the researcher entered the process without a solid predetermined idea or structure for how it would unfold, and this allowed the process to change and be influenced by the participants and various other factors.

Beginning the research project

Permission to begin the project was obtained from the Wits ethics committee and the Wits Psychology department through due process. Permission was also granted by the SRC to

display posters around campus explaining the research project and inviting participants to take part. The photovoice intervention began with initial contact or an initial meeting with each participant to explain what the research project entailed and to give a brief overview of what the method of photovoice involved. Each person was given an opportunity to ask any questions, share any concerns, or add any contributions that they might have had about the process and their involvement. An agreement was then reached with the participants to engage in a collaboration on this project.

The data collection process

Participants were invited to take photographs or retrieve photographs that they had taken previously which articulated or described some aspect of protesting or protest action that they felt was important to them. Participants were given agency to decide what they wanted to photograph, how they wanted to go about the process of photographing and how many photographs they wanted to contribute. They were free to express their unique interpretation of protest action in their own way. There was a conscious effort not to give participants a predetermined idea of what they should produce, and any contributions were accepted and valued.

Thereafter, once each participant had collected their photographs they brought them in to be discussed in an in-depth interview or in a group discussion. 7 participants participated in individual interviews, 4 participants joined a group discussion and 1 participant participated in both the group discussion and an individual interview. Participants were asked to sign consent forms to participate in interviews or group discussion prior to the commencement of the interview or group discussion. They were also requested to sign consent forms to be audio-recorded and to allow the use of their photographs within the research project. The participant's

personal contact details were captured so as to maintain contact with them and share the results of the study with them during the writing process and upon the report's completion.

The individual interviews were conducted to allow participants to have a safe space where they could share their thoughts, feelings and experiences of protesting and protest action and describe the concepts behind their photographs (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Lichty, 2015). A group discussion was then arranged to provide an opportunity for participants to talk about their photographs in a group format. The intention was to create an opportunity for the participants to share their experiences and have them witnessed by peers in order for them to be validated and heard (Lichty, 2015). Furthermore, aside from having the opportunity to share one's own experiences, it allowed for a situation in which students could listen to and hear the experiences of others. Thus, an additional intention was to enable students to have access to experiences that might have been different from their own, and to attempt to understand and reflect on how protests can affect different people in dissimilar ways. Lichty (2015) explains how the critical group discourse process of participants discussing their photo-narratives together promotes deeper insights into community needs and assets and facilitates critical consciousness.

While all interviewed participants were invited to participate in the group discussion only one participant from the interview process could attend the group discussion and therefore four new participants were recruited and included. These four new participants also contributed photographs and discussed them together. The group discussion provided a dynamic whereby participants could share the photographs that they took with others through a group dialogue. A brief reflection process was included at the end of the discussion so that participants could look back at the process and consider its impact for them as individuals and for the group. The

reflection space was also included to evaluate and ensure that all participants were not harmed in any way by the process and did not harbour any difficult and unresolved feelings.

Data analysis

Thematic Content Analysis

The transcribed text was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Content Analysis. Thematic Content Analysis is a qualitative analytic method which involves the search for and identification of key themes or patterns from a particular data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It involves a step by step guide of how to analyse the data using six core phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and these were followed for this project. Furthermore, it incorporates a practice of continuous reflexive dialogue by the researcher while simultaneously acknowledging the part the researcher adds to the process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

It is salient to mention that even though Thematic Content Analysis was used by the researcher to determine a deeper understanding of the transcribed discussions, there was a concerted effort to develop themes and key areas of interest with the participants. This was done by asking participants at the end of each interview to develop and conceptualize key themes and areas of focus according to what they found to be most salient about the discussion. The intention was that the participants themselves could collaboratively decide on the themes and discourses that they believed to be significant, rather than the researcher making this decision. If the researcher were to decide on which themes are important without consideration of the participant's opinions it would nullify the purpose and aim of the photovoice method, namely to give power and a voice to participants and include them in the data analysis process. That being said, it needs to be acknowledged that despite best efforts to the contrary, the

subjective experiences, thoughts, feelings and theoretical and cultural framework of the researcher always plays a part and influences the results in some capacity.

Participatory Action Research paradigm

The collected and analysed data was contextualized within the Participatory Action Research paradigm (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The Participatory Action research paradigm is a relatively novel paradigm which emerged out of Participatory Action Research into its own distinctive paradigm (Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001). It emphasizes certain key ideas such as participatory involvement, action and change, and encounter and dialectic dialogue (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The role of social and community influence is paramount and the paradigm contends that individuals create knowledge through their engagement and reciprocal encounters with others (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001). However, the engagement is understood as a mutual activity where shared power and co-ownership throughout the research process is essential (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001). Furthermore, the PAR paradigm highlights the political dimension of social science research and how politics not only influences the participants but also the ideological results of research studies (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It is a paradigm which aligns with many of the fundamental values and principles of photovoice, PAR and community psychology.

Participant involvement

In most traditional mainstream psychological research, participant involvement is confined to the data collection stage of the research process. This is the point at which researchers will gather information from participants in the form of interviews or other such data collection methods. Thereafter the participant´s contribution ends, and they are only contacted again upon completion and/or publication of the report to be informed about the

findings of the study. This research study aimed to challenge those conventions by actively attempting to include participants in a more collaborative partnership during the entire research process (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This is in accordance with the principles of PAR which encourage a careful maintenance of an ongoing relationship between participants and researchers (Kelly & Van Der Riet, 2001).

As has been mentioned, participants were invited to contribute towards the initial stages of the project where the main ideas and procedure of how things would unfold were still undefined. They were given agency to interpret the project in their own way and to make changes to the process that the researcher had initially envisioned. The participants were then involved in the data collection process by gathering photographs and participating in interviews or a group discussion. Thereafter, participants were invited to contribute to the data analysis process by providing key themes and areas of focus that they felt stood out for them. Lastly, once the data was analysed and laid out in a formal written report, and prior to submission of the final paper, each participant was invited to engage with the findings of the report.

The purpose of this last stage was to ask participants to read through the report and therefore have an opportunity to critically comment and reflect on their thoughts and feelings about what had been produced. Each participant was invited to provide comments, to add or disagree with key concepts or to challenge misconceptions or misrepresentations. Due to personal time constraints some participants were not able to engage at this stage. However, others engaged in a critical dialogue about their responses to the findings and made suggestions for possible changes and alterations which were then duly added to the report. Thereafter, at the final stage of this research process, each participant was asked to grant permission to

include their names so as to acknowledge their participation in the study. Most participants agreed to this request while some chose to remain anonymous. This last act of name inclusion of all parties involved was for the purpose of not only involving participants throughout the research process, but to acknowledge their valued involvement in shaping the final product.

Ethical considerations

Ethics of human participation

Participants were recruited voluntarily and had the right to withdraw from the project at any point during the process (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). They were informed about the study, what their involvement would entail and their ethical rights prior to commencement of the project. They were assured that their confidentiality would be maintained in terms of the particulars of what they shared during the data collection process (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Once the interviews or group discussion were completed there was an opportunity to reflect on the process in order to determine how participants felt about the data collection experience and whether there were any negative feelings elicited or any harm done that might have required further psychological intervention.

The onset of potential delayed trauma

A speculation prior to the commencement of the project, and a potentially crucial ethical dilemma, was the possibility that focusing on, and discussing protests, might be a sensitive area of conversation for some people. This is because it is happening in the here and now and is a current issue facing our country. The occurrence of Fees Must Fall protest demonstrations on campus meant that many Wits students have been exposed either to physical

demonstrations or have engaged with the ideological causes elicited by the movement. Therefore, there was the possibility that students might have encountered acts or demonstrations of violence both physically or psychologically, thus causing trauma which could be triggered by engaging in this research project. Fortunately, this was a concern that did not materialize as participants were able to discuss different experiences (some including acts of violence) and describe a range of emotions without suggesting that therapeutic intervention was necessary. Furthermore, during the time of data collection there were no major physical protest demonstrations happening at Wits. Thus, this cessation period of physical protests on campus might have allowed for some distance should participants have witnessed or experienced any violence or trauma and consequently allowed for a conducive space to reflect on past events.

Ethics of camera use and photography

Ethics in relation to the use of cameras and photography was also kept in mind. When using photography there is always the issue of what is going to be photographed and if the content could pose a safety or risk concern to the participants or the subjects they capture in their images. There were two main areas of concern in this regard. The first was if illegal activities were photographed, thus implicating the participant in a potential criminal investigation and/or further punitive consequences. The second was if the participants decided to photograph other people who could be identified and whose confidentiality could not be maintained. Fortunately, none of the participants photographed any acts of unlawfulness, nor did they photograph any subjects who can be visibly recognised from the photographs and so this did not become a concern.

Reflexivity

As a researcher conducting research within the PAR paradigm and through a community-based counselling psychology masters course, it is salient that I consider how my part is not neutral but integral to the process and the results. It is imperative that I maintain the practice of examining my subjectivity and self-reflexivity continuously throughout the research process. One major aspect of this is understanding my own thoughts, feelings, opinions and potential biases about the protests, how they have affected me as a student and how they have shaped my understanding of how I view my 'South African-ness'. This also involves acknowledging what I represent in the discourse of the protests as a white, female, English speaking, wealthy and educated researcher and how these descriptions are directly linked to issues of power. Furthermore, it involves conceding and reconciling with the fact that I don't have the ability to alter my representation and understanding that such a representation could influence the dynamics of the research on a number of levels.

Chapter conclusion

A summary of the methodology used for this research project was provided and explained. The core research questions were outlined followed by the research design used to answer the questions. The method utilized namely photovoice, which is classified as participatory action research method, was explained more in depth. An explanation of participant demographics and background was given as well as justification for the use of a student sample and the location of Wits University. The data collection process was described in detail followed by the practical implementation of the photovoice method with the participants. The data analysis method was explained in relation to this project with an

understanding of how participants were involved in the process. Ethical considerations were also listed and explained with reflections from the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Through the data analysis process six main overarching themes were identified using Thematic Content Analysis. The six themes are: *Voice, Change and action, Violence and disruption, Power relations, Protest culture* and *Equality and justice.* Each of these themes are further divided into subthemes.

While the information gathered in the data collection process has been grouped into six distinct themes in a categorical manner, it is important to note that these themes are not mutually exclusive. Even though each one will be discussed in turn as separate entities, they are related and there is significant overlap between them. These six themes should be understood using the analogy of an interwoven web that has multiple connections and intersections, rather than six individual free-standing ideas. The themes and subthemes are tabulated in Table 1 below.

The photographs captured and provided by each participant are also dispersed throughout the results and discussion section. Certain photographs are placed within each theme, however in a similar understanding to the core themes there is no clear-cut categorization of each and many of the photographs speak to a number of themes simultaneously. Some of the photographs are referenced directly in the text and yet others stand alone and speak for themselves. A list of the photographs is included in Table 2 below.

Table 1: Overview of main themes and subthemes

Main theme	**Subtheme**
1: Voice	1.1 Expression
	1.2 Critical consciousness
	1.3 Representation
	1.4 Ambiguities and contradictions
2: Change and action	2.1 Defiance and action
	2.2 Movement
	2.3 Progress and opportunity
3: Violence and disruption	3.1 Disruption and chaos
	3.2 ‘Hooligan’ discourse
	3.3 Violence
	3.4 Police and measures of control
	3.5 Emotion
4: Power relations	4.1 Powerlessness
	4.2 Leadership
	4.3 Capitalism
	4.4 Structures of power
	4.5 Entitlement
5: Protest culture	5.1 Positive dynamics of protest
	5.2 Legacy of protest
	5.3 The collective
	5.4 Mass mobilization
	5.5 The ‘right’ way to protest
6: Equality and justice	6.1 Injustice
	6.2 The liberation struggle
	6.3 Inequality

Table 2: The photographs and their corresponding titles

Photograph	**Title**	**Participant**	**Page number**
Image A	Free your voice	5	66
Image B	Untitled	11	73
Image C	A new year at Wits	2	77
Image D	“Taking back the city”	8	79
Image E	The false direction	6	81
Image F	It’s not too late	1	83
Image G	(No title)	1	86
Image H	Shattered dreams	4	89
Image I	Noisy silence	9	95
Image J	Waiting	2	99
Image K	Hearts of stone	4	104
Image L	Powerlessness	6	106
Image M	Truth to power	7	109
Image N	Your thoughts?	1	112
Image O	Structural	7	115
Image P	Protesting protest	10	118
Image Q	The gathering	2	121
Image R	We are students	7	124
Image S	Untitled	2	127
Image T	Potential for growth	5	130
Image U	Getting a better view	2	133
Image V	Again and again	7	137
Image W	Decolonize the mind	1	140
Image X	Going home	2	142

Theme 1: Voice

1.1 Expression.

When an individual or a collective group decide to protest the intention is to have a voice. The aim is to express oneself in some manner so that a person or a group can share their opinions, perspectives, thoughts, feelings or tell a story. Protests are considered to be an expression of a democratic system and allow citizens to voice their concerns. Protests are usually about some form of communication and are predicated upon the reciprocation of being heard and having others listen in response.

One of the core ideas that emerged is the realization that a plethora of stories and perspectives exist about protest, protest action and the problems or issues that are being protested for or against. All of the participants that took part in the project expressed a range of views and opinions about similar and dissimilar ideas. This is interesting because there is often an assumption that students have a similar approach towards protests and therefore present on a united front. It is also interesting to explore just how different each participant´s views and opinions are. Participant 9 highlighted the multitude of viewpoints during the group discussion when she said,

> *This has been really interesting and complex because we are all sitting in slightly different positions with slightly different, you know, but I think there are certain things that we all agree on and certain things that we all disagree on but there has been a nice mixture of different types of perspectives which has made this conversation very interesting*. (Participant 9)

Expressing oneself can be achieved through the medium of language but it can also be done through art-based methods such as photography or graffiti. For this project, all

participants were required to take photographs which expressed some aspect of protesting that they felt to be pertinent or interesting. Thus, there was an applied use of one mode of art creation during this research process. However, what many of the participants captured in their photographs was the use of another mode of art creation, namely graffiti. In doing so they referenced the use of art-based methods as a form of expression while using an art-based method (well known in protest culture around the world) to convey this. There are numerous similarities between graffiti and protest action and Participant 5 discusses this in regard to her photograph Image A which she titled *Free your voice* (see photograph below). She discusses how graffiti and protests are both modes of expression which attempt to challenge the status-quo yet society ensures that the manner in which their expression occurs is carefully controlled and monitored. The participants also discussed a pertinent difference between protest action and art-based expression such as graffiti or the photovoice method. They mentioned that even though both are modes of expression, one is considered to be safer and less risky. Participant 9 referred to this when she said,

> *Nobody gets hurt in the spray painting of the pillar*. (Participant 9)

Thus, there is an acknowledgement that graffiti and the photovoice method have the capacity and potential to get a message across and express an opinion or standpoint in a non-violent manner.



Image A: Free your voice

> I had been seeing lots of graffiti and I had decided that that would be one of the pictures that I take, because for me it kind of shows like expression, and like the freedom of expression, that I think that protests, protest action should have. And I don't necessarily think that it does have the freedom which is kind of similar to graffiti. So, I think in some places you're allowed to graffiti the walls but then there is a lot of other places where you are not. So, I think that it kind of shows that aspect where sometimes it is okay but sometimes it is not and the two different sides to it. So, it's good to protest, or its bad to protest, or you can protest here but you're not allowed to move from this area so… In terms of Fees Must Fall there were specific areas, which kind of defeats the whole purpose of the freedom of expression which is the same as the graffiti. So, I kind of saw the relationship between the two. (Participant 5)

1.2 Critical consciousness

While discussing their views about protests and the issues that were being protested for or against, participants referred to instances where their minds had been changed or altered due to the protests. As such, there were elements of awareness, insight or consciousness that were gained or arose as the protests unfolded which resulted in participants either changing their views or approach to the protest/s or learning something new which they had been unaware of

beforehand. This makes reference to one of the main aims or goals of the photovoice method, in accordance with the writings and teachings of Freire, which is for participants to develop a sense of critical consciousness about their political and social surroundings (Wang & Burris, 1997).

While discussing the Fees Must Fall protests participant 4 mentions a change in perspective over the duration of the protests when she said,

> *I think the difficulty with that is that in the beginning I was quite anti it, because I didn't understand it and then I understood the movement and was quite pro it.* (Participant 4)

She went on to explain,

> *I suppose my view has changed when I got to university in that I now have thought of it differently in terms of it now as people fighting for a cause.* (Participant 4)

This highlights a shift in perspective that has occurred over time as a result of a protest movement.

A shift in mindset, which a protest movement aims to initiate, is echoed by the photovoice method and its aim of being a vehicle for conscientization or critical consciousness. Some participants discussed how their minds were altered not only by thinking more critically about the concepts and ideas that the protest movements were intending to challenge but also by engaging in this photovoice project where they could consider concepts that they had yet to engage with. Participant 2 referred to this when she said,

> *I think speaking about it today kind of made me think a little bit more clearly about why people protest, stuff that I've never actually stopped to consider.* (Participant 2)

Thus, there was an acknowledgment by some participants that by participating in a discussion about the topic it allowed for a space to critically think about concepts that hadn't been considered previously. Participant 2 further added,

> *I think you don't really realize how significant protest action is until you start talking about it.* (Participant 2)

Therefore, many of the participants acknowledged how their involvement in this project elicited a change in consciousness. At the end of the process participant 10 referred to this when she said,

> *It was very interesting to see the different protests that people are aware of and feel strongly about that I wasn't necessarily aware of and just by this discussion, you know, I am actually being made aware of certain things where injustices have happened and I guess then this is exactly that, its peaceful protest by sharing what our standpoints are*. (Participant 10)

She went on to acknowledge,

> *I am going to go and research some of the things and obviously have a changed mind about things, so being made aware of things is a big thing about protest as well, and so this has achieved that for me.* (Participant 10)

Thus, Participant 10 drew a link between a sense of changed consciousness as a key aim of protest action and protesting and a sense of changed consciousness being achieved as a key aim of the photovoice method and this research project. Perhaps a process of critical consciousness has been initiated in the reader as they read this research paper and gather information which they did not have previously?

1.3 Representation

One of the key elements of protests and protest action is that often an account of what occurred can be distorted or told in an untrue manner. For example, many of the participants spoke about how the media represents (or misrepresents) key news events, stories or discourses. Furthermore, there is an assumption that only one true, real and objective story can be told about each event without considering how each person has a different story to tell based on their own knowledge and unique background or life experiences. Thus, there was a recognition that when it comes to protest sometimes the whole truth isn't told or heard, and an acknowledgment that different voices aren't valued equally.

Another key aspect of protest action which has been gaining in importance in recent years, and a core feature of the Fees Must Fall protest movement, has been the use of technology, the internet and more specifically social media. The Fees Must Fall movement is often spoken about in relation to the use of a hashtag which makes clear reference to social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. The use of social media as a tool during protest has meant that protestors are able to spread awareness about their cause or message at a much more rapid pace than was possible in earlier years. Furthermore, it provided access to a platform for more people to share their stories and opinions.

The use of social media has also allowed for a broadening of what would normally be defined as protesting. Thus, it has led people to question whether protesting can be more than just physical marching and can include things like taking a stand or even reposting something on social media. Participant 4 provided an example when she said,

> *With gay marriage being legalized in America I then had my rainbow all around, all over my profile picture, which I feel is a form of protest.* (Participant 4)

Furthermore, it has provided a space for people who don't want to or can't get involved in spaces where there could be the possibility of violence or risk. In other words, it has created an increased potential and greater accessibility for people to get involved in protest movements even if they are not able to physically protest on the ground. Participant 4 elaborated on this when she explained that social media,

> *…gives people more access. I can't always get involved in protest, but this gives me access to be able to say hash tag fees must fall you know, and I feel involved.* (Participant 4)

Social media is a platform that has increased the amount of people who have access to information and so it has enabled the democratization of knowledge. This is important because many media houses are renowned for monopolizing the information that is disseminated to the public with regards to newsworthy events. Not only are stories often not told in an 'accurate' manner because they are aligned to a higher agenda, but there is also great power in their ability to decide on what counts as 'newsworthy'. Therefore, the media hold the power to decide what the public should be informed about and what should be omitted and not given airtime. However, social media has provided an opportunity to counter this system. In reference to Image B called *Untitled*, Participant 9 spoke about how cell phones have,

> *…changed the face of journalism and the way in which stories about events are told. All the people inside of the protest are uploading little snippets of what's going on and there is not a single dominant narrative about what, well there is a single dominant narrative, but there is opportunity for it to be contested because there are people on the ground that are recording and uploading.* (Participant 9)

There is this idea that social media has democratized the accessibility of information regarding protests, but it has also allowed for an increased opportunity for the democratization of voices within protests. Participant 4 refers to this when she said,

> *It's also given different truths, different narratives. It's also given different truths because there can be four people all filming from a different perspective of what they're actually thinking in the crowd which is amazing.* (Participant 4)

Therefore, not only are voices more democratized but they are also given greater power.

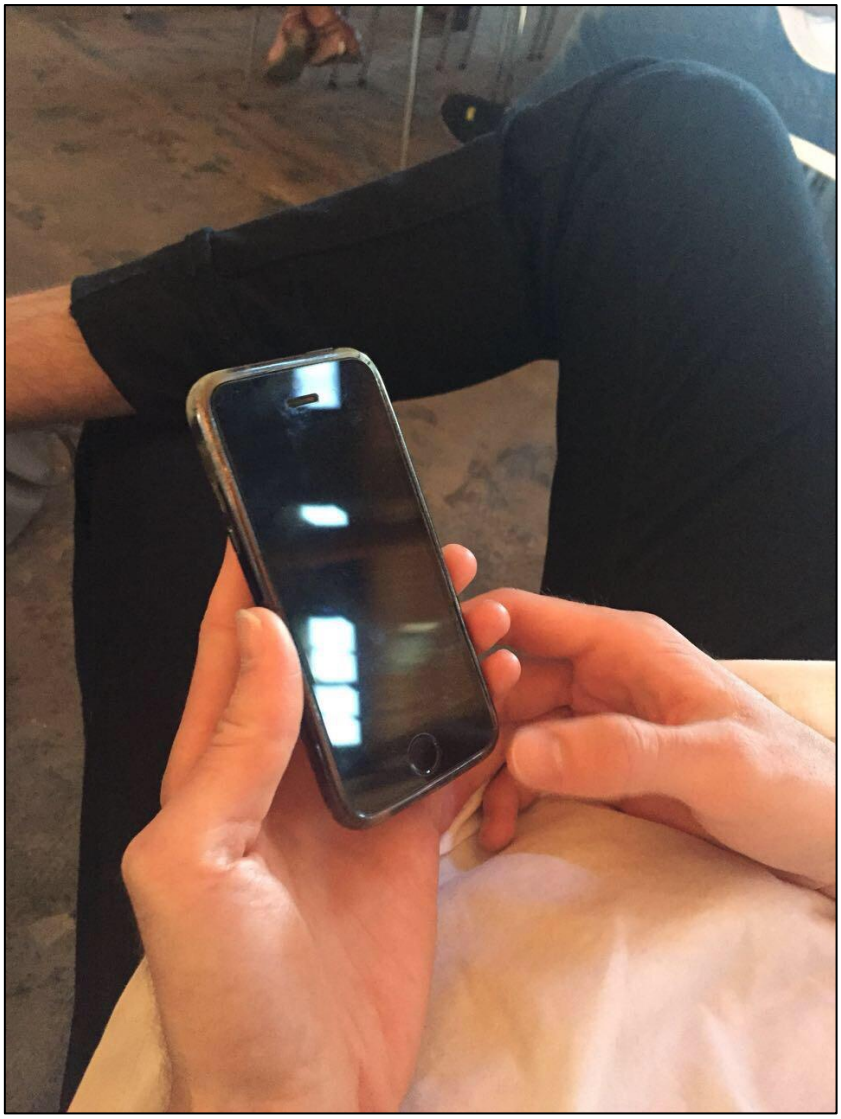


Image B: Untitled

So think about your phone and think about pretty much all protests that have happened in the past. So it is not only like that they developed there, it is where it circulated the most. Everything nowadays that exists, you know, as a protesting tool, this is probably the most significant tool we have. (Participant 11)

1.4 Ambiguities and contradictions

There have been a multitude of perspectives and opinions expressed about various aspects of protest action from both the general public and from the participants. There has also been an exploration of how such a topic elicits multiple stories and a range of perspectives from different people. However, an interesting subtheme that emerged from the data was the observation that many of the participants held different views and perspectives simultaneously. Sometimes these simultaneous views were even contradictory, and as such, were difficult to reconcile. Thus, it became apparent that for many of the participants a strange tension existed where they felt caught between two sides or two positions. This created an ambiguous space of uncertainty and unknowing for the participants as a sense of being torn in two became a repetitive topic.

This sense of ambiguity can be explained using an example. Protesting usually involves advocating for some sort of change that would affect a large group of people as a collective, but often the implication of these changes for the individual are not addressed, particularly when the consequences differ. So if we consider the Fees Must Fall protests, there could be someone who chooses to join the protests because they support one of the end goals of free tertiary education but yet in supporting the good of the collective they could face negative individual consequences such as receiving punishment for participating. Participant 9 explored this idea when she said,

> *When I saw the (police) car it brought up a kind of contradictory feeling inside of me of not knowing whether to feel reassured or to feel angry about the presence of that car there. And it's not something that I've ever managed to resolve and I think it's one of the inherent contradictions inside the Fees Must Fall protest for people that are privileged is that, in supporting this all the way like 150%, I could be not completing*

> *my exams or disrupting my classes or not finishing my degree. So, there is a part of me that wants this entire thing to be crushed because I don't want to lose my privilege and there is another part of me that's like unless I become willing to do that the system is never going to change. So, it's a moment in which I become very aware that I'm complicit and participating in this system of oppression and that it's not as easy as going oh I came and I helped make sandwiches for the protestors. It's a matter of going, am I willing to not finish my degree? To put my future on the line for a collective future?* (Participant 9)

From Participant 9's statement it is evident that she is aware that there is a tension that exists between collective and individual needs. She exists within a contradictory space where there is no clear right or wrong answer for her, a liminal space in which it is difficult to exist.

Many of the participants who identified as white grappled with the idea of privilege and attempted to reconcile or navigate how their identity played out within a particular socio-political space tainted by our apartheid history and the continuation of white privilege and white supremacy to this day. Participant 9 acknowledged this when she said,

> *We are always already implicated, we're always speaking from somewhere.* (Participant 9)

Participant 11 recognised the importance of context and our history,

> *…Context makes you really understand the issue or where the person has come from with any issue.* (Participant 11)

Thus, for these participants they were aware of existing within an ambiguous or contradictory space where there seemed to be no clear right or wrong answer but rather a need to reflect on this ambiguity.

A similar ambiguous space was noticed among all the participants who identified as black when they spoke about feeling like ‘sell-outs’. The sell-out concept was described by participants as a derogatory term that referred to black individuals or people of colour who exist within an in-between space and appear to make a choice based on their self-interests which is perceived to be wrong. So in the context of the Fees Must Fall protests, it could be someone who chooses to pursue their own education and continue going to class over the collective cause of forgoing class and risking failing in order to attain free education. The participants discussed the idea of being torn in two and not knowing what the right course of action was while being incredibly fearful of the consequences. Participant 3 shared his experience when he said,

> *You are saying to the children they must go back to class and when they are going back to class there are people who are protesting. What are those people who are protesting going to say when they are seeing me back in class? Obvious! They are going to, they are going to beat me. And when they beat me, the police are going to beat me again, which means I’m not on anyone’s side cause I’m a student. To the police I am a student who is protesting and to the students who are protesting I am a sell out who is attending classes whilst there is a protest action going on which will help me at the end of the day. So now there is no one who is supporting me, I get shot and I get beaten at the same time.* (Participant 3)

It is a powerful statement which makes evident some of the difficult choices faced by protestors and particularly those who participated or engaged with the Fees Must Fall protests.

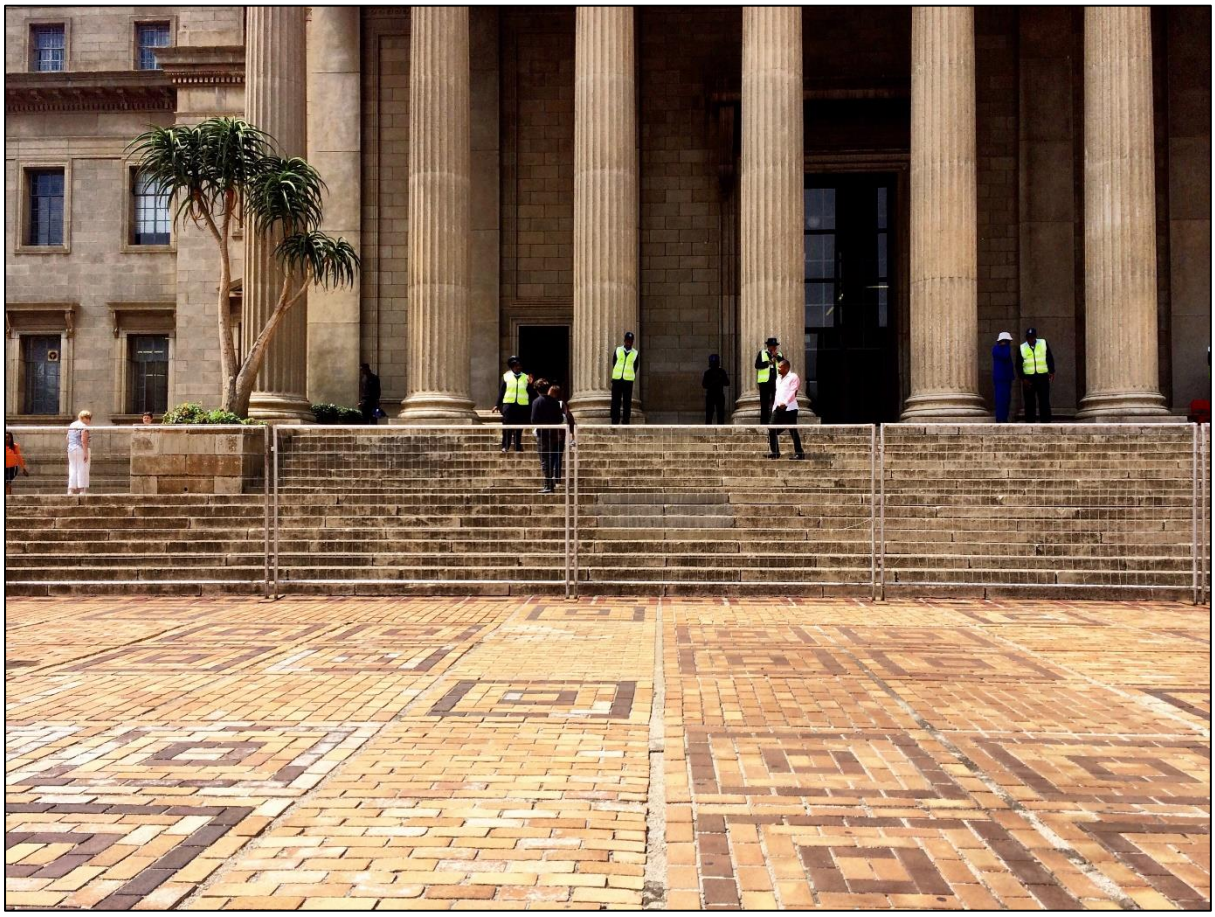


Image C: A new year at Wits

After the Fees Must Fall I took a photograph when the university was shut down and there were like major security protocols on the university campus and they fenced off the whole of the Great Hall. So you could only get access to the Great Hall if you specifically needed to write an exam in there, and you'd need to have permission and you'd need to show your student card. And there, the riot police, they were all lined up outside. (Participant 2)

Theme 2: Change and action

2.1 Defiance and action

According to the participants, protesting is seen as an act or action that involves making some sort of change. It is about the opposite or a defiance of apathy, indecision, indifference, complacency or acceptance of the status quo. Protesting is often associated with a physical action that can be observed but the definition is broader and can include any form of defiance. Participant 7 spoke to this when he said,

> *Protest can be something quite broad, any form of defiance not necessarily the conventional view of people going in a group marching somewhere.* (Participant 7)

Defiance in this case is taking a stand against the status quo or an institution that has greater power than an individual. Protesting is considered to be an act of moving from a passive accepting stance to one of action and defiance. Participant 1 reflected that,

> *…now it's just people have to be active, we have to protest as a public*. (Participant 1)

Participant 8 expanded on this idea and considered how protest action can be a form of defiance by physically doing something but also by intentionally not doing something when he said that protest is,

> *…like actively doing something to change the status quo or it can be not doing something that the status quo wants you to do.* (Participant 8)



Image D: "Taking back the city"

There's the guy there and he is wearing his city overalls and he is in some ways the person who is… He is sweeping the streets and in some ways the streets don't really belong to him cause he is not somebody who has the wealth to utilize these spaces other than by cleaning them and cleaning after people who are also in a lower economic state. [ ] And I know that they also housed the "In the City" music festival here, and there was a very big hipster thing, they made mostly like white people who attended. Middle-class people who attended… (Participant 8)

2.2 Movement

Protesting is about movement. Movement in the sense that an action is occurring or needs to occur and something is changing or needs to change. Participant 7 explains that when it comes to protest,

> *…people are trying to use their power that they have as a collective to kind of get some kind of outcome.* (Participant 7)

In other words, there is something that comes from the protest or some sort of tangible result. So, movement suggests that change can and does occur and thus it produces an outcome or a breakthrough. Movement is also about a protest movement or a revolution that is powerful and changes the status quo.

Movement also suggests the opposite, that there is resistance to change and a stubbornness to prevent change. The resistance faced by protestors from institutions which grapple to maintain positions of power, sometimes at all costs, seems to be evidence of this. Those who protest are doing so because they want change to happen or something to be different but at the same time there is always the presence of an opposition who are trying to prevent that change from happening.



Image E: The false direction

We had to break the ends just to actually get stones. So the staircase actually means you're actually going somewhere, you are actually going up. So for me this might feel like, I might see this as oppression, I might see this as a government who is oppressing us, not wanting to get us free education. But they say we should actually go this way, get an education, get this, get a better job, but the time we do that they limit us. So let's kill the system that wants us to actually go about their way, let's create our own ways. (Participant 6)

2.3 Progress and opportunity

According to many of the participants, one of the main reasons why protests or protest action is undertaken is for the attainment of a better life. Change is sought out in the form of improvement or the idea of reaching one's true potential. It is the idea of growing or moving forward towards a better life, better than the one that currently exists. Participant 7 discusses this when he says,

> *There is a recognition around the world that people do need to be looked after and people do need to have the ability to fulfil their potential.* (Participant 7)

There is a sense of hope, a belief or a dream that guides protest as protestors aspire towards something higher or better.

While this idea of continually striving to better oneself holds merit and may be considered a universal human phenomenon, it must be considered how this idea fits into our South African context. Some of the participants questioned this idea of betterment and what this actually means through the photographs they took. For example, participant 6 captured an image of a staircase in Image E (see previous photograph) and interrogated society's conceptualisation of what improvement and progress looks like. He questioned whether individual progress can be considered a Western ideal that places the achievements of individuals before that of the collective community. In Image F (see next photograph), participant 1 questions whether our idea of progress needs to engage with a process of decolonization. He asks whether protestors or fallists are aspiring towards a Western idea of progress and as such continue to perpetuate colonial ideas. Participant 6 appeals for an evaluation and a reflection regarding what it is that protestors are fighting for. Can we interrogate our own understanding of what progress means?



Image F: It's not too late

> I feel this is a, the whole idea of decolonizing the mind and taking back seizing the means of production. It feels, it's a… I found it very interesting because I feel the artist was trying to say to us, this is what should have happened to us a long time ago. I know it's a bit brash and radical but I feel like this is what they were going for, this is what should have happened. Africans welcomed the colonialists, colonialists with open arms and then they were betrayed. So, I feel like this is saying this is what should have happened. [ ] So what is he saying about the natives of Africa? Or basically the natives of any part of the world where they have had invaders. Maybe saying go back to your own roots and pick out Western ideology? I think that is the only way you can conserve yourself. Conserve your identity. Cause the Western, cause the Western man comes in his suit to do business but he just wants to pilfer, pilfer to his pockets and leave the people poor. (Participant 1)

Theme 3: Violence and disruption

3.1 Disruption and chaos

A common reoccurring theme in relation to protest action is the idea of disorder, irrationality and uncertainty. According to the participants there appears to be this notion that protesting is associated with the opposite of order or rationality where something common or steady is disrupted and anarchy ensues. Furthermore, there is also the idea of chaos where participants used descriptive words in association with protest that are repeated throughout the conversation or were common across participants. These were words such as 'noisy', 'loud',

'messy' and 'dangerous', words suggesting havoc or disorder. Participant 4 described protest action as "this huge chaotic thing". Furthermore, she delved into an additional aspect when she suggested that protest action functions by,

> *...bringing light to the chaos of the country at present.* (Participant 4)

Thus, protest action not only creates a sense of chaos or feeling of disorder but also stands as a representation of the chaos that is perceived to currently exist in our society.

There was also this notion that protests represented a final disruptive point where a collective frustration culminated in a breaking point. Participant 1 referred to this when he said,

> *The only way that they can get, they feel that they can get justice or get their part heard is through a disruption.* (Participant 1)

In regard to this, participants described aspects of protest as something that escalates or that is fuelled up and then reaches a 'fever pitch' or a 'tipping point' where protest becomes the last resort, the final straw or the extreme option. Thus, when people are discontent for a long time about serious issues that don't seem able to be resolved by other means, where they aren't heard or actively ignored, the culminating result is protest and protest action.



Image G: (no title)

We watch news all the time. Mostly it's Middle Eastern news regarding all the protests and all the violence going on in let's see Egypt, Yemen, Syria all those countries and then he always points out to me that you see, these are always beautiful countries, but when protests start they somehow have rocks. And then you can see on the street there is nowhere that you can find a rock, but somehow when the protests start they all have rocks. I always ask myself, where do they get the rocks? Until I came to Wits and I found out for myself, that's where we get the rocks. (Participant 1)

3.2 "Hooligan" discourse

The term 'hooligan' or 'barbarian' surfaced among many of the participants who either implicitly perpetuated the discourse or critically interrogated its use by media or other such institutions in relation to discussions of protest or protest action. Participant 4 explained,

> *…the first thing that comes to mind is always like the hooligan type of behaviour*. (Participant 4)

Participant 6 acknowledged how the discourse was perpetuated when discussing how he felt the media were portraying the Fees Must Fall movement. He explained that,

> *…somewhere they were like ah students don't want to write exams, students are just hooligans and this and this and this, all those negative acts.* (Participant 6)

Thus, it is a discourse that is shrouded in negative connotations.

This kind of discourse is often mentioned particularly in relation to protests that exhibit violence or aspects of violence such as the destruction of property or the act of looting. The hooligan discourse refers to the idea that protestors who engage in protests or protest action which have a violent component have experienced some sort of moral disinhibition or have engaged with a basic primal animal instinct. This comparison that is made between protestors and animals can either be explicitly indicated or subtly implied. It is a comparison that is by no means neutral and is seeped with problematic racist connotations. As someone who identifies as black, Participant 6 discussed how he felt about the hooligan discourse when he said,

> *It's racist, it's not good, it's not nice, it makes me feel like they are saying they are barbarians you know.* (Participant 6)

He went on to explain that hooliganism is associated with inhumanness and it's a discourse that is quite powerful and dangerous. Participant 1 also discussed what the negative narrative meant to him when he said,

> *The moment you become called a hooligan the whole world will swallow you up and then you cannot have emotion. I feel like really that's when the Fees Must Fall movement was dead. There was no sympathy from anyone. Even the black supervisors, they couldn't relate. They said our children are now hooligans, they are criminals, they cannot be respected. They do not deserve free education. Just like that.* (Participant 1)

There was this notion that the hooligan discourse was used as a weapon to delegitimize the cause. Participant 1 further elaborated when he said,

> *The moment they described the youth who were fighting for free education as hooligans, barbarians, as looters, the whole notion of the Fees Must Fall movement died.* (Participant 1)

Thus, the concepts of ´hooliganism´ and ´barbarianism´ are difficult ideas to grapple with and understand in the context of protest action. They are concepts which require a critical understanding and their use and explanation needs to be done so with caution in order to ensure that negative and racist stereotypes are not perpetuated.



Image H: Shattered dreams

> A picture of shattered glass, which again is the rocks going against buildings and the destruction of buildings but also shattered hearts of people who wanted an education, wanted a different life that then gets shattered by those whose hearts are rocks. (Participant 4)

3.3 Violence

Perhaps the most commonly discussed aspect of protest action by all the participants collectively was violence. When asked to describe what comes to mind when they think of protesting, most participants mentioned violence from the onset. Many different aspects of violence were spoken about including physical violence towards the human body or towards human life, violence in the form of disruption and lack of access or resources, and violence in the form of the destruction of property. Participant 2 explained,

> *The protests I've sort of witnessed have all been violent so that's how I'd associate protest action.* (Participant 2)

One interesting debate that elicited many divergent opinions was whether violence is a necessary component of protest action. In other words, whether participants believed that the use of violence is justified in order to achieve a greater aim or ensure a message is given attention. Most participants expressed that from a personal standpoint they felt violence is not

the answer to any problem. Thus, there was a general agreement that violence is not the answer and protests should be conducted in a peaceful manner. Some participants were against violence in any shape or form. Participant 3 shared the belief that,

> *…well violence, violence is never necessary*. (Participant 3)

Participant 4 elaborated by saying,

> *The moment someone picks up a rock or throws a stone, for me, it ruined the movement in my opinion because it then became violent and I don't feel that violence gets you anywhere.* (Participant 4)

Participants could also critically engage with the idea that violence can be a useful and powerful strategy. Participant 8 explored this when he said that violence can be,

> *…a legitimate strategy, an actual tactic to affect change.* (Participant 8)

There was an acknowledgement that sometimes violence is necessary when its use is the only avenue to garner attention because all other methods have been tried and no one has listened. Participant 2 shared her views by saying,

> *I feel like in South Africa its always this circle where you get to this point and it has to get extremely violent for something to change or for the protests to be actually even covered on the news.* (Participant 2)

Participant 7 agreed when he explained that,

> *…violence in protest is a strategic tool that can be quite powerful.* (Participant 7)

He provided insight into how violence was consciously used as a strategy during the Fees Must Fall protests when he explained,

> *It was purposeful, it was precise, it was for a good reason in the view of the students. It wasn't something that was meant to be destructive even though a few glasses were*

> *broken, a door might have been broken down, but it wasn't meant to cause damage it was meant for a purpose.* (Participant 7)

So in cases such as this one, the use of violence was a planned and calculated strategy used to get attention when it felt as if there was no other way to be heard or listened to. Participant 3 discussed how the destruction of property was used to get a reaction. He explained,

> *They start to react when you, when they, when people start to you know, pushing tyres, burning tyres on the road and stuff. That's where, that's where the person in power says, okay let us come and reason together. Let us come and sit. But before that, before that they don't take us seriously.* (Participant 3)

The protests that are often heard about or given airtime on the news are the ones that have demonstrations of violence or displays of property being destroyed. Participant 9 speaks about this when she said,

> *So this was 2008, they had just raised the fees and there were a group of people doing a silent peaceful sit in about the fees, that was 10 years ago. So when the fees erupted people were like ah but why can't they do a peaceful protest and I'm like they've been doing peaceful protest for the last ten years, it did literally nothing. I am like how long can you say something over and over and over again before you lose your shit?* (Participant 9)

If violent protests are the ones that become noticed by the public then it seems like a useful tactic for protestors to use violence to spread awareness of their cause. When last did you hear about a peaceful protest?

Violence is a difficult concept to define and describe and involves many different aspects. As mentioned previously, participants mentioned how violence could be physical acts towards others, it could be in the form of disruption and lack of access and it could be the

destruction of property. The term violence was defined and understood differently by each participant. There were also varying levels of acceptability. So some individuals felt as if a protest needed to be completely peaceful, others felt that it was acceptable in the form of self-defence, others felt that it was the destruction of property and yet others felt that more extreme shows of violence such as burning a bus were necessary.

One of the interesting debates that arose was whether violence is something that needs to manifest openly and be visible to the naked eye or whether systemic injustices and oppressive systems can also be classified as violence. Furthermore, what is the distinction between actual physical violence and the threat of violence, and can one be worse than the other? Some participants discussed how the experience of living in poverty can be considered an act of violence. This is because individuals have to endure hardships such as hunger, discrimination, harsh weather conditions and feelings of not being safe which can be equated to violence. Participant 7 explained,

> *So half of our country is living in poverty, so I mean people are bound to protest against things like that, people are bound to disagree with their lived experiences when their lived experiences are violent and more violent than burning a bus or throwing a rock at a window.* (Participant 7)

If a government system is not providing an individual with basic human rights promised in the Constitution is this a form of violence? If it is, then is protesting against a lack of service delivery using violence a logical form of retaliation? Is violence justified and if so when is it justified and who gets to decide? Is the burning of an auditorium worse than a person living in squalid conditions without access to basic food and water? Why is it that a broken window gets a greater reaction by the media and the public than the request for education? Why is it that the

burning of a library elicits a greater response than hundreds of people living in poverty and going to bed hungry every night?



Image I: Noisy silence

It was the beginning of this year, we had just, varsity had just reopened and there was police presence all over campus. Quiet presence. So this is kind of the very noisy silence that happens in between moments of protest. [ ] Intensity, suspense, anticipation, but most especially of surveillance, that this is the way in which policing actually works. It's not necessarily about police with their armour and going and shooting rubber bullets, that's not how policing works, this is how policing works. Policing works in terms of the threat of a response. (Participant 9)

3.4 Police and measures of control

Protests were often discussed as a defiance against methods or elements of control usually implemented by the state through laws or rules. The manner in which this was physically manifested was the presence of police who became representations of the control or power of the government or the state.

The purpose or the intention of the police was often questioned, and the role of the police is something that seems to hold great ambiguity and confusion within the minds of students. Some students felt that the police were present at protests to uphold strict orders from the government and this meant violence, fear and a feeling of not being safe. In reference to the clashes with police on campus Participant 1 explained,

> *When a policeman comes with a very huge armoured vehicle and then you cannot hit him, and they are all shielded up and you wanna find ways… you feel angry inside because your rocks against his armoured vehicle cannot do anything.* (Participant 1)

Participant 2 spoke about her experience with the police during the student march to the union buildings. She explained,

> *…Then rocks started flying everywhere in all directions and then the police used it as an opportunity to start getting violent with the students. So there, um, there was a police van, but like many of them, driving through the crowd trying to knock down students. So I had to run to avoid being hit by this car and hide behind a tree. Then the rubber bullets started, and then the tear gas started. And that's when I became really scared.* (Participant 2)

Participant 6 describes a situation when he joined a protest at Campus Square and was pepper-sprayed and shot in his back with a rubber bullet. He described the incident,

> *The police were all over the place, we were just singing, singing, singing and no one was actually saying anything. And then out of nowhere poof poof poof… We started running, they just started shooting at us from, I don't know what actually provoked them or anything, I don't know… so that was actually when I got shot by that rubber bullet.* (Participant 6)

Many of the participants therefore described encounters and clashes with the police which elicited fear and trauma and a feeling of not being safe or protected.

Some students also acknowledged that the police were citizens of this country too and were ultimately just fulfilling their job requirements. There was a recognition that they were placed in a difficult position themselves. Participant 1 explains,

> *I had encounters with the police and they were both positive and negative. In their defence they were not trying to harm us, I realize that now. They were just trying to do as their unit says, crowd control.* (Participant 1)

Participant 1 spoke about a need to recognise that police officials are humans too and are often used as pawns by those in authority to maintain control and keep power. He elaborated,

> *It was one evening and I was just passing by and I came across these police guys. These people are human, just like me, they are just doing their job. So I talked to them like humans, like I would talk to my father. I didn't look at them as people who would shoot down children and I asked them, hey are you aware? Do you know what's going on with the Fees Must Fall issue? They said actually we don't know, we've just been sent here to do crowd control. If we see a sort of unruliness amongst the crowd we have to dispel them, and the only way to dispel them is to frighten you guys. We are not trying to shoot you down. We are not trying to kill you. We are not trying to bring on a massacre. We are just trying to maintain a sort of order amongst you because this is also your property.* (Participant 1)

Misrepresentation is a concept that has been raised and perhaps it applies in this case too. What was the involvement of the police in the protests and how did they feel about the role they were asked to take on? Participant 1 explains,

> *The police look like the enemy, the police are not the enemy, they are just there, they are the peace keepers.* (Participant 1)

As such, the police and police presence elicited an ambiguous response from most of the participants who weren´t sure about whether they can be trusted in a protest situation, while also being cognisant of their existence as humans who are fulfilling a job requirement.



Image J: Waiting

This one is quite blurry actually because I'm trying to move away from people pushing me. You can see there is a lot of like streaks in the photo, it is not entirely clear. But um, you can see the placards so you can clearly see what protests it is about. [ ] Everyone at this point is asking what's going on? What, when is Zuma gonna come out? Ah it's almost like this anxious waiting and anticipation about what's going to happen next. I think that's what happens a lot of the time with protest I think once you're done with the hype of getting to the point where you are supposed to be, and then you usually marching to a point, and then you need to stop somewhere, and then once you get to the point you are with all these people who have finally stopped and now people have to wait so you in this in-between space of, oh is this person coming to address us? What's going to happen next? Is it going to get violent? (Participant 2)

3.5 Emotion

When it comes to protest, both the idea of emotion and the expression of emotion were mentioned often by the participants. Participants were able to discuss and reveal a range of emotions regarding the way they felt about protests, the way they felt about issues regarding protests or leading to protesting, and the feelings they had encountered while participating in a protest. In our society the expression or experiencing of emotion is often times viewed as the opposite of order and rationality. When people witness the expression of emotion, they tend to associate it with irrationality. This is particularly apparent when it comes to an emotion that is

not considered to be a ‘good’ emotion such as sadness, fear or anger. These emotions have a tendency to elicit a sense of uneasiness in people.

The most commonly mentioned feelings included sadness, fear and anger. Participant 1 explained,

> *It’s anger, it’s out of anger so I think that’s the main message. It’s out of anger. Protest result… emanate from… anger and it’s not just a personal anger, it’s an anger from the people. And it´s extraordinary*. (Participant 1)

Participant 3 also spoke about anger when he said,

> *The problem is that people inside, if you can get an opportunity to open and see what’s happening in their mind and on their heart, that’s where their anger is stored.* (Participant 3)

Anger was particularly relevant because it is an emotion that is often experienced and expressed outwardly or physically and which is often policed, judged and condemned.

One idea that arose from many of the participants is that protests have become a vehicle through which people can express difficult or ‘bad’ emotions that have become bottled up. Participant 2 explained that she felt that,

> *…there’s this hostility between people always, that people are so angry that they don’t know how to communicate without being violent.* (Participant 2)

Therefore, violence can be thought of as a way in which people or protestors are able to communicate their anger. Participant 9 explains,

> *I would back somebody who is so angry that they have been hurt that they react in a violent manner.* (Participant 9)

However, there seemed to be this notion that the expression of emotion is seen as a negative act because emotion needs to be controlled and if it is expressed, it needs to be done in an 'appropriate' manner. This begs the question; what is the appropriate way to express emotion? Who gets to decide?

The issue with society policing and controlling the expression of emotions, and particularly 'bad' emotions, is that it acts to inadvertently perpetuate the oppression and discrimination felt by protestors. A protestor can decide to protest a system/government/problem that feels oppressive and discriminatory and overly controlling by attempting to reject or defy that system/government/problem through the act of protest. However, the inherent contradiction arises when this act of protest is not carried out in a certain (controlled) manner and in turn is not accepted. As such, by controlling the way that a protest is carried out and the way emotions are expressed it further exacerbates the issue and enhances the experience of oppression and discrimination. The protestors are upset about an institution or system controlling them and giving them limited power. They are attempting to communicate through the act of protest action which seems to be the only option they feel they can utilize to be heard. The system/institution responds to the protestors attempting to tell them they are too controlling by further escalating acts of the very control that is being protested.

What's more is that it is not just the institutions of power that participate in the act of control and the maintenance of power but it is also regular citizens who contribute pressure and define what a protest is supposed to be about or what it is supposed to look like. If a protest is

‘too violent’ or ‘too angry’ or ‘too messy’ then support decreases for the protest because it is not conforming to certain rules or a certain expectation of the way people are supposed to exist in the world. How do you protest using the rules of a system you are protesting against? If you protest within the rules of the system you are against, or trying to defy, then are you further perpetuating or even accepting that system? When you judge a protest for being too violent, too angry or too messy are you perpetuating the system and aiding in oppressing those protestors? Are your unchecked assumptions about the way a protest ‘should’ look and feel hurting and oppressing others? What should a protest look and feel like?

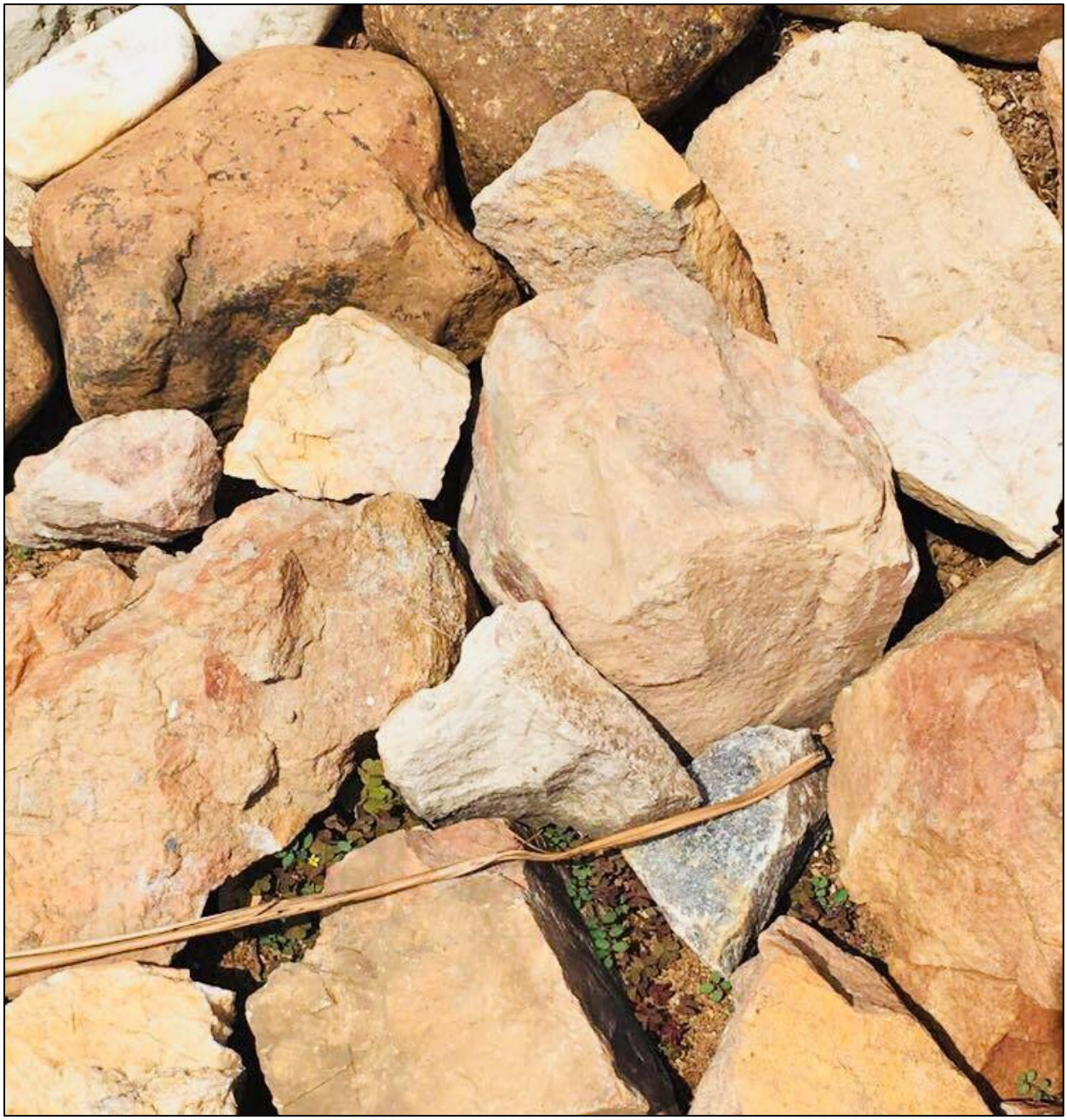


Image K: Hearts of stone

> So on a surface level it's when I think of a protest I imagine people picking up rocks and throwing rocks but on a deeper level, often we protest and there is no change and it's almost like the hearts of the people in authority are hearts of stone that don't get changed and don't get moved by the protests that happen. And I felt that that was indicative of what happened with Fees Must Fall cause despite getting a zero percent increase last year we now hear of an 8 percent this year. It's like these hearts of stone. (Participant 4)

Theme 4: Power relations

4.1 Powerlessness

Protestors are generally individuals who are disenfranchised, under-served or lack power in some manner. Thus, the purpose of protest becomes a way for individuals to come together to defy and interrogate typical power structures by joining together to form a collective power. Yet there is still an initial point or feeling of being powerless and participant 6 refers to this through his photograph *Image L* which he has chosen to title: *Powerlessness* (see next photograph). He discusses how protesting can be a battle or struggle to attempt to take power or acquire a sense of powerfulness, yet this is not always achieved. Those in power want to retain their power and so they fight back and attempt to maintain the status-quo of power imbalance with them placed firmly at the top.



Image L: Powerlessness

> So this picture for me symbolizes, so we had those ones that were made out of stone, so the university as precautionary measures they actually put these ones in place as new ones, because we used them as stones to actually throw back and vandalize buildings. [ ] . So anyway they are stopping us and telling us that no you guys shouldn't actually protest or anything, we will sort out everything. So they are trying to actually take back the power in a sense that you can't use them. Cause I said power is actually something that you take action against, so if there is no action there is no power… The power actually resides in them because we can't use this now. (Participant 6)

4.2 Leadership

Leadership is a topic that arises in association with protest because a protest demonstration is often in response to, or defiance of, a higher power in the form of leadership or management. In South Africa, our leadership and ruling power is the government who is currently occupied by the African National Congress (ANC). This includes the former president Jacob Zuma and the now current president Cyril Ramaphosa. At Wits University, it is currently the vice chancellor Adam Habib who is at the helm of decision making. When protestors feel as if a wrong has been committed, they place blame on the person/s in charge of making the highest decisions. Many students feel as if corruption is rife within our government and thus there has been a gross mismanagement of funds which is seen to be a contributing factor to the hardships of many who could have been better served by the correct

management of tax paying money. Participant 1 explained in reference to former president Jacob Zuma,

> *…We are a democratic state, we have the right to say hey we are above this now, we make the rules, we put you in power and you have robbed us. 200 million lost! You do the maths, I did the maths. 240 million for a Wits student… I paid R60 000 for fees, I pay R50 000 for accommodation, I paid R10 000 for my books annually… I have to buy new books every year! But I pay over R130 000 per year and I did the maths, that would have catered for half the students of Wits for a year. That's over 15 000 and it has been lost. Over 15 000 students taken care of, and it has been lost to a house, which has a swimming pool that is supposed to work to take out the fire. It doesn't make sense.* (Participant 1)

There is a general feeling amongst the students that our government has let us down and ruptured the promises they made when this country became a 'rainbow nation'. There is an air of disillusionment where students feel that the bold promises that were made during the democratic transition have not been upheld or have been broken. Some of the participants felt that many of the protests that occur are as a result of people feeling like they have been let down and the blame is directed towards the government or those in leadership positions. Protest thus acts as a method for citizens to air their grievances and inform those in power that they have let their people down and that they want change.

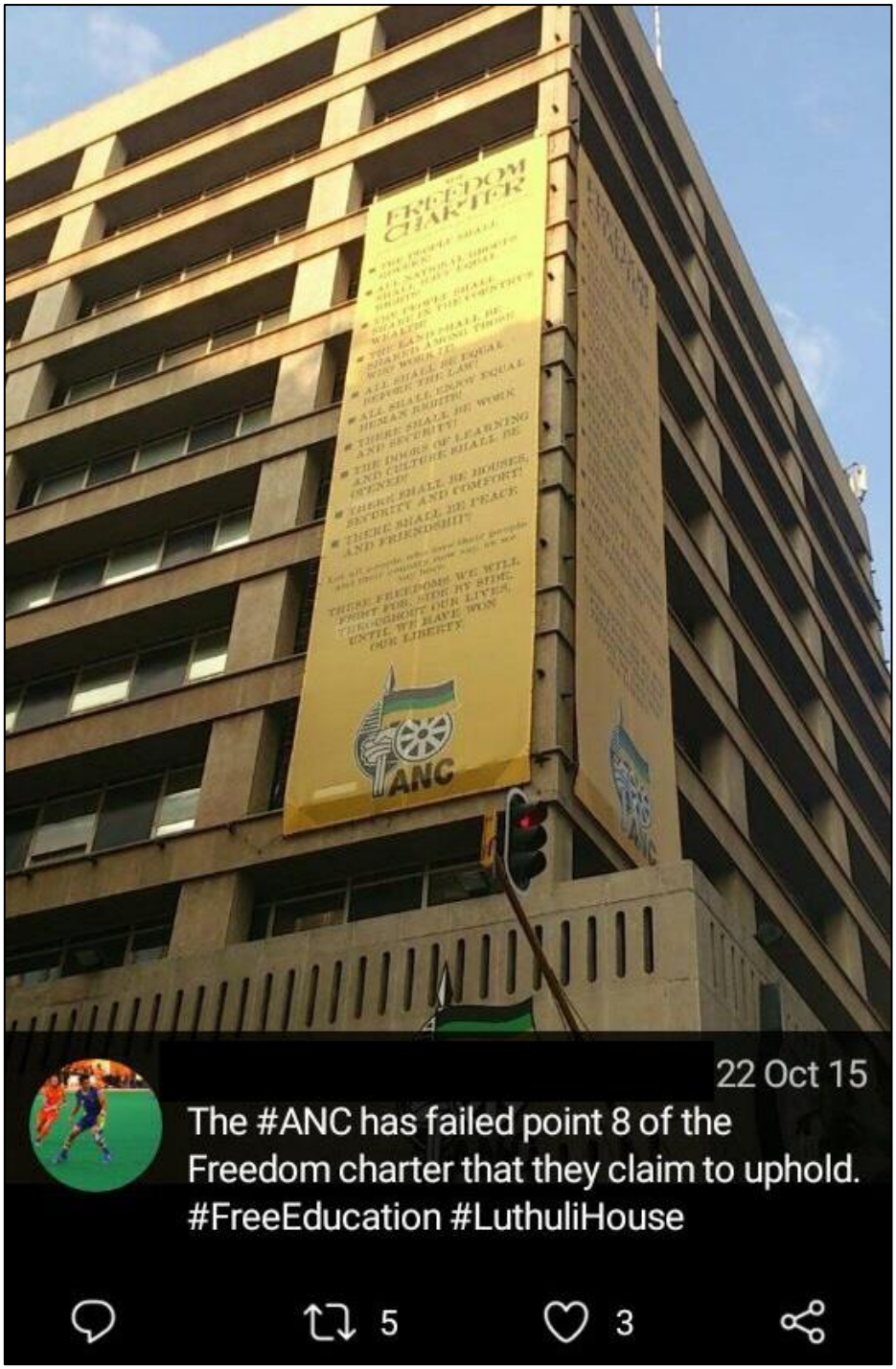


Image M: Truth to power

> This is just I don't know kind of saying, no matter how fancy your NDR plan is, you need to be accountable to the people and you need to hold the things that you've promised. (Participant 7)

4.3 Capitalism

Our economy is run according to a capitalist system. Capitalism is dictated by the pursuit of profit and accumulation of wealth which has historically favoured the select few and disadvantaged the majority. In South Africa the divide between the rich or the 'haves' and the poor or the 'have nots' is believed to be one of the widest gaps in the world. According to the participants, socioeconomic status and whether one is wealthy or disadvantaged is a major factor within protest action in our country. The perception is that most often the people who are protesting are the poor who lack resources whereas those being protested against are rich and have an abundance of resources.

Money within this capitalist system, and its deficiency, is seen to be one of the major reasons why protests occur. Participant 6 said in response to a question about the most common reasons for protest action in our country,

> *…number one at the top I would say it's actually money*. (Participant 6)

Participant 1 agreed,

> *It's always, it always has to do with money, it's got to do with finances, things being mishandled or employers refusing to pay their workers, their employees enough.* (Participant 1)

One of the biggest protest movements in recent years makes reference to this point in its name: Fees Must Fall. Fees, money, wages, and what people earn is a powerful determinant of protest action. Participant 1 confirmed this,

> *Its Fees Must Fall, its right there in the word, the first word tells us it's all about the money.* (Participant 1)

Therefore money, and its unequal distribution within our society, has often times been the reason for why protests occur.



Image N: Your thoughts?

> I knew the people who, who, who wrote that down. The same people who have been graffitiing the whole campus. It's not just a random 'free' it's free education. But then they are saying, maybe they are saying, this is the only free we will ever have. Again grasping at the faecal matter enveloping the whole thing, are they saying this is the only thing that will ever be free? Or maybe it was resistance. Maybe they are saying, maybe it was someone saying if we get something for free then it has no value. There is not sort of aesthetic, anything aesthetic about it really. (Participant 1)

4.4 Structures of power

Protests are about breaking out of a system that feels to be restrictive and oppressive. This means that when protests occur, they target 'the man' or any symbols of power. For example, at Wits University a monument that symbolizes the main seat of power is the Great Hall. It is the building attached to Solomon Mahlangu house where the seat of Wits management and leadership resides as well as where the fees department is situated. It is also the building that most notably symbolises colonialization with its big foreboding columns that reference Euro-Western architecture, and which stands as a representation of how our institutions of higher learning are governed by Euro-Western principles. Other examples of structures of power are the Union Buildings in Pretoria or the Parliamentary buildings in Cape Town. Both of these buildings were the target of Fees Must Fall marches in 2015 and are where the seat of our government resides and operates.

In our society the university is an institution of power that acts to maintain certain power structures. The university is the ivory tower where only the most select few of our citizens have access. The term `ivory tower´ makes reference to the university being a space whereby the interests of white people are privileged and seen as paramount while black people and people of colour are often made to feel alienated and disadvantaged.

The University is a source of knowledge production and this is especially true for Wits University which has placed a great deal of emphasis on research and the production of research by staff and postgraduate students. Therefore, it has the power to control what knowledge is dissemination and distributed to the public and thus what concepts and ideas the public are exposed to. Participant 7 refers to how monuments can be representations of power in his photograph Image O which he chose to title *Structural* (see next photograph).



Image O: Structural

The aim was to pull the middle finger to the man you know, and the only way to do that is you know, to attack structures that symbolise the man. [ ] It's reminisce of colonialism and to me it looks like bars of prison, right now to me if you look at this photo. I mean this to me is like the symbol of power, it's a symbol of, you know, it's exclusive, it's the closest thing to the man you will get at Wits to throw something at. (Participant 7)

4.5 Entitlement

One of the more surprising and interesting ideas that emerged from many of the participants is the idea of entitlement and the belief that the current generation, the youth or the student population are entitled. Entitlement is a term with a negative undertone and refers to a believe that something is owed to you or you deserve something without sufficiently earning it. Participant 1 explained that,

> *…the youth of South Africa feel very entitled.* (Participant 1)

This topic was often mentioned with regards to the Fees Must Fall protest movement specifically, but was also discussed in relation to other matters such as service delivery protests.

There is a belief by some of the participants that students, and people in our society in general, have an expectation that they should be handed certain resources for free and that they deserve these resources without working for them. This idea has been described as a hand-out culture, as students being spoilt and privileged and an assumption that they are owed certain things and therefore they can be wasteful and lazy. So, for example when it comes to the Fees Must Fall protests, some participants expressed the sentiment that other students want free education to be handed to them, that they complain too much and that they don't want to work for what they get. Participant 1 elaborated,

> *South Africa is spoilt. We became a first world mentally before we could become a first world economically. We feel entitled, way too much as South Africans. We demand and yet we are not willing to put in the same effort. Service demands? We ask for too much and we are not putting in effort to developing infrastructure. It's also the same, we ask for too much from the government, but we are not building ourselves up as South Africans.* (Participant 1)

This is an interesting discourse because it suggests that students reject a socialist understanding of society and instead have internalized a capitalist ideology where nothing can be given for free and some sort of exchange has to always take place. It is also interesting to consider that it is a sentiment that goes against the fundamental ideology advocated by the Fees Must Fall movement and begs the question of whether students actually ultimately disagree with the aims of the movement or whether there is an element of societal propaganda directed by a capitalist agenda?



Image P: Protesting protest

> So students have put together a survey at the Liverpool University (UK) and sent out to all the students asking whether fees are too high, whether they are happy with their studies etc, etc. So kind of starting a discourse around is this education worth it and who gets this education. So the um the university then put up these posters saying that if you even take part in this survey you get expelled. [ ] it's shut down even before it starts, even before it has started the idea has kind of germinated, it's being rooted up and thrown way out. (Participant 10)

Theme 5: Protest culture

5.1 Positive dynamics of protest

It is common for protests or protest activity to be spoken about and reported in a negative light. Emphasis is often placed on police involvement, the presence of fighting and violence and the ideological injustices that have necessitated the manifestation of protests. Media coverage is known to be negatively skewed by commonly reporting incidences of violence and disruption. Any celebrated or positive aspects are usually either given insufficient attention or are omitted in discourses or conversations, or at least this is what the media often leads the general public to believe. However, what is often not mentioned or given enough coverage are the positive aspects of protest action which deserve elaboration.

Most participants mentioned and spoke about the positive aspects of protests which elicited good feelings such as happiness and excitement. Some participants compared protests to a celebration where protestors felt energised and empowered to be involved in an event where they could express themselves and have a platform to be heard. Participant 2 explained how protests for her are about,

> *…this mutual desire to finally speak out about the things that are going wrong in communities in our society. It often becomes a way for people to come together and finally agree on something together as a community.* (Participant 2)

The presence of singing and dancing created a positive atmosphere for some participants who directly took part in the protests. For some, protests were seen as a site or a source of empowerment where they could take part and feel as if they were making a difference or contributing to a cause that was bigger than them.



Image Q: The gathering

I was more focused on the people because my interest when I photograph anything is always on the people involved. So, I was more interested in the reactions of the people more than you know the crowd. But I feel like in this photo you can see more of the crowd than the people but, you'd, its mainly just focusing on the people gathering and the excitement. Many people are trying to take photos of their experience. (Participant 2)

5.2 Legacy of protest

South Africa has a long and complex history of protest that has led to protests having a particular role in our country. The term ‘legacy of protest’ or ‘protest culture’ is often used to refer to two aspects that have created a unique South African way of protesting which is different from demonstrations of protest in other parts of the world.

The first aspect is how South African culture has influenced the way that protest is expressed or shown. In South Africa, protest can often be expressed as if it is a celebration involving singing and dancing. Participant 2 explained that,

> *South Africa has one of the most significant protest cultures in the world, we are a very loud nation.* (Participant 2)

She further elaborated that,

> *In black communities when we celebrate, we sing, when we’re sad we sing, for most things that happen in South African culture people are not quiet about it. There is always a noise and there is always a gathering of some sort. So it’s in our culture to gather and to speak out about things and to sing about it and to really be loud about whatever is going on around us.* (Participant 2)

The second aspect spoken about by the participants regarding what makes protesting unique in this country is how it has also influenced South African culture. So, not only has South African culture influenced the way the protest is demonstrated with a uniquely South African flare, but it has also reciprocally influenced that culture. The term protest culture can also be used to refer to an idea that protesting is something that is engrained in our culture as South Africans, probably because it has played a significant role in our history. The term “toyi-toyi” is used to describe a form of protesting that involves jumping and dancing and South

Africa has a rich history of 'struggle songs' referring to songs created and sung during the apartheid era to express disapproval of such a system but also the power of the collective. Participant 1 spoke about how,

> *...everyone around you is, is just ecstatic, and then you feel that you wanna be a part of that, and you then start off and then there's the songs that have a historic context.* (Participant 1)

As such, the legacy of protest in South Africa has roots in anti-colonial and anti-apartheid sentiment. Participant 9 discussed how the presentation of protest as celebration involving singing and dancing may have been a survival strategy during the apartheid era when she said,

> *I think it's a historically located way of doing protest because doing things in song wasn't immediately read as protesting, so it was actually a safe way.* (Participant 9)

She further explained that,

> *They would sing about their oppression but because it sounds friendly it's not immediately recognised as protest. So, it's a safer way of doing protest and that's something that under apartheid was absolutely necessary.* (Participant 9)

As such, South Africa's unique history and the particular context in which protestors operate has influenced a distinct and special way in which protest action occurs in our country.

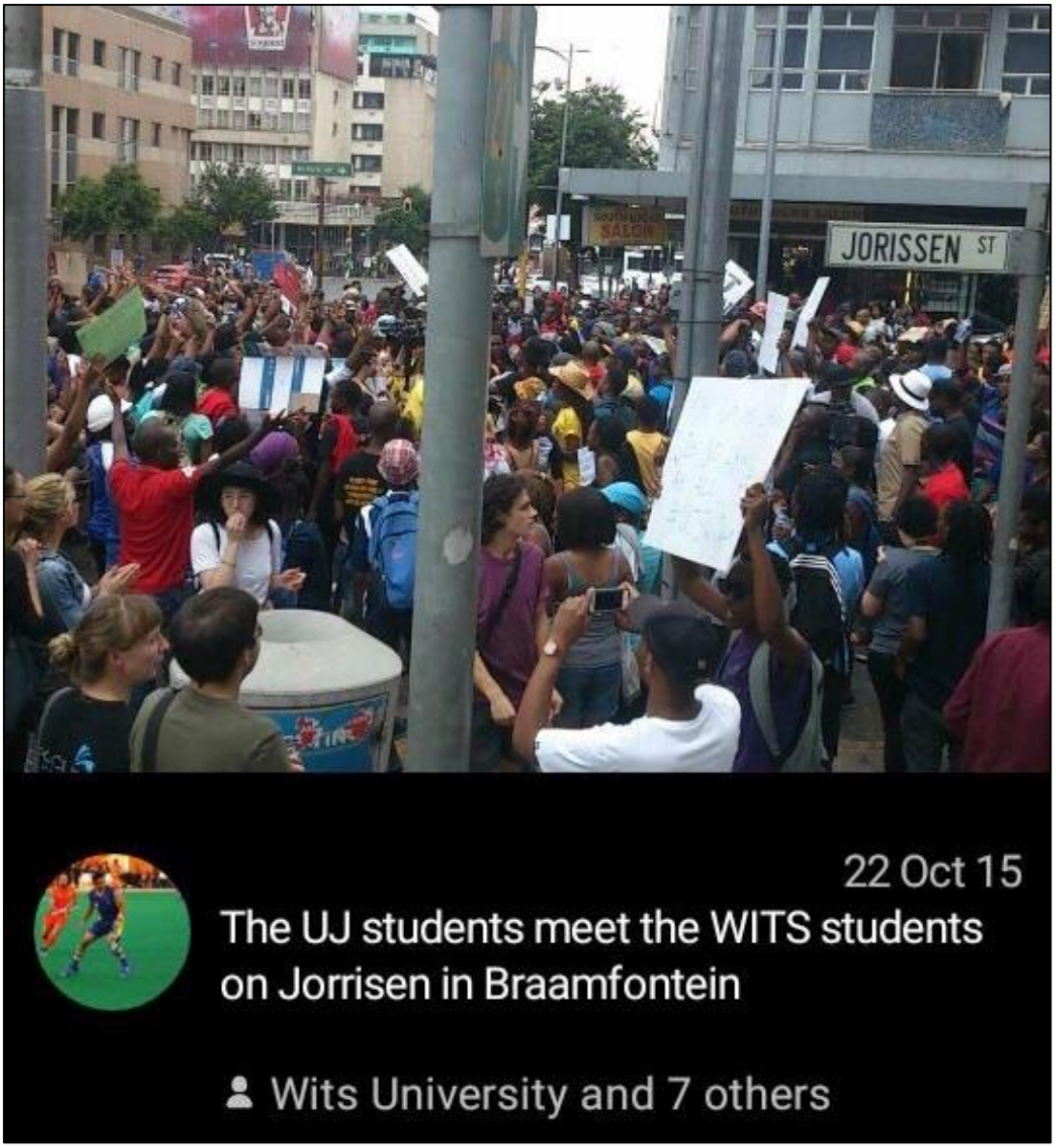


Image R: We are students

> Then this one is ah, this is quite a cool symbol of unity. [ ] UJ students marched to meet us here and we met up and then we all marched to Luthuli House which is quite, it was quite an experience and it was just a thing of, it was a moment that students just joined from two universities for the same, because we all recognised that it was necessary. [ ] And it was quite a, it was a beautiful moment I think. Shew it was quite a moment and that is just I think just symbolizes the unity, symbolizing the collective. (Participant 7)

5.3 The collective

One common feature about protests and protest action is the presence of a group of people as opposed to a single individual. As such, protests usually involve people coming together as a community, a group or a collective to stand for or against something. Participant 5 referred to this when she explained her definition of protesting which involved,

> *…a number of people that come together for a bigger cause or movement than just the individual.* (Participant 5)

Participant 2 further agreed when she said,

> *When I think of protest action, I think groups of people gathering together.* (Participant 2)

Some of the participants who have physically taken part in protests spoke about the sense of unity that is formed when joining a protest and how they feel as if they are a part of something bigger than themselves. Participant 2 spoke about how protest action,

> *…is an opportunity for anyone and everyone to literally come together. You could be from the most different background, you could even speak a different language, but in that moment and at that point you are speaking the same language and you have the same view. For that space of time you are, you have the same goal in mind.* (Participant 2)

There is a notion of rallying together and a feeling of comradery that exists between protestors. Participant 6 explained his positive experiences of taking part in a protest when he said,

> *I would say there is that unity, there is that singing, there is this euphoria that we get when we sing. I don't know how to explain it, but you experience it when you're there. It's a, its good, it makes you feel like no this is it, you are willing to die for this cause.* (Participant 6)

Thus, participants who had physically been involved in marches or protests which involved many people described these events fondly and could recall positive and happy memories of feeling a part of something larger than themselves.



Image S: Untitled

Here is a panoramic view of what was going on. I think I just took this photo cause I wanted to try and show the scale of the protests. It felt so much bigger than what you were, like just a small person standing in the middle of this massive crowd. I think a lot of the time these things feel a lot bigger than what we actually are. And I think also a lot of the students were very, um surprised to see how, to see how many people came through because, you know, sometimes you'll organise these things and you don't expect such a great turn out but literally every single student that could have been there, was there. (Participant 2)

5.4 Mass mobilization

Another common feature of protests and especially protest movements is the size of the group that is protesting. According to the law, a protest becomes official when it involves more than fifteen individuals but often times protests can include hundreds or even thousands of people. Some of the participants spoke about the sheer size of the crowd at a protest and how this created a particular atmosphere that felt powerful and full of potential. In *Image S* called *Untitled* (see previous photograph), participant 2 explained that she made the conscious decision to take a panoramic photograph rather than a standard size photograph because she wanted to capture the magnitude and huge scale of the protest.

There is a belief when it comes to protest marches that the power that the group has is directly related to the size of the group and so mass mobilization results in greater change. Participant 4 described this idea succinctly when she said,

> *If you've got more people walking then it brings more awareness, like this is how many people are against this.* (Participant 4)

Participant 5 further elaborated,

> *I think that when so many people come together, especially like Fees Must Fall, a lot more can be done than if it was just an individual person and it also shows the quantity of people affected by it, or the number of people who agree with the movement.* (Participant 5)

Some participants acknowledged how the size of the crowd could be a useful and powerful tool. It is powerful because it has the ability to show those in power that their power is fleeting, and it is possible for the collective to stand together and demonstrate that they can

have greater power. This idea is particularly relevant when it comes to the most powerless or disenfranchised individuals in society, such as those in poverty or minority groups. People in poverty have scarce resources and this means that they have limited means to be able to climb the power ladder and attain more resources. This is the cycle of poverty which describes how in order to break the cycle you need to attain resources but because you are poor you have no means to attain those resources and therefore you cannot move. It's a commanding system that acts to maintain the status-quo of keeping those at the top with the most power firm in their position and those at the bottom with the least power trapped. However, protest action was seen by some of the participants as a loophole to this system. How do you fight against a system when you have no means or resources to fight against a system? The answer is that you band together and you use the only tool that you have, your body and the power of collective bodies, which you demonstrate in protest. In reference to protest action, Participant 7 spoke about how,

…poor people feel it is the only weapon or the only tool that they can use. (Participant 7)

Therefore, protesting is a tool that can be harnessed by those who lack sufficient power and be used to effect change.



Image T: Potential for growth

> When you stand at the base of a tree and look up, the tree becomes a lot bigger and you see all the elements of it. So standing here you can see the bark and you can see the leaves and you can see how they all come together. And that reminds me of protests where you can get all these little individual aspects of it and then suddenly when it is brought together it gives you like this huge image, or this huge movement, and with the tree you look at it and you see how big it is. You think about how it's grown, but for me I think about how it's still to grow. It's the same as looking at a protest action and seeing how the individuals have come together and they have grown into this huge movement, but where else can they go and how else can they grow. (Participant 5)

5.5 The 'right' way to protest

When we stop and consider what protest action is and what we think it should look like will the conclusion be the same for everyone? Many participants seemed to hold an idea of what they perceived protest to be, what they believed it was or should not be and what was the correct or 'right' way for it to look to the public. This formed the question: What is the 'right' way to protest? Furthermore, according to what principles and who's principles are we basing our conclusions on? Some participants expressed the notion that protests should be 'civilized', 'ordered' and 'peaceful' but are these notions based on an outdated and Euro-Western notion of what civilized means? If that is the case, then is a South African way of protesting wrong or is it simply the way we conceptualize or perceive our way of protesting that requires revision?

Does the way we think of protest and what we think it should look like need to undergo a process of decolonization?



Image U: Getting a better view

I had this great idea in my head that I was going to um have like this front row seat and see exactly what was happening and um listen very clearly to what the speakers were going to say. (Participant 2)

Theme 6: Equality and justice

6.1 Injustice

What are the reasons or root causes for why protests happen? This is one of the key questions that emerged when discussing the topic of protest action in South Africa. The responses from participants suggested that there is always an overt and openly stated reason that can range from low wages to inadequate resources but sometimes there can also be a more covert underlying and broader systemic issue. In other words, protests can explicitly put forth a cause but upon closer consideration this cause or reason may just be a symptom of a much larger problem in society that requires attention or addressing. Thus, there can be a broader injustice that has led to protesting such as the presence of discrimination, oppression, sexism, racism, classism and so on. When discussing the Fees Must Fall protests for example, participants were cognisant of the fact that the protests were about the attainment of free tertiary education and the abolition of fee increases. At the same time however, they also considered how the movement and related protests are about broader systemic issues such as racism and classism perpetuated by universities or institutions of higher learning, management, government and South African society.

Racism is a particularly pertinent issue within South Africa. This is due to its troubled history as a result of years of a tyrannical system of apartheid as well as the continued effects of that system and of colonialism. The apartheid project was structured in such a way that it ensured that one aspect of our identity was constantly highlighted alongside an oppressive and discriminatory agenda. That aspect is race and as a result race has become a sensitive and prominent topic within our society, especially when it is in the form of racism. Race was a topic mentioned by all the participants and was spoken about in many regards.

One aspect mentioned by participants, was how racism and discrimination towards other races was considered to be a huge factor affecting why protests occurred. In other words, race and racism was considered to be a common reason for protesting.

Another aspect that was considered was the race dynamics that played out within a protest, especially regarding the race of protestors. It was commonly assumed by most participants that those who actively participate in physical protests such as marches are mostly black people or people of colour. Participant 6 described how during his involvement in the Fees Must Fall protests,

> *…it was always black students who were actually protesting, so it was black, black, black, so I didn't actually see any white people.* (Participant 6)

He explained that,

> *…it's assumed that normally white people actually can afford fees and stuff like that.* (Participant 6)

Thus, there is an intersection between race and class that becomes particularly important to consider.

It was interesting to note that participants of different races felt as if they had different roles to play in terms of participating in protests. One participant who identified as white explained how she didn't physically engage in any protest action because she didn't feel like it was her place to get involved or even that she would be allowed to be there. Participant 5 who identified as white referred to this when she explained,

> *Because of my skin colour, it doesn't matter how much I can say that I don't have as much privilege as people assume to my skin colour, no one will really see past that or I don't think I will be seen past that. As a white student I could either really agree with the movement or really need the movement myself. I don't think that most of the group would be able to see me as that just by looking at me, at my skin colour.* (Participant 5)

Participant 5 felt that because she had white skin there would be an assumption that she was of a certain socio-economic status and therefore did not feel like she could participate in the protests, even though she supported them. Participant 6 who identified as black explained how,

> *…different races are not quite represented in such protests…* (Participant 6)

He questioned why this is so. He believed that even though many of the protests are focusing on the black person's struggle, other races need to get involved and show their support. It was interesting to consider how there seemed to be a great deal of confusion and disagreement by different races regarding which races should get involved in protest action. This example highlights a situation where a participant who identifies as black believes that white people should get involved and support protests that are advocating for black rights/issues while a participant who identifies as white wants to get involved and show her support but believes she won't be accepted within the protests.

Lastly, race was considered in terms of how protests are thought about and talked about by different races and how this had an impact within this research project. All of the participants were self-aware regarding how their race had an impact on the way they thought about and approached discussing the topic of protesting. Each participant was able to reflect on how their race and representation situated them within a particular context and historical framework and had implications for the way they thought about and talked about protest action.



Image V: Again and again

> This one just shows the irony and the legacy, a similar thing. We are on Paul Kruger street in Pretoria marching to the union buildings, and this person says "you are poor because you are uneducated, you are uneducated because you are poor". It just speaks about that thing of human capital that I've spoken about, about how people need to be fulfilled and people need the opportunity to alleviate their material conditions from something that's oppressive. (Participant 7)

6.2 The liberation struggle

The 'liberation struggle' is often a term used to describe the nationwide protest movement that arose prior to 1994 to rid the country of the apartheid system. However, time did not stop in South Africa after 1994 nor did the country magically transform into a perfect 'rainbow nation' society. Rather this country can be considered to be in a state of transition and so the protests that are occurring at present need to be understood within a particular context. Even though apartheid has ended in terms of overt laws, the policies and experiences during that time have left behind a residue that can be felt in the minds and hearts of its citizens. Thus, current protests cannot be divorced from the past and from the history of protest as there is always a memory that lingers and influences the present. Participant 2 acknowledged how,

> *Protest in South Africa definitely signifies our very segregated history. It speaks about the trends present in our government that people often don't have anywhere else to turn except onto each other. It's really, really deeply rooted in our apartheid system.* (Participant 2)

Many of the participants spoke about the idea of different generations and a process of repetition or a cycle that is being recreated with the new generation. Participant 7 explained how protesting for him is about,

> *...realizing we can mobilize and we can take action and we can do things to create social change, just like our parents had done.* (Participant 7)

There is this notion that the current youth or the 'born-frees' are emulating and recreating what their parents or grandparents created or how they acted when they were youth. Furthermore, it is perhaps alluding to the idea that even though we have transitioned from an apartheid system to a democracy in terms of our political system and the rights stipulated in our Constitution, there are still a plethora of issues that have yet to be addressed and the youth are highlighting these cracks.



Image W: Decolonize the mind

It begs the question really, what is decolonizing the mind? What are we trying to do? Is the mind in an unhappy state as it is? Is the colonized mind bad? If the colonized mind can make something of itself, is it that bad? (Participant 1)

6.3 Inequality

South Africa has one of the biggest gaps between the rich and the poor in the world. The difference between the quality of life of the rich and the quality of life of the poor is drastic and disgraceful. When discussing the reasons for why protests occur Participant 7 explained,

> *It will always be about inequality because we have the highest inequality rate in the world.* (Participant 7)

Poverty levels are astronomical and resource distribution and allocation is unequal. The participants discussed how inequality of resources and services is one of the core reasons why protests occur, and it is usually the poorest and most under-served individuals in the country who protest. Participant 7 elaborated,

> *The protests come as push back against the symptoms of an unequal society that lives in poverty*. (Participant 7)

Service delivery protests are extremely common and involve protestors asking and arguing for the provision of basic human needs such as water or jobs to be able to sustain and support themselves. The Fees Must Fall protests have been pleading for the equal provision of educational opportunities.

The unequal distribution of resources, and the division of wealth between the rich and the poor in South Africa is heavily delineated along racial lines as a consequence of our apartheid past. What this means is that there is a stubborn link between race and class in our society with the greatest portion of resources and opportunities belonging to white people while black people are the poorest and most disadvantaged.



Image X: Going home

It was a day after a protest that had happened and the community had been protesting against the xenophobic attacks and also service delivery. So this community has been without running water and electricity for about 5 years now, and so every single time they need to get water for their household they need to go fill up a bucket and electricity they don't have any. So they rely on like gas stoves or fires and that sort of thing. So that's also a safety hazard for the community. There's obviously been a lot of shack fires because all the mining houses here are surrounding by shacks. So, um the protests that happened the day before this photo was taken, ended up being very violent. Someone actually lost their life in the protest.

(Participant 2)

In depth discussion

Through an exploration of the results of the study and its integrated discussion, it is evident that many of the core themes and ideas which surfaced are ideas which have been acknowledged in previous literature and are currently in circulation in public discourse. Thus, in each core theme, ideas emerged which acted to re-enforce pre-existing ideas about protesting and protest action. For example, one of the core themes, namely *Violence and disruption*, has had extensive coverage in the media and literature pertaining to the topic. One notable example is the novel written by Jane Duncan and titled *Protest Nation* in which she discusses the presence/absence and role of violence in protest. Thus, the emergence of the overlapping concepts in this project and in societal discourse about protests, acted to confirm its relevance

when discussing the topic. However, the aim of this research was to focus exclusively on the perspectives of students and therefore confirm or deny what students based at Wits University felt to be important aspects of protest and protest action. The photographs and captions which were captured, and the resulting themes and discussion, portrays the voice of our youth and therefore aims to understand and grapple with the idea of protest through a unique avenue and point of view.

While pre-existing ideas and knowledge about protesting and protest action in our country emerged, the results were also able to demonstrate novel concepts and viewpoints which have not been explored or considered as of yet. Many of the participants of this study expressed how they shared their experiences, thoughts and feelings of protest for the first time through this project. There was a realisation that they had not been given a sufficient opportunity or platform in any other space to thoroughly and critically explore the topic prior to taking their photographs. As such, through their participation, participants were given a space to digest and process the meaning of events taking place in our current socio-political climate which they may not have had access to otherwise. Furthermore, participants were able to learn about other students' experiences, thoughts and feelings in a collaborative engagement in a space that also might not have been available otherwise. First-hand accounts of involvement in protest action were also provided, documented and shared, stories that may have gone untold but yet are important contributions to our understanding of protest and to our history going forward.

Chapter conclusion

In concluding this chapter, it is worth noting the rich and nuanced account of protesting and protest action provided by the participants. Each participant was able to explore their

thoughts, feelings, perspectives and experiences of what protesting means to them. This was done through the production of a series of photographs, the descriptions of these photographs as well as an in-depth and critical discussion. From this a multitude of opinions and ideas were expressed, some of them contradictory and some of them compatible. This led to a detailed account of key themes and ideas which provide a richer understanding of what student´s feel to be important about protest action as well as our wider society at this point in our history.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of key areas of interest which are pertinent to acquiring a fuller understanding and appreciation of this research project and therefore warrant further consideration and speculation. It includes an exploration of the limitations and challenges which were faced during the process as well as recommended solutions where feasible. Thereafter, some in depth reflections from the researcher are included. Directions for future research are then proposed with a firm motivation for more research such as this study to be conducted with research which interrogates core concepts grappled with in this report. Lastly, a conclusion is provided which summarises the entire research project and reiterates its importance and necessity in the South African context.

Limitations and challenges

Participant involvement

A challenge encountered during the project was the recruitment and committed involvement of participants as many students had time pressures and study obligations of their own. The data collection process also occurred during the exam period and as such it was difficult for participants who had taken the time to engage in the interview process to dedicate further time to the group discussion and as a result a new group (aside from one participant) was recruited for the purpose of sharing photographs with each other.

Considerations of race

Race is a major identity marker in South Africa due to our historical apartheid past, a past which continues to have an imprint on the protests happening at present. Therefore, race was an important factor during this research not only in terms of the race of the researcher (who represents the historical oppressor which could have had an effect on interactions with participants) but also in terms of the disproportionate number of participants who identified as white. The number of participants who identified as white were greater than other races and therefore this skewed the data by giving an increased opportunity for white voices and experiences to be heard over those of other races. This is unfortunate because simply by including more white participants this research borders on perpetuating issues of white dominance and highlights white narratives, all issues attempting to be interrogated through this research as well as through the Fees Must Fall protests. However, the researcher did not make the decision about which participants should take part. Rather, all students who made contact with the researcher expressing interest in the project were included. This raises questions about why it is that more participants who identify as white were willing to take part in the research. Was it based on the race of the researcher or is it a larger systemic issue relating to the experience of white people finding it easier to express their views and take part in such activities without facing discrimination? Does it draw attention to the understanding that Wits is a space geared towards white interests, where white people feel more comfortable and thus more willing to engage in such activities? Does it highlight the feeling expressed by many persons of colour that Wits perpetuates discrimination and feelings of alienation thus deterring participation? Was the process of finding and recruiting participants already restricting access to some and inadvertently facilitating a white space which then attracted a greater number of white participants? How can the recruitment of participants be done differently in future to ensure that it is more inclusive and provides a safe space for all races to engage and participate?

Resistance to the research topic

Resistance was experienced during the project from various administrative bodies who felt reluctant to support a research topic based on protests. For example, when attempting to obtain permission for stamps that would allow posters to be placed on various noticeboards for recruitment purposes, I as the researcher was informed that the Wits management could not be seen to be politically aligned and wanted nothing to do with any protest action. Further explanation that the various posters related to a research project and not a political movement proved to be irrelevant and thus it was necessary to seek assistance from the SRC to get the posters certified. Concern was also raised within the Wits psychology department regarding the temperamental choice of research topic, its political disposition and connotations as well as the message and implications that might arise from a researcher with my identity (and race) conducting research within a particular environment and political climate. While the resistance experienced proved to be a hindrance and had its hurdles it also needs to be understood within a particular context and time. Currently at Wits tensions are high following protest action on campus in recent years and various stakeholders are sensitive towards the topic as well as towards fears of potential implication or consequences.

Reflections

Conducting qualitative research, and research particularly within the PAR paradigm, it was paramount that I as the researcher maintained a sense of self awareness and self-reflexivity about my part in this study and the contributions this may have had on the process and the results. A critical awareness of how my representation as a white, female, middle-class, English speaking and educated researcher might have effected the engagement between myself and the

participants was also an essential element of this project. I felt that it was salient that there was an acknowledgement about this and how my representation might have altered, hindered or encouraged answers and responses during the interviews and group discussion. In attempting to emulate PAR principles, my goal was to be as transparent as possible about this consideration and therefore I included it as a direct question during the interview process which I posed to each participant. Through a critical engagement, participants acknowledged that my representation had indeed influenced their responses in some manner. One of the main influencing factors was the issue of race. Some participants who identified as white described how my whiteness provided a space where they could feel comfortable to discuss their views. One participant explained that she felt scared to share her views about protests in the public sphere for fear of being misinterpreted, unintentionally discriminatory or inadvertently guilty in perpetuating harm or hurt. Some participants who identified as black or coloured conceded to an awareness that my race had influenced their answers because I do not have an understanding of existing in a world where I am not white. As such, some of these participants acknowledged that they had provided altered responses or answered questions in a particular manner so that I would be able to understand them from my worldview or as someone of my particular representation. In other words, this could mean that my race had an effect on the choice of answer that was given, as well as information that was chosen to not be shared. What this means is that my race may have acted to potentially silence and obstruct a comprehensive account of some participants true thoughts and feelings.

My representation as someone who stands as a symbol of the oppressor also raises questions regarding the politics of representation and the thorny issue of misrepresentation. If protest action is about the disempowered or disenfranchised rising up and finding their own voice so that they themselves may speak about their experiences unencumbered by their

oppressors, can someone who represents oppression join a protest and fight alongside the cause? More importantly, should I be conducting research that still speaks for others despite my best efforts and are my best efforts enough? Is it possible for me to convey the stories of students in an open and unbiased way without being guilty of that which I criticize? Is an awareness of this contradiction and an attempt to be honest about it sufficient enough to justify the underlying hypocrisy? Should someone who represents what I represent be conducting this kind of research? These are all questions which I have debated over the course of this research project and which I continue to grapple with post completion. They are difficult questions to provide answers to and perhaps such answers may never be found.

Directions for future research

Through emulating the vision of PAR, photovoice has the potential to question the status-quo not only in research but in psychology in general. Psychology is a discipline that originated from Europe and the West and is therefore still yoked in many respects to a colonial agenda which it arguably still perpetuates through overarching assumptions it utilizes in research (Berry, 2013; Graham & Ismail, 2011; MacLeod, 2004; Stevens, 2013). If research methods such as photovoice can be used more often, in a manner that stays true to its honourable intentions, then it can contribute towards creating a new story from a local point of view and with an agenda that embraces indigenous knowledge. Therefore, simply by conducting more research in this regard, dominant power structures can be questioned and imbalances in the research relationship between participants and researchers can be challenged. As such, conducting this research using the particular research method of photovoice is intended to be a starting point which can be emulated by other researchers. The hope is that it may stand as a beacon to show the importance it carries and consequently encourage greater

use of photovoice and creative-based methodology in psychology in general and perhaps even in other social science fields.

Psychology has a dark past in South Africa as it was often used as a pawn to aid the apartheid agenda but it has also been able to critically reflect on this past and determine a path forward (Cooper, 2014; Yen, 2013). Psychologists in South Africa need to conduct more research from an emic, local point of view that can self-reflexively interrogate issues of power. MACC students in particular, who are trained under the overarching umbrella of the core ideals of community psychology need to create research that mirrors the ideals of community psychology, questions dominant structures and discourses in society and gets involved in the current political atmosphere. Using the photovoice method and conducting action-orientated research within the PAR paradigm is in and of itself an intervention and a political statement. One of the fundamental tenets of community psychology is that the status-quo should constantly be interrogated. Stereotypes, (neo) colonial discourse, Western and European bias, scientific hegemony, power of privilege and a paucity of local knowledge production should be questioned, and the Fees Must Fall and other such protests mirror this call. Simply by conducting more research using this method these issues can gain traction. As such, while this research project is attempting to actively contribute to an arena of knowledge that is seen to be sorely lacking, it is also attempting to encourage further research that utilizes the photovoice method or PAR or that adopts its overarching concepts and intentions.

Conclusion

It is important to consider how this research project has focused on the idea of protest and protest action and explored a range of different views and opinions of the topic. However,

it also stands as an act of protest. The participants have taken photos of what protest or protest action means to them and in doing so have engaged in a process and act of protest. They have come forward and agreed to share their views and opinions of protest and pertinent topics in our current socio-political society. I have chosen to undertake this research project and write this research paper in protest. I am advocating for a certain way of conducting research within a specifically South African context that is more aligned to an equal, pro-(South)African, decolonized agenda. I am protesting against a university that overvalues certain kinds of research which is more scientific-based and less focused on art-based methods. That is, certain kinds of research that undervalues an understanding of the more social and emotional aspects of humanity. I am protesting for the field of psychology in South Africa to actively adopt and incorporate more Community Psychology based values and principles into both theory and practice and to give it value. I am protesting using this research report to show that protest can come in many forms and doesn't need to be just the conventional understanding of a physical march on the streets. I am protesting to spread awareness about protest and how it can be a tool that can be used to create change, it can be positive, and it can have an impact.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical clearance documentation

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MACC/17/004 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	A photovoice project: an exploration of Wits student's experiences of protests
INVESTIGATORS	Caboz Janee
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	06/06/17
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 06 November 2017

CHAIRPERSON

(Dr Hugo Canham)



cc Supervisor:

Prof. Tanya Graham
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2019

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Participant information sheet

Dear participant,

My name is Janeé Caboz. I am currently a Masters student completing my degree in Community-based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a degree. The aim of this research is to conduct a photovoice study on the thoughts, perceptions and experiences of protest action.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation in this study will involve taking part in the photovoice method by photographing aspects of what protest action means to you. This process will involve approximately two meetings of about 1 to 2 hours each. It may also involve participating in an exhibition. Participation is voluntary and you may choose not to continue with participation at any time, without any consequences. The two meetings will involve a group process with other participants who are taking part in the study and who will take part in a group discussion or interview. The interview or group discussion will be kept confidential. The discussions or interviews will be audio recorded and only my supervisor and I will have access to these recordings. The recordings and the transcripts will be kept at the University on a password protected computer. Although I know who you are, confidentiality will be maintained by not disclosing any information that is of a personal nature in the report. I will assign an alpha code to your information, for example, Participant X, or Participant Y. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You also have the right to refrain from answering any questions. Feedback of the study and its findings will be available to you upon completion of the report. Should you wish to follow up you may contact me using the details provided below.

Thank you for taking the time to familiarise yourself with my research. I look forward to working together with you should you agree to take part in this project.

Janeé Caboz

Janee.caboz@gmail.com

0794996026

Prof. Maria Marchetti-Mercer

maria.marchetti-mercer@wits.ac.za

27 (11) 717 4525

Appendix C: Consent to participate in interview and group discussion

Consent form (Interview or group discussion)

I, _____ consent to take part an interview/group discussion on this day: _____with Janeé Caboz, for a photovoice study on the thoughts and experiences of protest action.

I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary.
- I may refrain from answering any questions.
- I may withdraw my participation and/or my responses from the study at any time, however I give permission for Janeé to use any of the photographs taken and discussions recorded prior to my withdrawal.
- There are no risks or benefits associated with this study.
- The interview/group discussion may be audio recorded and photographs may be used in the final research report.
- All information provided will remain confidential, unless otherwise specified.
- I may be quoted in the research report but if I am quoted then an alpha code (Respondent X, Respondent Y etc.) will be used.
- I understand that I should not participate in any illegal activities or subject matter that might implicate myself or others in a criminal investigation. If this occurs then I understand that this information will need to be reported to the relevant authorities.

- None of my identifiable information will be included in the research report unless otherwise agreed upon.
- I am aware that the results of the study will be reported in the form of a research report for the partial completion of the degree of Masters in Community-based Counselling in Psychology.
- The research may also be presented at a local/international conference and published in a journal and/or book chapter.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Consent to audio record

Consent form (audio recording)

I, _____ give consent for the interview or group discussion with Janeé Caboz and other participants to be audio recorded for her study.

I understand that:

- The audio recording and transcripts will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the group participants, the researcher and her supervisor.
- The audio recording and transcripts will be kept in a safe place and stored on a password protected computer.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report, unless otherwise specified.
- Although direct quotes from the interview or group discussion will be used in the research report, each person will be referred to by an alpha code (Respondent X, Respondent Y etc).

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: Consent to use photographs

Consent (photographs)

I, _____ give consent for any of the photographs taken during the photovoice process to be used by Janeé Caboz for her research study.

I understand that:

- No identifying information will be used alongside the photographs, unless otherwise specified.
- Although the photographs will be used in the research report, each photographer will be referred to by an alpha code (Respondent X, Respondent Y etc).
- I understand that I should not take photographs of any illegal activities or subject matter that might be implicated in a criminal investigation. If this occurs then I understand that this information will need to be reported to the relevant authorities.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Demographics and consent for acknowledgment

Demographics and consent for acknowledgement:

Full name:	
Date of birth:	
Age:	
Race:	
Gender:	
Home language:	
Area of study:	
Year of study:	
Contact details Cell number: Email address:	
Number of photographs submitted:	
Titles of photographs: 1 2	

3	

I, _____ give consent for my name to be included/acknowledged in the final research paper written by Janeé Caboz. My name will not be associated with any of my answers and the details of my contributions will be kept confidential. My name will only be acknowledged at the end of the paper as a contributor to, and collaborator on, the project.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Participant poster

