

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

**Rape culture and social media: Exploring how social media influences students'
opinions and perceptions of rape culture**

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Abstract

In April 2016 students from South African universities launched the #Endrapeculture movement to protest their universities' institutional policies towards sexual assault on campus, which was seen as perpetuating a rape culture. Through the use of social media, students from across South Africa were able to provide instrumental information and mobilise support for the protests.

This thesis focused on exploring the rape culture discourse that emerged from the online debates following the #Endrapeculture protests, as well as the potential of social media as an accessible and affordable pedagogical tool to address rape culture on campus. An exploratory qualitative design was used and this was framed within a postmodern feminist framework. To address the aims of the study two methods of data collection were utilised. All ethics principles were adhered to for both forms of data collection.

Firstly, natural observation of comment threads of Facebook relating to the April 2016 #Endrapeculture protests was conducted. A total of 590 comments from 8 Facebook posts were collected and analysed using qualitative content analysis. The findings indicate that rape culture discourses were prominent within these comment threads with *Perpetuating Victim-blaming* emerging as the most significant theme followed by *Rape or Rape Culture*, *Patriarchy*, *Race and Culture*, *Sexualisation and Bodily Autonomy*, *Trivialising Rape Culture* and *Role of Universities and Law Enforcement*.

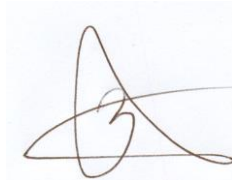
The second part of the data collection involved conducting online, asynchronous focus groups using the Facebook secret chat group application. Participants for the SFFG were recruited on Facebook through a process of snowball sampling. A total of three SFFG were conducted with 16 participants. Thematic decomposition analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed three main themes namely; *Defining Rape Culture*, *Learning about Rape Culture* and *The Role of Social Media*.

Based on the observations from the comment threads and the findings from the SFFGs, it is argued that social media can be used as a pedagogical tool to address rape culture on campus in two ways. Firstly, it is beneficial on a macro level by using social media platforms to provide instrumental information about rape culture. Secondly, it can be utilised on a micro level by using applications like the SFFG to provide a safe space where students can engage in small-scale interactive discussions.



Declaration:

I declare that *Rape culture and social media: Exploring how social media influences students' opinions and perceptions of rape culture* is my own work, and that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.



Zaida Orth



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

In 2015, students precipitated protest hashtag campaigns (#RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, #OpenStellenbosch, #Endpatriarchy) which spread across South African university campuses. These campaigns were spearheaded by black African students who, through a framework of black consciousness based on the works of Steve Biko and Frantz Fanon, mobilised to express their frustration against the institutional university cultures which serve to exclude Black students (Gouws, 2018). In this context, 'Black' does not refer to the race-based construction which emerged under apartheid, rather it refers to Biko's black consciousness definition, in which Black people are defined as those who are by law or tradition discriminated against, politically oppressed, economically exploited and socially degraded, and who identify themselves as a unit in their struggle for liberation (Gouws, 2018). As such, students took to the streets to call for university transformation and reform through decolonisation and the move towards free education. In this process, social media proved to be an instrumental tool in allowing students to organise protest action, raise awareness and mobilise support.

The student protest action that occurred during that year represented a turning point for South African youth, who spoke out about being disillusioned by the false promises of the Rainbow nation government. Furthermore, protesting students received significant backlash from law enforcement structures, as well as the mainstream media. Despite this, the students ultimately claimed a small victory as a zero percent fee increase was announced across all campuses. However, various criticisms from within the movement emerged, mostly relating to the sexual assault of women who were participants and leaders in the movements. This led to various debates concerning intersectionality, the role of women in the struggle and the occurrence of sexual assault on campuses. Spurred on by the success of the 2015 protests,

students surged forward with a new sense of purpose to keep up the momentum and call for reform and change. It is from this backdrop that the #Endrapeculture movement arose in April 2016 as a culmination of the reports of sexual assault of students during the hashtag movements and the students' frustration with the universities' institutional policies and responses to sexual assault, which were seen as perpetuating a rape culture (Gouws, 2018; Wazar, 2016).

1.2. Rationale

Rape has moved to the forefront of our collective consciousness. Within South African society; it is presented as an ever-present fear as news reports of children and women being raped or sexually assaulted continue to permeate both social and mainstream media. However, thanks to the contributions of digital feminism and activism, the discourse surrounding rape and sexual assault are shifting (Rentschler, 2014;2015;t; Sills et al., 2016). Discussions of rape are no longer simply targeted at lone predators, evil perpetrators or a failed justice system. It has expanded to incorporate the critical reflection of problematic societal attitudes concerning gender and sexuality, which serve to normalise and perpetuate sexual assault. Therefore, instead of limiting the discussion to rape, which despite efforts continues to be pervasive in society, the discussion has moved towards considerations of a rape culture. South African university students have played a significant role in bringing forward conversations concerning rape culture in the mainstream domain. In April 2016, an awareness campaign known as #chapter212 was launched at Rhodes University in an attempt to raise awareness of the policies relating to the sexual assault and rape on campus, as well as highlighting the prevailing attitudes of university management towards sexual assault and rape victims (Wazar, 2016). The name of the campaign is in reference to the South African Constitution, which aims to protect the rights, safety and dignity of students. The initial protest activity took the form of posters displayed on the face of the Rhodes University

library, with quotes accusing the university management of victim-blaming and perpetuating rape culture. Through using the hashtag, the campaign rapidly gained momentum on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. The reactions of the student body to the campaign ranged from curiosity over the movement to outrage at managements' lack of engagement (Wazar, 2016).

During that time, protest action concerning the issue of rape culture erupted at other universities across South Africa. Students at the University of Witwatersrand organised their own protest in solidarity with Rhodes University, while students at Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town launched their own campaigns against the universities policies on rape and sexual assault.

Across all of the campuses, social media has been valuable in providing instrumental information regarding rape and sexual assault in relation to the policies of the respective universities, as well as communicating the experiences of students who have been victims of sexual assault or rape on campus (Gouws, 2018; Wazar, 2016). This served to attract attention, spark debates and mobilise support for the rape culture protests. Social media platforms are part of the public domain. As a result, people from across South Africa could engage with each other regarding the protest action. While there were many who showcased their support online, there were others who expressed negative sentiments. Regardless, by using social media as part of the protest campaign, students succeeded in reaching a large number of people and getting them to discuss the issues at hand. A feat that may not have been readily accomplished had the protest been reported through mainstream media alone.

Not only did the student protest action raise awareness about rape culture on campus, but it also raised the issue of rape culture in South African society. This is evident in the 'Remember Khwezi' protest, in which four women staged a silent protest against President Zuma at the August 2016 election results announcement (Gqirana, 2016). Social media was

an instrumental tool in raising awareness of the protest as the use of the hashtags ‘Remember Khwezi’ and ‘I am one in 3’ went viral. According to the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) Member of Parliament (MP), Liezl van der Merwe we can no longer afford to ignore rape culture in our country (Gqirana, 2018).

In her book, *Rape: A South African Nightmare* Prof Pumla Dieno Gqola opens the discussion about rape as a recurring nightmare within South African society and conceptualises it as a patriarchal act of aggression linked to language and power (Gqola, 2015). While Gqola (2015) argues that the problem of rape is not necessarily a South African phenomenon, she exposes the reader to rape culture as an embedded social ill within South African society. Additionally, Gqola (2015) discusses South Africans reactions to rape and how there appears to be a paradox between condoning acts of rape (as can be seen in the Jacob Zuma rape trial), and reactions of shock each time the rape of a woman or child is being covered in the news. This suggests that the nation lacks a solid understanding of the phenomenon as well as behaviours which are not classified as rape or sexual assault, yet contribute to the occurrence and prevalence of the problem. Furthermore, her discussion of these cases further highlights how the media can play an important role in shaping people’s views and opinions about rape.

While there are many studies reporting on the effects of rape, intervention and counselling strategies for survivors and perpetrators, and statistics reporting cases of rape, there are few studies focused on the problem of rape culture (Dematteo, Galloway, Arnold, & Patel, 2015; Zaleski, Gundersen, Baes, Estupinian, & Vergara, 2016). Furthermore, studies of rape culture in South African society are virtually non-existent. The points raised by Gqola (2015) suggests that there is a need to further investigate the problem of rape culture in South Africa as a form of deep patriarchal communication which aims at degrading the place of women, and is shaped through contextual issues of race, history and violence (Gqola, 2015).

In light of the above, the aim of this study was to add to the body of knowledge by exploring the digital discourse of rape culture and the potential role of social media in shaping students' perceptions and opinions of rape culture. This is important in providing information to enhance current conceptual models of the rape culture phenomenon, and understanding how social media may be used to contribute to the creation of innovative preventative measures against sexual assault (Armstrong & Mahone, 2017; Hart & Mitchell, 2015).

The interest of this study was framed in exploring how social media platforms are used to discuss rape culture, and in doing so, creating an emerging digital discourse around the issue that engages others online, and facilitates debates concerning the presence of rape culture. Previous studies have explored how youth in the global South are using social media technologies to mobilise citizens to strive toward social change (Hart & Mitchell, 2015). The literature demonstrates the role of social media sites in empowering the youth, from both developed and developing areas, by providing them with a platform to actively participate in social and political life (Hart & Mitchell, 2015).

As previously mentioned, South African students precipitated the #Endrapeculture movement which brought forth the conversation of rape culture into the public sphere. According to Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood, young people between the ages of 18-25 represent a distinct developmental period distinguished by identity exploration, relative independence from social roles and normative expectations (Arnett, 2000). University and college students experience this period in an environment in which they acquire new knowledge forms and interact with people from diverse backgrounds. It is important to understand how students and young people use social media and engage with relevant topics such as rape culture, to better understand how to effectively engage with this population to address issues around sexual violence and rape culture on campus.

Previous studies have been conducted on college campuses in order to explore factors such as rape myth acceptance, sexual assault and the bystander effect (Carroll, Rosenstein, Foubert, Clark, & Korenman, 2016; Edwards, Bradshaw, & Hinsz, 2014; Fisher, Lindner, & Ferguson, 2017; Foubert, Brosi, & Bannon, 2011; Grubb & Turner, 2012; McMahon, 2010). However, this study will examine rape culture (behaviours and perceptions that contribute to the occurrence of rape) and social media as a tool that is frequently accessed and used by students.

Sonke and Gender Justice found that GBV cost the South African government between R28.4 billion and R42.4 billion in 2012 and 2013 respectively (Van der Merwe, 2015). Social media is an affordable and easily accessible tool. This study is beneficial in providing information which demonstrates how social media sites can be used as a cost-effective tool to address gender-based violence (GBV).

1.3.Aims and Objectives

The above information thus served as a basis for the articulation of the aim and objectives.

Aims

- To explore the digital discourse of rape culture in relation to South African campuses, in order to provide a broad and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

Objectives

- To explore how these digital discourses influence student perceptions of rape culture.
- To explore the construction of gender through these digital discourses.
- To explore student perceptions of rape culture on social media platforms such as Facebook

- To explore how students interact in an online space and how they collectively engage in topics concerning rape culture and gender-based violence.

Based on the aim and objectives, a postmodern feminist framework was deemed appropriate within which to locate the study. From a postmodern feminist framework, rape culture is viewed as a socially constructed phenomenon, the meaning of which is dependent on social interaction and the use of language. In addition, the ways in which we use language to talk about rape culture are embedded in micro and macro power dynamics.

1.4. Conclusion

The introduction aimed to provide the context in which the current study is located within by discussing the role of the student hashtag campaigns in bringing to light issues of rape culture on campus through the use of social media as a tool to mobilise support and create awareness. Thus, the aims and objectives were identified in relation to the study and further linked to an appropriate theoretical framework. Provided below is an outline of the chapters to follow.

1.5. Outline of Thesis

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this chapter relevant literature meant to further contextualise the study is presented. This is to assist the reader in understanding rape culture in South African society, the nature of sexual assault on campus and the potential role of social media as a tool to address these issues. Furthermore, the application of a postmodern feminist theoretical framework in relation to this study is discussed.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology that was used in this study is discussed, which includes an explanation of the research design, procedures, data collection, reflexivity and trustworthiness and the ethical considerations.

Chapter 4- Results

In this chapter, the findings of the data analysis are presented

Chapter 5- Discussion

In this chapter, the findings are discussed in a way that relates back to the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion and Recommendations

In the final chapter, the findings and discussion are summarised in relation to the aims and objectives. Additionally, the limitations of the study are discussed and recommendations are made.



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Rape Culture and the South African Context

The recent discourse of rape culture in mainstream platforms can be attributed to the growth of digital feminism and activism. However, a cultural theory of rape first originated in the 1970s during the rise of second wave feminism. Term ‘rape culture’ was first coined in 1975 by Susan Brownmiller in her book, *Against our will* (Brownmiller, 1975; Johnson & Johnson, 2017; Rentschler, 2014). Brownmiller’s (1975) book is considered a turning point in academic history as it was one of the first books that described rape as a political and social problem, rather than an individual crime of passion. Indeed, in the first chapter Brownmiller addresses the lack of attention rape has received in the social sciences, especially from scholars who pioneered the study of sexual disorders, such as Kraft-Ebing and Sigmund Freud, who wrote off rape as an act of depravity. Brownmiller (1975) argues that rape is a tactic used by all men as a form of power to keep all women in a constant state of fear, with the purpose of asserting and maintaining their dominance over women in a patriarchal society.

The theory of rape culture was further developed to describe a culture or pervasive ideology, in which male sexual violence is perceived as the norm and victims are consequently blamed for their own assaults (Brownmiller, 1975; Johnson & Johnson, 2017; Zaleski et al., 2016). Drawing from social construction theory, researchers have determined that rape is perpetuated through the social construction of a rape culture (Stubbs-Richardson, Rader, & Cosby, 2018). That is, societal attitudes or behaviours towards gender and sexuality that normalise sexual violence, are constructed and reproduced in society through modelling and social learning (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018).

A rape culture perpetuates rape by socialising boys and men to be sexual aggressors, and girls and women to be sexually passive (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). Consequently,

society has been socialised to believe that relationships involving male sexual aggression are natural and normal (Zaleski et al., 2016). As a theoretical construct, rape culture has been cited frequently. However, attempts to empirically verify the construct have been limited (Johnson & Johnson, 2017).

The most comprehensive model of rape culture to date is the construct of rape myth acceptance first proposed by Martha Burt in 1980 (Burt, 1980). According to Burt (1980), the acceptance of traditional gender roles, adversarial sexual beliefs and acceptance of interpersonal violence are regarded as indicators of a rape culture. This model was further developed by Lonsway and Fitzgerald in 1995 to include constructs of sexism and hostility towards women (as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 2017).

Studies investigating rape myth acceptance have found support for the normalization of male sexual aggression (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). For example, one survey found that one in three men endorsed behaviourally descriptive intentions (i.e. “coerce somebody into intercourse by holding them down”) to commit sexual assault, but denied these intentions when the word ‘rape’ was used (Edwards et al., 2014). These findings suggest that as a society we may have denounced the word rape, yet we have normalised the act (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). This relates to the points made by Gqola (2015) regarding societal reactions towards rape. On the one hand, we demonstrate appropriate outrage and disgust if the case of rape is related to a minor or a murder, as it represents an act of perverse and senseless violence. There is no one to blame but the perpetrator. However, in other cases, there is an amount of scepticism to behold (Hayes & Abbot, 2016; Mardorossian, 2014). The ‘alleged’ perpetrator is spared some of the scrutinies as male sexual aggression is normal and expected and by all accounts, the ‘survivor’ should have known better than to put herself in that position (Hayes & Abbot, 2016; Mardorossian, 2014). Rape culture should not be considered a subculture of feminism, but rather a systematic and collective problem in society (Zaleski et

al., 2016). Therefore, the cultural or societal explanation of the cause of rape needs to be moved from a micro to a macro level

Rape is a pressing problem in South Africa as the country has been categorised as the rape capital of the world (Gqola, 2015). However, based on the rape culture framework, the pervasiveness of rape and sexual assault in society is not only a by-product of the prevalence of rape but also how rape is constructed by society. According to the South African Police (SAPS) crime statistics, 40035 cases of rape were reported in 2017/18 (Africa Check, 2018). Previously, national police commissioner Jackie Selebi stated that these statistics might be exaggerated due to the fact that many rape cases are reported on a Friday and Saturday night only to be withdrawn on a Monday (Smith, 2004). The comment made by Selebi is speaking more to the rape culture that exists within South African society than it does to the accuracy of rape statistics. Additionally, the Institute for Security Studies cautions that the rape statistics recorded by the police does not reflect the true extent of this crime (Africa Check, 2018). The withdrawal of rape accusation deserves closer examination, as it is less related to the fact that women are lying about rape, and speaks more to the failure of society to protect women and children (Smith, 2004).

2.2. Studies focusing on the issue of Rape on College Campuses

There are many studies focused on the issue of rape on campuses. This is due to the high rates of sexual assault on college campuses (Burpo & Burgess, 2012; Harway & Steel, 2015). Many of these studies are quantitative in nature and focus on concepts such as rape myth acceptance, victim-blaming, and the bystander effect (Carroll et al., 2016; Foubert et al., 2011; Hayes & Abbott, 2016; McMahon, 2010), the effects of media on perceptions of rape (Burpo & Burgess, 2012), the effects of gender (Hayes & Abbott, 2016; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007) and the effects of interventions to minimize sexual assault on campuses (Senn & Forrest, 2016; Zapp, Buelow, Soutiea, Berkowitz, & Dejong, 2018).

Despite the prevalence of sexual assault on campuses, it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics to reflect this phenomenon due to the fact that many of the assaults are underreported (Burpo & Burgess, 2012; Harway & Steel, 2015). Many campuses are struggling to address the situation and to conceptualise ways to reduce the problem (Zapp et al., 2018). Various interventions to address sexual assault on campuses have been developed and usually take the form of awareness campaigns or workshops (Senn & Forrest, 2016; Zapp et al., 2018). Studies evaluating such interventions report some positive effects, such as an increase in empathy and bystander intervention, following students' exposure to the interventions (Senn & Forrest, 2016; Zapp et al., 2018). Despite the initial positive results, evidence shows that the desirable effects from such programmes may diminish over time in the absence of ongoing exposure and clearly communicated and enforced policies (Zapp et al., 2018). This indicates that university administrators should provide ongoing supplemental awareness education and training to reinforce the positive effects of sexual assault intervention programmes (Zapp et al., 2018).

However, it is suggested that the campus itself creates an environment that enables and perpetuates sexual assaults (Harway & Steel, 2015). The student protests that occurred in 2016 are indicative of the fact that the issue of rape on campus is not being addressed and that the various administrations may inadvertently be contributing to the problem. This problem is not unique to South Africa, as campus administrations in other parts of the world are being criticised for the role they play in protecting the perpetrator and engaging in processes of victim-blaming (Dematteo et al., 2015; Harway & Steel, 2015). According to Dematteo et al. (2015), while efforts to address campus sexual assault are important, it is also imperative that administrative and legislative responses be based on reliable data that is suitable to address the problem at hand.

Many of the studies of rape on campuses focus on students' rape myth perceptions that are conceptualised as attitudes and false beliefs about rape that minimise victim injury or blame the victim for their own assault (Hayes & Abbott, 2016). These rape myths do not originate from college campuses as research shows that rape myth acceptance is found in society, with some groups such as males, the working-class and people of colour being more prone to accepting these myths (Hayes & Abbott, 2016). It is not entirely clear why this is. However, previous studies have argued that working class and ethnic groups such as Africans, Latinos and Asians are more likely to endorse rape myths, as these groups are more likely to ascribe to traditional gender roles (Feild, 1978; Jimenez & Abreu, 2003). Furthermore, studies which found men to be less empathetic towards victims of sexual assault and more likely to endorse rape myths argue that this occurs because men are less likely to relate to the victim (Burt, 1980; Jimenez & Abreu, 2003; Wakelin & Long, 2003).

This supports the notion of a rape culture that is entrenched in the conscious or unconscious hetero-normative, white male, privileged traditions and narratives (Hayes & Abbott, 2016). Previous studies have shown that the perpetuation of a rape culture on campus is related to several factors namely; the construction of gender, race, the media, religion, association with male dominant spaces (i.e. sports or fraternities), and alcohol consumption (Hayes & Abbott, 2016)

Other studies have explored the relationship between rape myth acceptance and bystander intervention. Bystander intervention is considered to be a useful resource to combat rape or sexual assault on campuses. On campuses, bystanders are usually present in the 'pre-assault' phase and if they are aware of the situation and equipped with the appropriate skills, they can intervene and stop the assault from occurring (McMahon, 2010). For this reason, the majority of the studies are aimed at understanding the factors that influence people to intervene in such situations.

McMahon (2010) conducted a study in which she explored the effect of various demographic variables on college students' rape myth beliefs and bystander attitudes. The results of her study highlight that college students in her sample moderately support rape myths, with certain myths showing more acceptance than others (McMahon, 2010). The study indicates that incoming college students, who have likely been part of classes teaching sexual violence in high school, still engage in victim-blaming and rape myth acceptance (McMahon, 2010). This suggests that more work is needed for sexual violence prevention programs. McMahon (2010) further demonstrates that gender is an important factor for both rape myths and bystander intervention, as males are presented as being more accepting of rape myths and are less positive towards bystander attitudes than females. These findings supported by previous studies (Carroll et al., 2016; Foubert et al., 2011; Hayes & Abbott, 2016)

Furthermore, many studies have explored how specific social factors such as media consumption influence rape perceptions and rape myth acceptance. Foubert et al., (2011) conducted a study in which they examined the effects of pornography viewing on fraternity men and how it affects bystander intervention and rape myth acceptance. The results indicated that the harmful effects of pornography consumption increased as the level of violence depicted in the viewing increased (Foubert et al., 2011). According to Foubert et al., (2011) 83% of the men in their sample reported watching mainstream pornography in the last 12 months, and their scores show that they were more likely to commit acts of rape or sexual assault if they could be assured of not being caught. While this does not mean that all male pornography viewers will commit rape, it does warrant further investigation into mainstream pornography and sexual violence.

Another study explored the effects of music videos on college students' perceptions of rape (Burpo & Burgess, 2012). According to Burgess and Burpo (2012), adolescents and

young adults spend an increasing amount of time-consuming electronic media in the form of video games, social media, television and music videos. Of particular interest was the effect of music videos on rape perceptions as music videos often present images of women as being objectified or highly sexualised and can contain elements of violence (Burpo & Burgess, 2012). Their study included 132 college students who participated in an experimental design. Participants were split into two groups, with one group watching the highly sexualised music video and the other group watching the low sexualised music video. The participants were then administered questionnaires to measure their perceptions and rape myth beliefs. Their study indicated that for college males, the portrayal of highly sexualised images of women in music videos is associated with higher rates of victim-blaming (Burpo & Burgess, 2012). Both men and women associated this type of portrayal with less empathy for the victim. Studies focusing on gender and sexual assault have found positive associations between participation in all-male groups and sexual aggression (Harway & Steel, 2015; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007). More recently, studies are shifting the focus away from factors contributing to rape toward the university cultures that perpetuate sexual assault behaviour (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017).

2.3. Social Media and Rape Culture

Currently, there is a dearth of research examining the phenomena of rape culture, particularly within social media platforms (Zaleski et al., 2016). However, recent studies have stressed the importance of investigating the presence and nature of rape culture on social media (Rentschler, 2014; Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018; Zaleski et al., 2016). Digital and social media consumption in contemporary society, has become the standard of how many people acquire their news and viewpoints on cultural issues (Zaleski et al., 2016).

Through social media, individuals can provide information and events not covered in the news (i.e. cell phone footage of protest events), can share their opinions and engage with

others concerning events reported in mainstream media (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018). As such, social media has become a pertinent aspect in contemporary culture and cultural change by becoming a valuable resource of providing and disseminating information – including information concerning feminist theory (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018).

In this way, social media platforms can be used to establish a counter-public (Jackson & Banaszczyk, 2016; Rentschler, 2014; Sills et al., 2016). The term ‘counter-public’ was first coined by Felski (1989) and later refined by Fraser (1990) to critique the notion of the public sphere which historically excluded the participation of women (as cited in Sills et al., 2016). Rather, the counter-public(s) represent a plurality of spheres to account for the specific discursive spaces and practices of women’s experiences and knowledge which seek to infiltrate and dismantle dominant narratives within the patriarchal sphere (Jackson & Banaszczyk, 2016; Rentschler, 2014; Sills et al., 2016). In other words, social media provides a space to produce counter-publics which allow users to initiate and engage in conversations about sexual violence that challenge and contradict established social and legal norms, by circumventing the gatekeepers of traditional media.

According to Rentschler (2014) a blog post by feminist, Jessica Valenti surmises that most young women in the United States are first made aware of rape culture through social media platforms such as *Tumblr*. Several responses to this blogpost indicated that young women first learned about the term rape culture on Facebook and other online platforms (Rentschler, 2014). This suggests that online sites may serve as a pedagogical tool and a key resource for feminist education and activist terminology.

The recent student protests regarding rape culture on campuses reflect similar trends in other parts of the world, as feminist bloggers are utilising social media in order to respond to rape culture, and to hold perpetrators and those responsible for practices of rape culture accountable when mainstream media fails to do so (Baer, 2016; Dodge, 2016; Keller,

Mendes, & Ringrose, 2018). Social media is a powerful tool in creating awareness as it connects people from all across the globe (Baer, 2016; Rentschler, 2014). An example of this can be seen in the case of Brock Turner, a Stanford student who was caught in the act of raping an unconscious woman by two exchange students from Sweden. Even though Turner was caught in the act, the Judge presiding over the case only sentenced Turner to 6 months in prison (Levin, 2018). This sparked significant outcry on social media platforms across the globe. Due to the conversation generated on social media platforms, the judge presiding over the case was brought under scrutiny and subsequently dismissed from a future sexual assault case (Levin, 2018).

This incident highlights the power of social media as a tool to raise awareness and generate support to speak out against injustice as well as bring about some form of change. On the other hand, family members and friends of Turner were also able to set up a Facebook page in support of his case. This page demonstrated that there were a number of people who are willing to support Turner, regardless of the evidence presented against him. The statements and responses on this page reflected a rape culture in which the victim was blamed and where the concern was directed towards Turner's tainted reputation and destruction of his future career as a prestigious swimmer (Levin, 2018).

As feminist bloggers and activists are not the only or predominant voices on social media, it is important to understand how others perceive content related to rape culture and sexual assault and how this shapes public opinion. Previous research found that both positive and negative discourses could be useful in shaping public opinion (Anderson, Brossard, Scheufele, Xenos, & Ladwig, 2014).

International research has begun to focus on the role of social media in holding perpetrators of sexual violence accountable (Armstrong & Mahone, 2017; Rentschler, 2014; Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018). A study examining the predictors of individual's social

media usage on willingness to engage in collective action against sexual assault found that women were more likely to engage than men. According to Armstrong and Mahone (2016), social media is an interactive climate that lacks gatekeepers and allows individuals the freedom to create and distribute material. Therefore, it is important to determine how this material is perceived by young adults, as they are considered to be the most frequent users of social media.

A more recent study by Stubbs-Richardson et al. (2018) examined rape culture in the Twitter social media platform through the use of qualitative content analysis to analyse 'tweets' concerning the Torrington and Steubenville Rape trials, as well as the Rehtaeh Parson's story of rape, victimization and suicide. The findings identified instances of rape culture online and indicated that Twitter users engaged in victim-blaming were more likely to have more followers than users who engaged in spreading messages of victim support (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018). Furthermore, the study demonstrated that rape culture is an aspect of social media, and data concerning rape culture can be readily accessed and studied.

The rape culture movement has also received various critiques. According to Young (2015) the 'rape culture' myth must be challenged and dismantled before a discussion about campus sexual culture can take place. In an attempt to explore the issue, (Zaleski et al., 2016) conducted a study in which they explored the presence of rape culture on social media forums. Their findings indicate that rape culture is prominent in social media threads and victim-blaming is the prevailing attitude in which it is expressed (Zaleski et al., 2016).

According to Baym and Boyd (2012) social media mirrors, magnifies and complicates countless aspects of everyday life. Rape culture attitudes and practices online are reflective of attitudes and practices offline. As such, understanding the role of social media in shaping public opinions, attitudes and willingness to speak out against sexual assault can contribute to the facilitation of preventative measures against rape and sexual assault.

In their article, Hart and Mitchell (2015) discuss the potential of social media technologies as ‘technologies of non-violence’ to help address sexual violence, especially in rural communities in South Africa. According to Hart and Mitchell (2015), while there is evidence to suggest that social media technology can be used to inflict harm, as can be seen in cases of cyberbullying and the distribution of content showcasing sexual violence, it can also be used to as a platform of empowerment and information. The Steubenville rape case is an example of how social media can be used to both inflict harm and address sexual violence (Pennington & Birthisel, 2016; Rentschler, 2014). The assault of the victim was recorded through pictures and video footage that were taken by the perpetrators as well as witnesses to the assault, which was subsequently shared online (Pennington & Birthisel, 2016). While these images may perpetuate ideas of violence on women’s bodies, it also served to provide a body of evidence for the trial against the perpetrators.

Hart and Mitchell (2015) also discuss the various ways in which social media is being used to provide information. According to these authors (2015), social media technologies are being used in sub-Saharan Africa to communicate AIDS-related health information such as, reminding patients to take medication, and providing emotional support to children orphaned by AIDS. Furthermore, public health organisations are increasing their use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to connect with the youth and provide them with information regarding sexual and reproductive health (Hart & Mitchell, 2015).

Additionally, social media platforms are being used by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and feminist activists’ communities such as Woman Action Media (WAM) who are using social media platforms to create an active community of knowledge and interpersonal connection. Social media technologies are also being used to provide a safety network for women. Sites such as Hollaback! (www.ihollaback.org) makes use of mobile apps and the internet to construct street harassment reporting databases that are active

in 36 countries, including South Africa (Hart & Mitchell, 2015). As can be seen from the above examples, there is an emerging body of work to draw on. However, there is still a lack of research investigating the potential of social media technologies to address sexual violence (Hart & Mitchell, 2015).

The proliferation of studies on rape culture, social media and internet activism is on the increase (Armstrong & Mahone, 2017; Dodge, 2016; Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017; Peters & Besley, 2018; Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018; Zaleski et al., 2016).

2.4. Theoretical Framework

The aim of the current study is to explore how rape culture discourses in the context of South African campuses emerge in social media forums. The goal is to understand how language is actively used to understand and construct the rape culture phenomenon. As such, a postmodern feminist framework was chosen as it involves challenging dominant knowledge claims, especially those that suggest a universal ‘truth’ exists which can be seen as ahistorical and stable (Enns, 2010).

Due to the rapid development of information technology (IT) during the 1970s, scholars and social scientists have turned towards understanding how these technologies may influence social interaction and identities (Ratliff, 2006). In the decades that followed researchers are still concerned with exploring questions related to gender and identity construction online (Ratliff, 2006). Some have turned to feminist standpoint theories, which emphasises the differences between men and women’s experiences in electronic spaces, to explore those issues. However, researchers have argued that postmodern feminist theory is more accurate in explaining the practices of electronic communication and behaviour, and is more suited to the attainment of feminist political goals (Ratliff, 2006).

Through a postmodern feminist framework concepts such as reality and identity are socially constructed and embedded in social relationships and history and perpetuated

through language and power. By applying this framework to the current study, it is argued that social media offers a space where people from different backgrounds, identities and social-political histories are able to communicate on the subject of rape culture on campus. The communication that occurs in these spaces can either reinforce the dominant socially constructed view of rape culture or it can challenge it, through the use of language (Zaleski et al., 2016). In other words the ways in which people talk about rape culture on social media can either perpetuate the hegemonic language and power found within a patriarchal society which aims to undermine women and reinforce male sexual aggression; or it can challenge the current dominant narrative and bring new information to light thereby deconstructing the dominant ways of framing reality and associated binary categories (Enns, 2010)

The constitution of knowledge from a postmodern feminist framework differs from traditional Enlightenment conceptions of epistemology. Firstly, feminists reject the notion that knowledge can only be acquired through a knowing subject and a known object as it is based on the assumption that only men can be the subjects, and, consequently, the knowers. Secondly, postmodernists reject the opposition of both subjects and objects and the notion that there is only one way for knowledge to be constituted (Hekman, 2013). Therefore, engagement with an epistemology from a postmodern feminist position does not entail the formulation of a replacement epistemology, but rather an explanation of the discursive practices by which human beings gain an understanding of their common world (Enns, 2010; Hekman, 2018).

For this study, I utilised a postmodern feminist framework drawing from the works of Susan Brownmiller, Pumla Gqola (2015) and Judith Butler as a foundation. As previously mentioned, Brownmiller (1975) pioneered the concept of a 'rape culture'. From a postmodern feminist framework, the concept of 'rape culture' is constructed, and its meaning can thus be subject to change with the passing of time. Brownmiller (1975) stated the importance of

recognising that rape has a history, and through the tools of historical analysis we can better understand our current condition. It is important to draw on the historical development of the concept of rape culture to better understand the usefulness of the concept in contemporary narratives. It has been more than 40 years since Brownmiller first published her book and it has not been out of print since. Regardless, the message behind her book seemed lost until recently. The rise of hashtag movements served to refocus attention towards the subject. There is a need to unpack why, after all these years, Brownmiller's work seems more relevant than ever? In essence, Brownmiller's book focuses majorly on the American and western context. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that while the spread of her message on social media seems to address a universal rape culture, in reality, there may be aspects of the rape culture framework that are experienced and expressed differently in other contexts. For this reason, I also drew on the works of Gqola (2015), who describes a rape culture within the South African context through a political, historical and socio-cultural lens. Similarly, the works of Judith Butler was widely perceived as ground-breaking due to her revolutionary ideas regarding gender performance and the connections between the sex and gender (Butler, 1999, 2004).

This framework was appropriately applied to the current study as it explored how rape culture is socially constructed on an online platform through discussion and debate, baring in mind how the different lived experiences of the participants influenced their 'truths'. Furthermore, the ways in which people discuss the rape culture protests on social media is indicative of how language can be used to either perpetuate rape myths and rape culture narratives or, it can allow people the power and freedom to challenge these narratives by bringing new information and experiences to light. In this framework, the focus was not placed on the perceptions of only women or only men, as we need to consider gender as a spectrum. The goal of postmodern feminism is not to privilege feminine epistemologies;

rather it is based on the understanding that there are many truths which are privileged along gendered lines (Hekman, 2013). By only focusing on women, one could be in danger of leaving out the experiences of individuals who identify within the non-binary and queer categories. An individual who does not identify as a biological female, but still represents qualities constructed as feminine is still repressed by the same patriarchal language.

Postmodern feminism is not concerned with the search for a universal female standpoint, but rather emphasises the ways in which meaning is invented, structured, and renegotiated, and how people with power and authority maintain control over those meanings (Enns, 2010). Therefore, this study focuses on how discourse is used to construct meanings of rape culture on a social media platform, in which people who ascribe to different lived experiences and identities have access to, and participate in.

2.5. Conclusion

There is a dearth of literature focused on the role of social media and rape culture. This chapter presents an overview of the available literature regarding, GBV in South African, society sexual assault on college campuses and social media and rape culture. The literature shows that rape culture in South Africa has evolved out of the country's colonial and apartheid history, and continues to be influenced by gender inequality. The majority of studies available on rape and sexual assault on campus are predominantly quantitative studies. These studies majorly focus on factors which influence students' rape myth acceptance and bystander intervention, as these have been demonstrated to correlate with sexual assault. Factors which influence rape myth beliefs and bystander intervention are not innate, but are products of the individual's environment and socialisation. This supports the notion of a rape culture. Studies have shown that social media is increasingly used by young people to mobilise support for social movements, and can be used to create safety networks and create awareness around sexual health. The literature concludes that rape culture is

present within South African societies and university campuses, and provides evidence to suggest that social media technologies may be used to address the problem of sexual violence on campuses.



CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will entail a discussion of the methodology that was used in conducting this study. The aim of this study was to explore the digital discourse of rape culture online, and how students make sense of rape culture through their engagement on Facebook. Therefore, for the purpose of this study an exploratory design with a constructionist strategy of inquiry was used as this paradigm is centred on the assumption that meaning is constructed by humans as they engage in the world they interpret (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Furthermore, the way in which humans make sense of their world is based on their historical and social experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

This approach is aligned with a postmodern feminist framework, in that it allows for the exploration of how participants understand and make sense of rape culture. Following this, a qualitative research approach was adopted to explore the aims of the study. Naturalistic observation and online focus group discussions were incorporated as methods of gathering data.

3.1. Research Design

This research study adopted a qualitative approach in order to explore the digital discourse of rape culture online, and how this plays a role in influencing students' perceptions about rape culture. Unlike quantitative research, a qualitative approach allows for the exploration of subjectivity and the authenticity of human experience (Silverman, 2013). Furthermore, while many studies investigating rape or sexual assault on college campuses used quantitative methods, fewer studies used qualitative methods to explore students' experiences with social media and how this shapes their perceptions and opinions about rape culture as a broader societal problem. As such, the use of a qualitative method of inquiry is not only suited to the aims and theoretical framework of the study, but also serves to add to

the body of knowledge by uncovering the ways in which social media is used by students to discuss, challenge and define issues of rape culture on campus and society.

3.2. Sampling and Participants

The first phase of data collection involved naturalistic observation that was conducted between 1st- 20th of August 2017 and required no participants. Only public posts that were posted between 11 and 30 April, with a comment thread of 10 or more comments were included in the analysis (Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015; Zaleski et al., 2016). Posts that generated more than 10 comments were collected in order to observe how different people discuss and debate matters relating to rape culture on campus as well as their reactions to people speaking out against rape culture. According to Lijadi and Van Schalkwyk (2015) posts with more than 10 comments are appropriate to observe discussion among people online. The comment threads on Facebook are part of the public domain. Therefore, it was not necessary to obtain consent.

The second phase of data collection involved the use of online focus groups. Participants were recruited online through a process of snowball sampling. On August 28 2017, a public invitation to participate in the study was posted on my personal Facebook page (See Appendix D). In this post, I requested people to share the information and I ‘tagged’ 19 of my Facebook friends. This created more exposure for my post firstly by making the people I tagged aware of the study which prompted some of them to share the information, and secondly, it allowed the post to quickly reach people who were not on my friend list, but who were friends with the people I tagged.

Additionally, I sent emails and personal messages to the Facebook accounts of the Student Representative Council (SRC) of five South African universities. However, only one university responded by asking for the study invitation to be sent through. Despite providing them with the information, the invitation was never posted on their social media pages. One

other University responded by directing me to their transformation unit. However, there seems to be a lack of communication between the two, as the transformation unit directed me back to the SRC unit. Furthermore, I sent a similar request to student humour pages such as *UJ Humour* and *UCT Just Kidding*. However, I was informed that I would need to pay to advertise on these pages.

A total of 17 participants were recruited to take part in this study. Only one participant was unable to take part in the focus group. The participant in question signed the consent forms and was interested in taking part in the study. However, when the focus group commenced the participant was unreachable. After the data collection phase was completed the participant apologised for the lack of communication and enquired about their participation in the focus group. I thanked the participant for their interest. However, I had to inform them that the focus groups were completed.

The first two focus groups consisted of five participants in each group, while the third and final focus group consisted of six participants. All participants were either currently registered as students at a South African university, or they graduated within the last 2 years (2015/2016). I decided to include participants who graduated in the 2015/2016 cycle, as they were students at the time of the #Endrapeculture protests, and would, therefore, have valuable insights. Furthermore, all participants had a valid Facebook account, spoke English or Afrikaans as their first language, and were between the ages of 18-25. While there were older postgraduate and undergraduate students that would have experienced the #Endrapeculture protest, it was decided that the cut off age of 25 should be used. This decision was based on the theory of emerging adulthood, which suggests that this period does not simply represent a transition into adulthood, rather it is a distinct period in an individual's life course, characterised by change and exploration of possible life directions (Arnett, 2000).

3.3. Procedures

Phase 1: Facebook was chosen as a suitable site to conduct the natural observation of the comment section, as these comments were available in the public domain, and the process would complement the subsequent focus groups that would be conducted on Facebook. Considering that the posts were public, there was no need to request access to online communities, nor was there any need to request consent (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018; Zaleski et al., 2016).

Phase 2: Potential focus group Participants indicating interest in the study were asked to provide their email addresses in order to receive further information. All interested individuals received an email explaining the nature of the study, the rules concerning confidentiality, and my contact information with the assurance that they may ask for any additional information and clarification should they require it. Furthermore, the email included the following attachments; an information sheet, focus group confidentiality binding form and a biographical questionnaire (See Appendix A-C), which potential participants were asked to complete and send back via email should they wish to proceed with the study. In total, 20 emails were sent, with three individuals declining the offer to participate. After returning the consent forms, the participants were randomly allocated to one of the three focus groups. The focus groups were not conducted simultaneously. As such, the participants who were allocated to the second and third focus groups were informed of their placement and were provided with the preliminary start dates of their assigned group.

3.4. Data Collection

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the study, two methods of data collection were utilised.

Phase 1: The first phase of data collection was aimed at exploring the presence of rape culture on social media. In order to accomplish this, natural observation was conducted

on the comment section of Facebook posts relating to the April 2016 #Endrapeculture student protest. As previously mentioned, the student protests were instrumental in raising awareness of issues around rape culture on campus. Analysing the comment thread on posts relating to these protests provided insight into how people responded to the protest, and how people engaged with others to debate issues regarding the protest and the problem of rape. Therefore, these were subsequently analysed using content analysis to determine the presence of rape culture within this digital discourse.

During the first phase of data collection, news stories and public posts relating to the 2016 #Endrapeculture protests were searched for on Facebook using the hashtags; #RURferenceList, #nakedprotest, #Endrapeculture and #chapter212. Posts meeting the previously mentioned inclusion criteria were copied into a data sheet along with the comments. The data sheet indicated the type of post (i.e. personal, news report, video etc.), the date posted, the date accessed, the number of shares and reactions (Facebook allows users to react to a post by either using the 'like', 'love', 'laugh', 'wow', 'sad' or 'angry' reactions) and the number of comments. During the data cleaning the comments were copied into a new document, formatted and de-identified by deleting the profile pictures, surnames and any other personal information of the commenters.

Traditionally, ethical requirements call for participants to be provided with pseudonyms (Bryman, 2012). However, the large number of commenters under each post made this an impractical option. Instead, I de-identified the commenters for the quotes used in the interpretation of findings by numbering them and using either M or F to designate the male or female gender respectively (e.g. User 1, F). Following this, the new document was entered into the Atlas ti program to be analysed. The information in the datasheet was used purely for organisational purposes and was not necessary for the analysis. For the content analysis, the interest resided in emerging themes of a digital discourse of rape culture in the

comment thread as it related to the campus protests, rather than the people posting the comments. A total of 590 comments were collected from 9 Facebook posts in August 2017.

Phase 2: The data collected during phase one aided the preparation for phase two, which was aimed at exploring how students engage with each other to discuss issues of rape culture in an online platform. Data collection took place from September 2017 to October 2017. Three asynchronous focus groups consisting of 16 participants in total were conducted using the Facebook secret group application. According to Lijadi and Van Schalkwyk (2015), online focus groups produce large amounts of data, as the participants are able to reflect on the conversation and use the platform to formulate well-thought-out responses. Therefore, it is argued that it is appropriate, and perhaps preferable to use 5-6 participants per focus rather than the traditional recommendation of eight or more (Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015). Indeed, the challenges of conducting an online focus group are different than the traditional focus groups.

For the purpose of this study, it was deemed more appropriate to conduct the focus groups on a social media platform rather than using traditional focus groups. It would have been possible to conduct traditional focus groups and ask participants to discuss issues around rape culture, their social media usage behaviours or whether they use social media to share information regarding rape and sexual assault on campus. That being said, it would have sufficed to conduct a study exploring students' opinions on rape culture. However, as it were, this study is aimed specifically at exploring the unique interaction that occurs in an online platform, and how this type of interaction shapes the way students engage with issues such as rape culture. There is enough evidence to suggest that while social media may reflect everyday behaviours, the ways in which people present themselves or communicate with others is altered as screen communication allows people to reflect, retype and edit (Turkle, 2004). Therefore, it can be assumed that having students discuss their thoughts and opinions

concerning rape culture in an online platform would yield different results compared to real-time discussions.

Once all the participants were allocated, I proceeded to create the first Secret Facebook Focus Group (SFFG). The participants assigned to the first group were asked to accept a Facebook friend request from myself in order to become a member of the group. It should be noted that the participants were not required to accept a friend request from the other members in the group. A feature of the Facebook secret group application allows the admin to personalise the group space. Therefore, I added a cover photo (See Appendix E) in order to make the group space more welcoming. Following this, I opened up the group discussion by posting a welcoming message (See Appendix E) in which I thanked the members for joining and explained some of the 'house rules' of the group. I made it clear that the members should remain respectful of one another, and that they should think of the group as a safe space to share their opinions.

The participants were informed that the SFFG would be active for a one week period. The SFG was asynchronous, thereby allowing participants to respond whenever they were available. However, for the purpose of facilitating a group discussion, I requested that participants suggest certain times that everyone could try to be online. The discussion progressed as each member introduced themselves and agreed on a time in which everyone could try to be online. In order to facilitate discussion, a question was posted from a preliminary interview schedule (See Appendix F) a few minutes before the agreed upon time. Other questions came forth based on the points raised by the participants. At the end of the week, I posted a farewell message and encouraged participants to raise any other questions they may have. The participants were informed that the SFG would remain open so that I may present them with feedback from the study.

Using the memos and reflections from the first focus group, I was able to prepare for the remaining two SFGs. The remaining SFGs were conducted in a similar manner as the first SFG. In order to maintain consistency, I used the same cover picture, opening message, and closing message in the second and third focus groups. After the focus groups were completed, the information from each group was copied into three separate word documents to be cleaned by removing the participant's profile pictures and changing the names to pseudonyms and analysed. The Facebook secret group application was successfully used to conduct focus group discussions in a previous study and proved to be advantageous in the current study (Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015).

3.5. Data Analysis

This study incorporated two phases of data collection. As such, it was deemed appropriate to utilise two separate methods of data analysis which aligned with the aims and objectives of the study.

3.5.1. Qualitative Content Analysis

In essence, content analysis describes a process of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages (Cole, 1988; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Initially, it was used as a method to analyse hymns, newspapers, magazines, articles, advertisements and political speeches in the 19th century (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). However, contemporary use of the technique has become increasingly popular in the fields of psychology, sociology, communication studies and journalism. As a research method, content analysis is used as a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena, with the purpose of making replicable and valid inferences from data, in order to provide new insights and a guide for practical action (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008)

The aim of this study was to explore the digital discourse of rape culture online, in order to add to current conceptualised frameworks to build a more comprehensive description

of rape culture. Therefore, a deductive content analysis approach was utilised with the purpose of retesting online discourses of rape culture in a different context (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Phase 1: The comments were extracted from Facebook posts; therefore, no transcription was necessary. The data from the comment section was initially cleaned by clearing any personal information and formatting the document to be analysed in Atlas ti.

Phase 2: The second phase of data analysis involved the construction of an unconstrained categorisation matrix based on previous data. However, there are few studies that have specifically explored rape culture discourse on social media platforms. As such, the information from the aforementioned studies was used in conjunction with other studies delineating the concept of rape culture in order to develop the categorisation matrix. The initial categories included; victim-blaming, perpetrator support, survivor support, statements about the Law and society, and the presence of a patriarchy. Using an unconstrained categorisation matrix allowed for inductive principles to filter through the analysis process, by viewing the categories in the matrix as fluid rather than fixed (Cole, 1988; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In other words, while I had a predetermined set of categories by which to code the data, these were open to change in interpretation based on the information that emerged from the comment threads. Additionally, this approach was more aligned with the postmodern feminist framework of this study, by recognising that current concepts and categories of rape culture are not static, not universally true.

Phase 3: After cleaning the data and developing the categorisation matrix, I immersed myself in the data by reading and re-reading the collected data. This allowed me to become familiar with the context of the data and gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the comments.

Phase 4: The data were coded manually using Atli ti as the qualitative analysis tool. The first round of coding involved a process of developing conceptual codes in order to describe the data. Following this, codes were further developed and refined. The refined codes were then categorised using the matrix. Based on the emerging codes, some of the categories were redefined in order to reflect the data.

3.5.2. Thematic Decomposition Analysis

The SFFGs were analysed using the thematic decomposition method. Based on the theoretical framework, aims and objectives of this study, the thematic decomposition method was deemed as appropriate, as it allowed me to trace how students subjectively position themselves and use discourse to engage with others in order to make sense of, and construct rape culture as a social phenomenon (Stenner, 1993; Ussher & Mooney-Somers, 2000). Essentially, it describes a process of thematic analysis which incorporates principles of discourse analysis in order to gain a better understanding of how subject positions contribute to the construction of social phenomena (Stenner, 1993). Therefore, a thematic decomposition involves a close reading of selected texts in an attempt to separate it into coherent themes or stories, and subsequently tracing subject positions of individual participants and how these positions impact their engagement in the group and the constructions of rape culture (Stenner, 1993). As the focus groups were conducted online, there was no need to transcribe the data. The process of the thematic decomposition analysis closely followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis:

Phase 1: The focus group data was first copied from the Facebook platform and the text was pasted into a word document. This was done to prevent the participants Facebook profile pictures from copying over. Following this, the data was cleaned to remove all personal information and to change the participant's names to pseudonyms. In order to familiarise myself with the data I read and re-read the focus group discussions. Furthermore, I

read the reflexive journal notes I kept during data collection, as well as the private conversations between me and some of the participants via the Facebook messenger app.

Phase 2: The focus group data was entered into the Atlas ti program to be analysed. As with a traditional thematic analysis, I first created conceptual codes from the data which were refined after the second round of coding. Subsequently, I grouped the codes into categories, which were then developed into themes.

Phase 3: Once the themes were developed I reviewed the codes and the ways in which they interlink with the identified themes through creating a visual representation of the data (Bryman, 2012). From this representation, the final themes were selected and presented to my supervisor for discussion. The themes were further validated by linking the context of the findings to relevant literature.

Phase 4: In the final phase I attempted the thematic decomposition of the SFFGs by selecting dominant discursive themes (Stenner, 1993). The decision on which discursive themes to choose was also based on the content analysis of the comment section in order to trace a richer understanding of rape culture narratives as a social phenomenon. By doing this, I was able to present a reading of how participants in the SFFG understood and collectively discussed rape culture, and link these themes to the broader rape culture discourse as it relates to the 2016 #Endrapeculture protests.

3.6. Trustworthiness of the study

In order for trustworthiness to be established, four criteria need to be met namely; credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Bryman, 2012). Credibility refers to ensuring the study measures what it is supposed to. In order to ensure credibility, I followed a process of sustained engagement with the data from the comment section and focus group discussions, and linked the commonalities which emerged from the two data sets to relevant literature. Furthermore, I utilised research methods which have been established

and used successfully in other contexts (Bryman, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, I familiarised myself with the context of rape culture in South Africa and the #EndRapeCulture campaigns by reflecting on my own experiences and engagement with the protest culture and following relevant Facebook pages. Transferability was achieved by keeping documents detailing the processes followed during data collection, in order to provide a thick description of the steps followed, as well as detailing the phenomena of rape culture in this context and previous contexts, so that judgements can be made regarding the extent to which the conclusions in this study can be transferred to other times, situations or people (Bryman, 2012; Lincoln & Guba., 1985). However, due to the qualitative nature of this study, the findings should be understood in relation to the context of the participants.

Additionally, the findings of the thematic decomposition analysis should be regarded as a reading of the data rather than an interpretation of findings. According to Stenner (1993), an interpretation can be regarded with approximate accuracy, which is essentially assessed against the authorial intent of the speaker, or against an external truth. This notion is problematised in the context of a postmodern feminist framework. It is preferable to judge a reading by how useful it is (Stenner, 1993). Lastly, dependability was ensured by engaging with my supervisor and having her closely examine the process and outcome of the findings and study (Bryman, 2012).

3.6.1. Reflexivity

According to (Mason, 2002) reflexivity is the act of thinking critically about what you are doing, and why, confronting and challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape the way you do research.

I am a 25 year old female from a multi-cultural, multi-religious, middle-income background. I am currently completing my postgraduate degree and internship at a South African university. From the conception of this study, I had to be aware of how my

experiences and biases related to the study. As previously stated, this study was inspired by my observations of the #Endrapeculture protests. More precisely, it was inspired by my personal experiences of learning about concepts such as rape culture, feminism or patriarchy on social media and how this subsequently informed my perceptions, feelings and experience of the protests and my engagement with others.

When the hashtag campaigns first started in 2015, I enrolled as postgraduate as a sociology honours student at Stellenbosch University. The coursework we engaged in that year was centred on critical thinking and social theories. As such, I became more familiar with the works of Fanon, Foucault, De Certeau and Du Bois which shaped my research interests concerning race and gender. It was also during this time that the #OpenStellenbosch movement started and encouraged by my supervisor, I attended some of their initial meetings. While I never became a member of #OpenStellenbosch my experiences with the group, coupled with my newfound academic interest, influenced the ways in which I experienced and talked about the 2015 hashtag campaigns. I found myself liking and following pages on Facebook which provided me with information regarding the various student protests, and the ways in which others talked about and responded to the movement. I recall being frustrated and angry at the ways some of my peers responded to Facebook posts concerning the various public discussions organised by #OpenStellenbosch, as well as the response to the protest actions on campus.

Furthermore, I was taken aback by the ways in which the media portrayed the student protests across South Africa without considering the context within the respective universities. Many people contacted me to ask about the protest and were often shocked when I told them I supported the Fees Must Fall Movement and that the only violence on campus was what the protesters experienced at the hands of the Stellenbosch private security detail.

During that time, I did not consider myself a feminist. Not because I felt there was anything wrong with feminism, rather it was not something I was very familiar with at an academic or personal level. Reflecting back, I realised that my academic background was dominated by the narratives of predominantly male theorists, and while theories of Fanon and Du Bois allowed me to engage with racial inequalities, I had very little information to frame a feminist narrative. I started reading Butler to support the findings of my thesis. However, even then my engagement with feminism as a position and identity was surface level. It was only toward the end of last year that I started seeing more content of feminist-related issues on my Facebook page. This was due to the fact that one of my classmates often shared information from feminist pages on Facebook.

The messages behind the posts were a revelation. I remember reading that rape is more about power than it is about sex. This notion has eluded me for many years yet, as I took this information in I could feel the truth in it because I have lived it. Brownmiller (1975) argues that rape seeps into our childhood consciousness, indoctrinating women into a victim mentality. The first time I was exposed to the word 'rape' I was about 6 years old. My mom took my (white, male) friend and I to get a movie after school. We were in the back seat of my mom's car and I was teasing him about one thing or another when he got so angry with me that he threatened to rape me. Not knowing what the term meant, I continued to provoke him. My mother's reaction was completely shocked/outraged and she asked us if we knew what that meant. He did not know what it entailed, only that it was something terrible that happens to females. Even though I have never been sexually assaulted, I have experienced living in a rape culture.

Therefore, my lived experience resonates with the feminist messages I read on social media. It validates the experiences I have had by giving it a name that can be shared by other women. I started following the pages to receive more information. By the time the

#Endrapeculture protests started, I was more informed concerning the matter of rape culture and could appreciate the stance the protesters were taking. However, engaging with the topic on Facebook made me realise that not everyone sees the protests the way I do, and not everyone seems to understand the problem of rape culture. I wondered why some people were supportive of the protest while others were not? Why could some people accept that rape culture was real, while others could not? It was through this questioning that the current study was framed.

In line with the postmodern feminist framework, I recognise that my identity, as well as my previous experiences and background, influenced my way of thinking regarding the protests, as well as issues around rape culture. Furthermore, while there may be voices in the comment section and focus group that I identify with, our ideas of framing the problem of rape culture originate from different spaces of experience. Regardless of these differences, my goal is not to unearth a universal truth of rape culture, rather it is to understand how we use and understand language to construct ideas around rape culture. In doing so, I needed to be fully aware of my position as a cis-gender female student of colour that has an interest in issues around race and gender.

Throughout the research process, I felt the need to constantly write in my reflection journal in order to be aware and make sense of my feelings, especially while analysing the comment section data. While reading the comments, there were times I felt completely frustrated by the commenters who insulted the protesters or who did not pay attention to the issue of rape culture being raised. I believe my frustration is related to the fact that I have been aware of these issues for some time and it baffles me that others seem unable to grasp a concept which, to me, seems so powerful. However, I tried to be cognisant of the fact that the comments were made by members of the public whose perspective of the protests, and even sexual assault in South Africa, are framed by their own set of values, beliefs and experiences.

On the other hand, I also felt waves of triumph as I read all the comments in support of the protesters and who spoke out against rape culture. Even though I recognise that there is no universal truth to rape culture, those comments reflected that there is a possibility to change dominant understandings of rape and sexual assault in order to improve the quality of life of those who continue to be oppressed by these narratives.

As I continue the process of writing this thesis during women's month, I turn back to this section in reflection. The more I read and engage with this work the more I think about my experience of rape culture dating back to my childhood days. These moments of reflections occur too often for me not to take a moment to unpack how this influences the way I interpret the findings and write the subsequent conclusions of this work. At this point, I feel a sense of immersion in my work that is not solely related to the literature I consume on a daily basis.

As previously mentioned, I am a frequent user of Facebook which served as inspiration for this study. Recently, I have observed more posts on Facebook relating to GBV, women helping other women, rape culture and calling out sexism. I recognise that this could be related to the fact that the people on my 'Friends' list are the type of people to post content like this. However, aside from the increased frequency of these posts, I am also observing elevated elements of righteous anger and a 'we've had enough' attitude. Perhaps it is the spirit of women's month that inspires these posts, or perhaps the amalgamation of student protests increased reports of violence against children and women, distrust in organisations such as the African National Congress Women's League and the rise of international movements such as #TimesUp, and #MenAreTrash.

A recent post on Facebook read like a public service announcement to all young girls under 18 to stay away from older men due to the inherent toxicity of the relationship. This post made me think of a friend I had in high school. We were about 14 at the time when she

started 'seeing' an older man from our neighbourhood. He was ten years older than her and he had a girlfriend. I remember her telling us about the details of this relationship (which was mostly physical) during break time. I remember us laughing with her, encouraging her, giving her ideas to surprise him and putting down his girlfriend, because that's what friends do right? I also remember that a tiny part of me felt that there was something very wrong and dangerous about this situation on a variety of levels, but I kept quiet. I did not want to upset my friend or seem 'uncool'. So I went along and followed the social script I thought was laid out for me. Looking back now, I wish that our 14 year old selves had access to the content that floods my Facebook wall on a daily basis.

Perhaps that little part inside of me would have felt valid, giving me the courage to say what I really feel. Perhaps my friends would have still thought I was being 'uncool', but Bell Hooks was correct when she said our silence is complicity (Gqola, 2015). I believe that being able to access and relate to the type of feminist discourse that we see on social media sites today is important because young women realise they are not isolated in their thoughts, feelings and opinions. Perhaps my friends would have still thought I was being 'uncool' for saying such things, but speaking up and having the knowledge to frame my unrealised feelings on the matter could have led us to engage in more constructive ways. This is why I am interested in this work. I am aware that this thesis will not lead to some life-changing revelations, but I hope to better understand the ways in which we can facilitate all too necessary conversations around GBV and rape culture.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research and Ethics committee. As this study involved collecting data on social media, ethical decision-making surrounding was based upon the guidelines proposed by The Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) (2012) as well as the British Psychological

Society's (BPS) Inter-Mediated Research Document (2017). Furthermore, I read extensively on the Facebook privacy policy, as this was the social media platform from which the data was collected, and I consulted with my supervisor, who has previous experience with qualitative online research.

The current study utilised two methods of collecting data on Facebook. As such, the ethical decisions regarding both methods were carefully considered. With regards to the natural observation of the comment section of posts concerning the #Endrapeculture protests, the comments were already posted in a public domain and could be read and accessed by any person with a Facebook account.

According to the BPS guidelines, observation of public behaviour can only take place in situations where those observed would expect to be observed by strangers (BPS, 2017). According to the Facebook privacy policy, users are able to control who is able to view the information they post or share. When a Facebook user shares a status update or other form of media, they are able to use the audience selector tool to determine if the post will be shared with friends or with the public (Facebook, n.d.). If the user chooses to share the information publically, anyone on or off Facebook can see the post. However, users who comment on other posts are subject to that user's privacy settings. In other words, people who comment on public profiles are visible in the comment thread, meaning that other users can engage and respond.

Additionally, users have the option of deleting or editing comments after it has been posted. According to the BPS guidelines, it is not always easy to determine whether people perceive online spaces as 'private' or 'public' (BPS, 2017). I argue that those who commented on the #Endrapeculture posts were aware of the public nature of the posts as they interacted with people in the comment section that were not their 'Facebook friends'. The comments that they make are perceived in the public. However, each commenter can

simultaneously choose to comment on public posts, whilst still maintaining their desired level of privacy concerning the visibility of their profiles and personal posts. Therefore, the natural observation of the comment section did not require consent, as the information was publically available.

The posts concerning the #Endrapeculture protests were not posted in Facebook communities. As such, there was no need to ask permission to gain access to the content. However, in accordance with the aforementioned ethical guidelines, I ensured that the personal information of the commenters was removed during the data cleaning process by excluding the user's profile pictures, surnames or any other identifying information. Exemplary quotes were included in the findings section in order to clearly demonstrate the themes. Pseudonyms were provided for the quotes that were used, and quotes by the same person were attributed with the same pseudonym. This was done in lieu of referring to commenters as 'participant' in order to provide context. Furthermore, the times and dates of the comments were not disclosed, thereby decreasing the chances of the comments being tracked.

According to the (BPS, 2017) paraphrasing should be considered, especially in cases where not paraphrasing may cause harm. However, it was decided to use the direct quotes of the participants, as not doing so would decrease the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Gibaldi & Monk-Turner, 2017). Before deciding to use the direct quotes, I copied each quote into the Facebook and Google search engines in order to determine the traceability of each quote. In each case, the results came back negative. Additionally, the nature of the comments is not perceived to be of risk to others or the original commenter, rather it forms part of a debate which others have already seen and responded to. However, for publication purposes, the quotes will be paraphrased (AoIR, 2012; BPS, 2017).

The SFFGs were based on a previous study which utilised the same method. In terms of the Facebook privacy settings, the secret group is only visible and accessible to current members in the group (Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015). Participants were provided with an informed consent sheet which they were asked to sign and return. Once the participants returned the consent forms, I sent them a friend request. This was necessary in order to add the participants to the group. However, I made it clear that the participants are free to 'unfriend' me once the study was complete. It should be noted that the participants only needed to accept a friend request from myself, as I acted as the admin of the group. As previously mentioned, it was not necessary to accept requests from other group members, thereby allowing participants to retain their desired level of privacy, in accordance with their preferred Facebook privacy settings (Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015).

As group administrator, only I had the ability to add members to the group. However, participants were free to remove themselves from the group if they wished. Furthermore, participants were informed that they were able to quit the study at any moment without repercussions. Unlike traditional focus groups, the Facebook messenger application allowed me the opportunity to send individual communications to participants. Therefore, I was able to speak with participants during the course of the discussion to ensure that they felt comfortable.

After the focus groups were completed, the data was copied into a Microsoft word document. In the cleaning and formatting process, the participant's profile pictures were deleted and they were provided with pseudonyms. The exemplary quotes used in the findings section are direct quotes. As with the comment section, it was decided to use direct quotes to maintain the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Furthermore, the secret groups are untraceable by those who do not belong to the group, meaning that the

quotes will be untraceable. However, as previously mentioned, the quotes will be paraphrased for publication purposes (AoIR, 2012; BPS, 2017).

After the completion of the focus groups, I informed the participants that the groups will remain active to them, so that I may use the platform to present them with feedback of the study. However, after feedback has been given the groups will be deleted. All data is saved on my personal laptop in a password protected folder, and can only be accessed by myself.

3.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an outline of the methodology used throughout this study. I adopted a qualitative approach following a constructionist line of inquiry which was aligned with the postmodern feminist framework. Two methods of data collection were used to address the aims and objectives of the study. Firstly, I utilised a method of natural observation of Facebook comment threads relating to the 2016 #Endrapeculture protests. These comments were analysed using a content analysis technique to quantify and describe a rape culture discourse. Secondly, I conducted online SFFG to explore how students understand and discuss rape culture as a collective. The SFFG data were analysed using a thematic decomposition technique.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1. Findings of the study

This chapter discusses the findings from the analysis of the Facebook comments threads relating to reports around the #Endrapeculture protests and the results from the three SFFG. The findings will be presented as two separate sections. The first section will reveal the ways in which people talk about rape culture online, and how this discourse influences the ways in which the problem is dealt with, as well as the implications this has. The second part of the chapter reveals students' perceptions on rape culture, how they engage to make sense of rape culture, and how social media can be used as a pedagogic tool to educate students on rape culture. In the final part of the discussion, the common themes that emerged in both the comment section and SFFG will be linked and discussed.

4.2. Rape culture Discourse in the Comment Section

A total of 590 comments from 9 Facebook posts were coded and analysed. Theoretical saturation was reached at this point, in which no new themes emerged from the data and comments began to seem repetitive (Bryman, 2012). It is important to understand the way we talk about rape culture, or the discourse around rape culture, as this determines how rape culture is perceived, the extent and nature of moral outrage, and which solutions are pursued. Furthermore, this discourse determines to what extent rape culture will be conceptualised as a political, societal, and institutional or health-related problem, and will thus be addressed according to those terms (Gouws, 2015).

The majority of studies exploring the discourse of rape culture on social media platforms focus on comments related to news stories of rape or sexual assault cases (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018; Zaleski et al., 2016). In these studies, rape culture discourse is more easily recognised as there is an identifiable perpetrator and victim. As such, people can comment to either show support to the victim, engage in victim-blaming, or show support for

the perpetrator. A more recent study explored the perception of rape culture on a South Western campus in the United States of America, by exploring social media comments made on a Facebook post reporting on ‘the banner incident’ in which a fraternity house hung signs from their balcony during move-in day. The banners read ‘Rowdy and fun, hope your baby girl is ready for a good time’ and ‘freshman daughter drop off’. The findings of the study revealed that the overall societal attitude towards the banner incident was one of permissiveness and acceptance. This suggests that rape culture exists and is prevalent, and the majority of people who posted comments did not recognise the banners as rape culture; rather it was accepted that the fraternity meant it as a joke (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017).

What is interesting about the Giraldi and Monk-Turner (2017) study, is that a rape culture narrative was still present in the comment section, despite there being no case of sexual assault. There were no explicit narratives concerning victim-blaming or perpetrator support, which seems to suggest society’s permissive attitude toward such behaviour. It was less threatening for most people to believe that the banners were humorous or ‘boys being boys’ rather than recognise the implicit danger behind such attitudes. My study is similar, in that the comment threads analysed are based on reports or personal posts regarding the #Endrapeculture protests. As the following sections will reveal, a rape culture narrative emerges in a different form than it does in studies focusing specifically on reactions to cases of sexual assault, yet it is still recognisable. The findings of my study will be discussed under the broad thematic theme of “Rape Culture Discourse” which is divided into 9 sub-themes namely; Perpetuating victim-blaming; Sexualisation of the body and bodily autonomy; Trivialising rape culture; Gender; Law; Society; Race and culture; University; and Rape or rape culture. Based on the content analysis, perpetuating victim-blaming emerged as the most significant sub-theme (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1.

Content analysis quantifying the representation of the rape culture discourse themes from the 590 comments

Sub-themes	Number of times coded	Percent (%)
Perpetuating victim-blaming	131	25.6
Rape or rape culture	91	17.8
Patriarchy	73	14.3
Race and culture	64	12,5
Sexualisation and bodily autonomy	60	11.7
Trivialising rape culture	60	11.7
Role of universities and law enforcement	33	6.4
TOTAL	512	100

4.2.1. Perpetuating Victim-blaming

In previous studies, victim-blaming emerged in discussions centred on how believable the survivor's accounts were (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017; Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018; Zaleski et al., 2016). In these studies, commenters would point out details surrounding the circumstances in which the assault occurred in order to portray the survivor as an unreliable storyteller that was somehow complicit in their own assault (ex. "she wanted it" or "no1 believes the slut who cried rape") (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018; Zaleski et al., 2016). While the #Endrapeculture protests originated at Rhodes University in response to the university management's lack of action against perpetrators of sexual assault on campus, the message behind protests resonated with students across campuses in South Africa. The

protests grew, not only to call for just treatment against specific perpetrators, but rather to promulgate the idea of rape culture as a problem within university institutions. Therefore, the protests did not call for justice for certain victims or the punishment of certain perpetrators, rather it called for the acknowledgement from the respective universities, students and members of society to recognise the ways in which rape culture permeates daily life, and to call for a change in the way we think about sexual assault and rape (Wazar, 2016).

Victim-blaming is functional, as it serves to uphold the power relations in society by absolving perpetrators from punishment and allowing individuals to socially distance themselves from victims of crime (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018). According to Mardorossian (2014), victim-blaming occurs as a two-fold process in which victims blame themselves for their own assaults, and are routinely blamed by others. The victim-blaming experienced externally reinforces personal victim-blaming, thereby forming a sexual script that is a direct result of the perpetuation of rape myths (Mardorossian, 2014). Consequently, it allows the perpetrators to go unpunished.

The results from this study show that victim-blaming is pervasive in society, and is entrenched in discourse, even when there is no archetypal victim involved. During the #Endrapeculture protests, female students across various campuses marched topless with some carrying sjamboks (whips, which are linked to the apartheid past and are symbolic of fighting back) to show their solidarity with the cause and voice their frustration (Gouws, 2018). Under the #nakedprotest, news rapidly spread concerning the topless women, thereby igniting debates across social media platforms. The comments analysed in the current study revealed discourses which perpetuated victim-blaming.

User 1 (M) Running around topless will only enrage a rapist sexual needs. I don't think this was the best idea ladies...

User 2 (M)and the rapists choose their next victims by breast size...this isnt really helping their cause

User 3 (M) By exposing yourself you are creating more rapists my dear. Would rather demonstrate fully covered to stop any potential rapist. As it stands you are very inviting

*User 4 (M) some of them rapist were busy playing *my mother told me to choose that 1 but I want the best of them all" pointing so if any of them fine ones get raped don't be astonished coz they asking for it*

In these comments, the protesters are critiqued and cautioned for walking around topless, as this may incite rapists to choose their next victims. The nature of these comments read as less empathic in tone and more condescending in their warning. It is interesting to note that these comments were majorly made by male commenters. This reflects findings from previous studies which show that male participants are less empathetic towards victims and more likely to endorse rape culture myths than female participants (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017; Morales, 2015; Phipps, Ringrose, Renold, & Jackson, 2018). Another comment claims to understand the notion behind victim-blaming, yet continues to perpetuate the narrative by claiming that protesting topless is similar to protesting paedophilia with naked children.

User 5 (M) Ladies I understand that 'breasts' have been objectified and that you should be able to wear whatever you want and not feel worried about being sexually harassed or worse - raped! But honestly...protesting against rape by marching and singing topless around town is the same as protesting against pedophiles while marching young kids naked down a street! #justsaying

Victim-blaming is an integral part of rape culture discourse as it relates to the normalisation of male sexual violence in society. This narrative suggests that we are taught that sexual violence and male sexual aggression is the norm. Therefore, women are expected

to anticipate sexual violence against them and should subsequently enforce behaviours and actions to avoid such an encounter.

Essentially the argument follows that if women enter a situation where there is a strong chance they might be assaulted, they should avoid engaging in behaviours that may increase that chance. However, the fallacy of this argument is revealed when women, children and men become victims of sexual assault in circumstances where sexual violence is not anticipated. In these cases, the victim-blaming narrative becomes incompatible. For example, news stories reporting on cases where victims were subject to rape and subsequently murdered are free of comments regarding the victim's circumstances and are rather replaced with calls for justice and the perpetuation of narratives portraying rape and rapists as senseless deviants needing to be kept away from society. This disjunction is related to the "just-world hypothesis", a cognitive bias that an individual receives morally fair outcomes and consequences based on their behaviours and actions (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018). Just world beliefs (JWB) derive from people's desire to live in a world that is just and fair, thereby perpetuating a 'you reap what you sow' mentality (Landström, Strömwall, & Alfredsson, 2016).

In this framework, victims are blamed for their own misfortunes, whether it is related to abuse, sexual assault or poverty (Landström et al., 2016). The comments related to the #nakedprotest implicitly reveal that the protesters should have known better than to march topless in the streets where they may be "inviting" a "potential rapist" to take action. Comments such as these serve to warn the protesters by pointing out that their behaviour might result in them being sexually assaulted, and if this should happen they would have no one to blame but themselves. Furthermore, by describing the "potential rapists" the commenters are reinforcing the notion that rape is faceless, and driven by male sexual needs. Consequently, this leads to the belief that rape is a deviant event that happens to women who

failed to follow societal warnings to keep themselves safe (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018).

In line with JWB, the protesters are seen as violating moral codes of appropriate and acceptable dress. Therefore, they become rape-able.

On the other hand, many commenters defended the protest by explaining the reasoning behind the #nakedprotest, thereby challenging both, directly and indirectly, the victim-blaming narrative.

User 6 (F) What you are saying is the same as saying that we should not protest wearing shorts because this is an invitation for rape

User 7 (F) Stop victim blaming! These protests need to happen so people like you can gain awareness that issue isn't with the victim. Your analogy is a clear indication of this very issue. Why should kids be given the responsibility not to be free or naked if they please so they don't 'provoke' or 'seduce' the monsters? Cause that's what pedophiles and rapists are right? Senseless beasts who can't control themselves so we shift the blame to the victim because they provoked the senseless animalistic being that has no control over themselves? This is what your analogy is communicating to myself and many others

User 8 (F) User 46 there is no such thing as displaying yourself for more rape, that's disgusting. No one should be deemed rape-able or blame the victim of rape. Stop justifying rape and making it seem like it's a sequence of events that leads to the act of rape. The mere fact that sweets are on display in a shop does not mean you have a right to steal them. That should be common sense.

4.2.2. Rape or Rape Culture

Concepts such as rape and rape culture are socially constructed through language and sustained interaction between people. Consequently, this means that these constructions are subject to change and alteration as language evolves to incorporate new ideas that challenge status quo frameworks. It is not enough to recognise that these concepts are not representative

of an external universal truth. It is vital to recognise the preponderance of meaning and power attached to these concepts, and how this iteratively shapes whose voice is heard, and whose interaction is made meaningful. An interesting finding that emerged from the comment section was the ways in which people spoke about rape and rape culture as synonymous.

User 62 (M) Don't for one second think anyone that's committed/thinking about rape will see these protests and think 'Ahhh they have their breasts out, I change my mind'.

User 63 (F) Interesting topic. Who do we have to blame about rape?

User 8 (F) Before just blaming one individual, let's blame the justice system and society as a whole. Rape culture gives the rapist more power than the victim.

User 14 (F) I think some of the students do not seem to realise it is not breasts that make a man rape - it is power it is a man intimidated by the strength and independence of women and it makes him feel powerful whether you show bare breasts or bare vaginas or bare backsides it would send no message at all - it is a power 'thing' that drives a male to rape. He needs to dominate and overpower

User 64 (M) I dont get the logic for protesting topless exposing your breast. Do they believe rapists will stop raping them..but by the look of things they may as well be inducing & enticing them.

User 65 (F) This will only appeal to the converted and have zero effect on rapists, it certainly won't stop them.

User 66 (M) ppl who do rape ,i think they have a prblm

User 67 (F) How do you protest against Psychologically and mentally distorted ppl?they don't understand nor get the message..it has no logic... Dress up that's all don't invite them..

User 68 (M) Rapist are psychopaths naked bodies are not going to stop rape

User 69 (F) As we all know a disproportionate amount of rape perpetrators are people known to the victims, so what gives? All of those people have a psychopathic problem that makes them go on power trips?

User 70 (F) Many men who are not psychopaths can rape

User 80 (M) A rapist doesn't REALLY need to see anything to rape a woman. Most rapes are by family members and familiar peers like date rape. I don't see what this proves given the overall psychopathy of a rapist is just to assume power. I am not mad nor ashamed. Just don't agree with the symbolic message.

These comments indicate that there was a distinct disjuncture between commenters who problematised rape culture and those who problematised rape. In their stance against rape culture, the protesters and the commenters supporting the protest engaged in a narrative which implicates the university and other societal and institutional cultures as tools of patriarchy by pointing out how practices of victim-blaming, perpetrator support and sexualisation perpetuate a rape culture. However, other commenters pointed out that protesting topless won't stop the rapist, thereby shifting the blame from the university and other societal structures towards the rapist.

In the comment sections, rapists were described as mentally disturbed, aggressive and driven by the need to dominate. The failure to make connections between dominating male aggressive behaviour and a rape culture framework is a problem. Firstly, by problematising the rapist, people are excused from critical reflection into how their own behaviours may contribute to the perpetuation of rape. Secondly, this resistance hinders effective communication and engagement, as people believe they are talking about the same thing, even though they are not.

4.2.3. Patriarchy

Academics and activists who have engaged with the concept of rape culture have clearly implicated patriarchy as the source (Brownmiller, 1975; Gouws, 2017; Gqola, 2015). Essentially, rape culture is a product of systemic and institutionalised patriarchy. Digital feminist activists have used social media platforms to implicate patriarchy as the main producer and perpetrator of rape culture, gender inequality and LGBTQIA+ violence. Through the use of trending hashtags such as #endthepatriarchy, #downpatriarchy and #fightpatriarchy feminist activists are creating awareness and educating people about the problematic nature of patriarchy. However, often times the ones who engage with discourse and terminology around concepts such as ‘patriarchy’ and ‘hegemonic masculinity’ are the ones who have a vested interest in these issues, thereby following feminist related pages and using online technologies to further educate themselves.

Despite the fact that many people do not have the academic or activist vocabulary to promulgate ideas around patriarchy, gender roles or rape culture, the comment section revealed that these concepts emerge through discourse in ways that could easily be taken for granted. Essentially, a patriarchal society is one in which men are privileged over women, in that they have access to social, political and economic opportunities that women are often denied (Gqola, 2015). This inequality serves to limit the ways women move and exist in this world which, in turn, leads to further disempowerment. On a surface level, it seems as though women are acquiring more rights and political freedoms. However, there are continuing disparities in the equal distribution of power, not only vertical transference between men and women but also horizontal transference between women and queer bodies from various cultural, economic and social backgrounds. For this reason, theoretical frameworks of intersectionality have increasingly been used to emphasize the intricate difficulties of

spotlighting certain areas in which women empowerment seems successful while ignoring others.

By only focusing on the ‘bigger’ issues in gender inequality, we are in danger of overlooking the more subtle ways in which patriarchal systems continue to exert power and dominance over women. As previously mentioned, language is a powerful tool of patriarchy, and men have used this discourse to create and perpetuate rape myths and gender normativity in order to assert their dominance over women (Butler, 2004; Gqola, 2015).

User 43 (F) Men must educate each other. These spaces are violent when womxn facilitate them. We will no longer expose ourselves to such.

User 44 (F) I can tell you why because most men are raised to be predators and to think of women as a sex object and a slave not as an equal human being that is not man's play toy. Girls are always told to cover up and that you can't do this and that. When men have virtually no rule

User 38 (F) Teach young boys not to rape instead of teaching young girls how to avoid being raped. #yourerectionisnotmyproblem

User 45 (M) Hence it is gonna be a slow process to teach the young generation of boys to respect girls. And girls on the other side should also respect their bodies.

User 46 (F) Addressing rape culture should start @ home when parents teach their sons that women don't owe them anything!

User 47 (M) It's not gender equality to take two types of people with practically the same bodily features(minus genitalia) and say one of them is innately sexual and by law and the power of censorship, turn one of them into some coveted symbol.

User 48 (M) It would be inspiring to see men marching for the protection of our women. Men have to take a stand to protect our women.

User 49 (F) Derailing what could have been a productive conversation, which only excludes you from any responsibility or blame. This doesn't help us understand or combat behaviours mainly committed by men

The above comment extracts speak to the roles of gender and socialisation in a patriarchal system. Firstly, it is recognised that men hold a very specific role in the perpetuation of rape culture. However, it is also shown that men can and should take responsibility for the roles they play (whether implicit or explicit) by educating themselves and their peers and by showing solidarity with women. Secondly, it is understood that society plays a role in the socialisation of male sexual aggression. This is not something that is innate to the male biological condition, rather it is something that can be unlearned. Furthermore, we have the ability and the potential to reconstruct current views of sexism and gender normatively through the socialisation of future generations. While there was no mention of a 'patriarchy' as being the cause of these attitudes, it is clear that people recognise there are inequalities in the way we teach men and women, and the ways in which we are socialised perpetuate views of male dominance and female submission.

User 32 (F) Non taken User 24 (F), I'm not saying User 41 is uneducated, I'm saying that on this particular topic, in this context he needs to do some research. He is a man, he is white, he is unaware of his privilege and may or may not know what it's like to be raped.

User 24 (F) How do you know so much about what he does and does not know? Just because he is white and male does not mean he or any white male is privileged and have no idea about the topic... That is a very very uneducated assumption to make... And as for the sociology of rape it goes far deeper and is far more complex...

User 24 (F) Specially those who have the great "privileges" as you state maybe you should start treating them with some dignity and respect... I get that you dont like men... Thats fine

you dont have to... Just try and be a bit friendly... If they are ruling the system as you say then you aint going to get very far with your cause by insulting them

The above comment extracts are from a discussion between two women concerning rape and white privilege in South Africa. In this discussion, User 24 (F) becomes increasingly defensive over the ways in which User 32 (F) is implicating not only male privilege but also racial privilege in perpetuating rape culture. In her arguments, User 24 (F) makes the assumption that User 32 (F) does not like men, yet urges her to be friendlier towards them, especially since she believes they are the ruling powers. It is interesting that User 24 (F) would ask that User 32 (F) be friendlier to men in general, rather than being friendlier to other people she debates with. It can be argued that User 24 (F) interpreted User 32's (F) critiques against a 'white male dominated system' as her dislike for (white) men and felt the need to go on the defensive. Even though she believes that User 32 (F) does not like men, she still maintains that User 32 (F) should present with a friendly demeanour, which is more pleasing and acceptable to the male gaze. This is an exemplar of the ways in which discourse can uphold male hegemony in subtle ways.

User 50 (F) User 14 (F) what User 49 is trying to emphasize is the over-sexualisation of the female body which stems from patriarchy. Can we also just be conscious of the fact that rapists aren't solely males.

User 51 (M) If we're gonna derail, what about men who are rape victims? Where is their support? More men get raped than are falsely accused of raping someone.

User 53 (F) be careful of making rape gender specific! It's important to recognize the struggle that males who have been raped go through, like their experience being considered them "getting lucky" rather than being molested.

The comments above reveal the more complex nature of discussing gender assault in a patriarchal system. On the one hand, there is a recognition that men can also be victims of

sexual assault, and this should be included in the discussion around rape culture. However, comments like the one made by User 51 (M) are meant to disrupt rather than depict an actual concern for male victims and served to function in two ways. Firstly, it serves to interrupt and silence the voices of women and queer bodies who experience sexual harassment and violence within a normative framework. It is not only about the physical act of rape, but also the ways in which patriarchal mechanisms such as cat-calling, wage gaps or unwanted sexual innuendos are used to maintain power relationships between men and women. Secondly, pointing out that “men get raped too” as an afterthought in an argument against rape culture is rape culture, because that should be a sentence on its own. Using male rape as an anecdote in an argument serves to distort and diminish the experiences of male survivors.

4.2.4. Race and Culture

In previous studies focusing on social media and rape culture, themes of race or culture did not emerge, or if it did, it was not significant enough to include in the discussions. However, in my study, themes of race and culture were prominent because of South Africa's socio-political and historical culture. Race, culture and gender have shown to play out in intricate ways during the Fallist movements and the #Endrapeculture protests. It should be noted that the 2015 and 2016 #campaigns were spearheaded by Black students. During the #FMF protests, women were not only in solidarity with the men but also embodied leadership roles. However, during the #Endrapeculture protests, many were left disappointed by the lack of solidarity from their male comrades (Gouws, 2018). Some of them went as far as to insult the women protesters for objectifying themselves and acting ‘un-African’ (Gouws, 2018). This notion of Black women marching topless being ‘un-African’ is subtly echoed and subsequently challenged in the comment section.

User 33 (F) bare breasted women are part of our culture so I don't know what the fuss is all about.

User 34 (F) Bare breasted young women were traditionally acceptable in South Africa and was culturally accepted without increased rape rates in rural area. The city life makes women conform to more modern and western ways of dress

User 35 (F) Its normal in SAn culture for women to be bare breasted until they are married. Ppl still do it in the rural areas

User 36 (M) No its not. I am from the very rural transkei in the Eastern Cape and no it is not a norm.

User 35 (F) Yes the Eastern Cape is all of South Africa and IsiXhosa is all of SAn culture- i forgot! Lol!

User 37 (F) It is normal, go to the reed dance kwaNongoma on September u will see

User 6 (F) And it is part of our culture to dance and celebrate with our breasts out. That is no invitation for men to rape. We are not catalysts for rape

User 38 (F) Most African tribes the women are topless but the men don't go around raping them because of it!! With regards to the metaphor used by this "man" not I didn't say gentlemen.

Comments such as these were made in response to commenters shaming the protesters for being topless. They are challenging social constructions concerning nudity in society by reminding the audience that the naked female body was symbolically significant in African cultures, with some explicitly pointing out the role of western modernisation in reframing the way in which the female body is viewed. The ways in which South African women in post-apartheid South Africa experience their sexuality and sexual identity is a consequence of the colonial understanding of African sexualities (Gouws, 2017; Gqola, 2015). Race and South African rape culture intersect. According to Gqola (2015)

Because race was made through rape and sexual difference, there was a constant preoccupation in slave-ordered society with 'race mixing'. While the

rape of slave women was profitable, it also threatened ideas of racial hierarchy and produced anxieties about race-mixing. The institutionalized rape of slave women revealed a frightening possibility...of the unspeakable sexual intercourse between white women and slave men. This anxiety was about the loss of control over the bodies of white women, as much as it was about the view of white women becoming unpure. (p.44)

Under the colonial gaze, African men and women were constructed as hypersexual, resulting in a colonial sexual hierarchy in which white women were rape-able and black women were not, while black men were rapists and white men were not. The continued sexual violence inflicted upon the African body resulted in shame becoming part of sexual identity (Gouws, 2018; Gqola, 2015). Furthermore, the apartheid laws served to institutionalise race through policing sexuality, by enforcing laws to prevent miscegenation and to keep the white race pure. Through this discourse, white women were constructed as reproducers of the nation and ensured white heteronormative male dominance (Gqola, 2015).

Considering this history, it can be argued that the failure of some commenters to recognise the cultural significance of topless women represents a micro-aggression against black sexuality. Rather than recognising the cultural significance of being topless, the protesters are met with insults and are shamed. It is interesting to note that comments highlighting the norm of bare-breasted women in Africa were mostly ignored by commenters who critiqued the naked protesters. The few who did respond hinted that rape and sexual assault was a problem in rural communities. The topless protesters represent a direct challenge to the narrative of white heteronormative male dominance that was constructed during colonial times and continues to be maintained.

Other commenters focused more on issues of race than rape culture.

User 39 (M) Speaking of which, #racialabuse is still prevalent in #southafrica...imagine getting to a facility and you told we are closed because of the colour of your skin?.Had never experienced such. # jahguide. #whatssospecialaboutalightskin

User 40 (M) Where does that hate come from. Afriforum has no space in South therefore it everything to do with the issue at hand. Afriforum had no space in student politics but they have somehow involved themselves directly. Racist whiteness will bw disturbed in Azania

User 23 (F) Honestly, people pay to go and listen to a book discussion - you storm in to perform a misplaced protest and you feel sorry for yourself because they told you to go home? Don't you think what you did was just an example of bad manners and that most people, including fellow black students (those who need buses, books, classes to be students) are getting annoyed with you?

User 32 (F) South Africa is still a white-male dominated country

User 41 And how does the "South Africa is still a white-male dominated country" fit into the conversation?

User 32 (F) User 41 firstly, it has EVERYTHING to do with rape. It does not mean that white males are the only rapists, that's very ignorant to think. "White male" does not refer to specifically a white man, but rather a system that favors men and generally white men, which is evident in South Africa, particularly in Universities.

But in my post, I specifically stated "please educate yourself on rape culture"

By this I meant, do your own research, things like Google or maybe attend university and see the white male dominance which outright and blatant.

User 41 (M) No User 32, its time you learn to comment more carefully and applicably. Do Reg MacDonald, Grant Baker and other white males "dominating" the gastronomy scene in Cape Town also fall into this category?

User 24 (F) User 32 so why use white male? That stereotyping and according to the stats most of the rapes are not by white males...

User 24 (F) Ooo and one more thing the majority on the RU campus are not white and they are not male... So maybe look for a different culprit...

User 8 (F) User 32 you shouldn't even have bothered, after calling 'terms' such as rape culture, white privilege, the while male heterogeneous system, sensationalism, you should have seen that many white tears would be shed here.

User 42 (M) South Africa is a "White male" dominated country. That is racist! And don't try a and lie, by saying you were refering to a 'system' , because that's utter rubbish, even if you were refering to a system , would that not be the justice system?The police, the courts, prison system. Last time I checked those are Not white male dominated but ANC, but I won't say black male dominated, cos that is racist and untrue. Don't ruin a good points you made by adding racism into it!

User 32 (F) User 30 you're so ignorant I can't help but laugh 😂😂😂 I'm WHITE my dear friend. Unless you think I'm racist towards "my own race".

Please google the terminology I have used so you can understand my argument 😊☐

4.2.5. Sexualisation and Bodily Autonomy

Our bodies represent the borderlands between the natural and the socially constructed, thereby representing a living canvas and a site of political intervention meant to disrupt the status quo (Eileraas, 2014). Historically, the body, in various states of display, has played a significant role as an agent of global protest (Eileraas, 2014). According to Butler (Butler, 2004):

Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has its invariably

public dimension; constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine (p. 21).

Butler (2004) points out that we exist in a state of suspension, where our bodies simultaneously belong and do not belong to us. It is as if we were vassals, acting as owners of our bodies on conditions of service and allegiance. Our bodies are our own for as long as we use it to conform to societal norms. Butler (2004) argues that the body can occupy the norm in various ways, but it can also exceed the norm, reconstruct the norm, and expose the realities we have accepted as stable and open to transformation. Therefore, in order for politics to take place, the body must appear (Butler, 2011). Demonstrating bodies serve to disrupt the flow of everyday movement and challenge the status quo. Naked demonstrating bodies go even further by disrupting the sacrosanct dichotomies of public/private and visible/hidden, thereby constituting a uniquely explosive site of protest (Eileraas, 2014).

By marching topless in the streets, the members of the #Endrapeculture protests utilise the feminine body to call attention to universities institutional rape culture and demand for its transformation. By marching topless, the protesters embodied victim-blaming norms and aimed to re-signify them, challenging notions that the female body is a sexualised body at the mercy of male sexual aggression (Gouws, 2018; Gqola, 2015). However, the comments regarding the naked protest reveal that despite the historical and cultural connotations of naked bodies in South Africa, many felt that protesting naked was unnecessary and even shameful.

User 8 (M) Women breast are sexual, if it feels good to touch and lick both pleasing to man and woman, they're also pleasing to look at , one man would probably get arousal just seeing them bare and the point they're trying to make falls by the waste side, still doesn't make sense to me

User 9 (M) we understand their anger but they should have covered their

TEABAGS.(breasts)

User 10 (M) Veridis you are sooo right. Yes. But dignity, courtesy and unnecessary nudity is a thing too. These women's Moms and Dads have to see these pictures too. I understand the intention, but boundaries are needed as well. This is an oxymoron of boundaries.

User 11 (F) Whatever the cause or the reason behind any march, taking a stance doesnt need you to take off clothes. Its become so acceptable in society for people to show things that are meant to be private and quite frankly, its just plain disgusting. There are so many tools to use to fight against injustices, I dont know why stripping was the first resort for these women.

Whatever message they were trying to convey is now dust.

User 12 (F) it is painful to see our beloved sisters going through such traumatic incidents. and we pray that justice be done. protesting is seems to be the slogan for showing anger in S.A and we are used to it, showing off your teats like that! that's to shallow and looks like attention seeking. if you don't respect your bodies, do you expect males to respect them? do not let anger rob you your morals. cover up your bodies please then protest

User 13 (F) Are they really protesting or took this as an oportunity to express thr immoral natural behaviour

User 14 (F)Is it really necessary to go bare breated to get your message across - do it with dignity ladies not exposure like this - yes we are proud of our breasts and we need to be able to walk free wear what we choose etc and NO is NO - but this looks ridiculous.

Commenters who expressed victim-blaming attitudes with regard to the naked protest believed that the protesters were inviting rapists with their nudity. However, comments such as these reveal that the naked female body is not something that should be on display in public. Women who disrupt public spaces with their nudity are seen as lacking morals and

self-respect and are subsequently implored to ‘cover up’ to spare their dignity. This reinforces the view of women’s bodies as a living sexual canvas to be subjugated by the male gaze.

Women who defy these moral norms are not seen as ‘decent’ women and in line with JWBs are less likely to receive sympathy and more likely to be blamed in a case of sexual assault (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018). Furthermore, the commenters’ discussion surrounding the naked protesters reveal that the body exists within a public dimension, where members of the public may comment and give instruction as to how others should inhabit their bodies. Endorsing and perpetuating views of a sexualised female body serves to further entrench a rape culture by denying women ownership of their bodies whilst simultaneously endorsing male entitlement over these bodies. Other commenters engaged in the debate by pointing out the sexualisation of female bodies and explaining why this would be problematic.

User 15 (M) Half the problem is we have over sexualized women's bodies.

User 16 (F) Why people take such offense at the sight of women's bodies confuses me. Their body, their choice. The thing is, these women being topless HAS caused change and has educated people already - just look at this conversation. The changes you want to see are beginning to happen because of these brave women

User 17 (M) Well half of the reason rape is not tackled seriously and women are blamed for their own rapes, is because of a large and common notion that all value of a woman is on her body.

User 18 (F) People are brain washed breast are for feeding babies society has sexualized women's breast. It just fat and breast tissue the same thing men have but we have to cover ours up why???

User 19 (F) You have a particular aversion to breasts User 12? And you were taught that a human being has a right over another person's body that you feel entitled to impose your

notions on how these woman should have expressed the fight to have a right to own their bodies

Many of these comments aimed at disrupting the societal norms by challenging the idea of the female body as a site of sexual interest and reinforcing beliefs about biological functioning. Others used the space to reinforce notions of bodily autonomy. The debate that arose between commenters against the naked protest and those in support of it reflects Butler's (2004) argument in that we are still striving for rights over our bodies, which do not really seem to belong to us in its entirety.

4.2.6. Trivialising Rape Culture

Rape culture is maintained through a variety of mechanisms. However, denial of rape culture and the silencing of victims is one of its most disempowering methods (Romito, 2008). Denial is sustained and maintained through shared values, violence and fear. Families and friends of perpetrators of sexual violence deny that someone they know could be capable of such an act. By accepting the realities of rape and rape culture, people need to accept that rapists are not mentally disturbed deviants, rather they are people who have social ties, and can, therefore, be someone who is known to them. They would need to accept that sensible person in their lives are in fact capable of committing such a senseless act of violence. The denial of both the act of rape and the culture that perpetuates it leads to the assumption that neither the act nor the culture exists. However, to deny rape culture when it presents with real social ramifications is to deny the experiences of those who have been affected by it (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993).

In the previous section, I discussed how the commenters shamed the protesters for being naked. However, comments criticising the attire of the protesters present with a two-fold function. On the one hand, it reinforces sexualised and heteronormative views of the female body. On the other hand, it serves to trivialise the message behind the protest as the

commenters choose to focus more on the protester's state of undress, rather than engaging with the issues being raised. This indicates that sexual violence is still considered a woman's problem. Throughout the comment section, rape culture denial emerged through discourse aimed at trivialising the protest method and the protesters.

User 20 (M) These people obviously don't want to study, next they will be protesting about cloudy days or being lied to about father Christmas. Let's start protesting about the healthy gym freaks because they make the rest of us look fat..!ffs

User 21 (M) these students abusing their rights they seem to forget why they are there". protesting every nonsenses

User 22 (F) Oh for crying in a bucket 😊 Just go back to work, study or whatever and stop causing trouble!

User 23 (F) but your bad manners, disrupting a literary event when you're not properly dressed and your political affiliations cause you to lose support from women who feel that to be taken seriously, especially where something as serious as this is concerned, you should conduct yourself differently

User 24 (F) With all this protesting i wonder where they get the time to actually get educated?

User 25 (M) But protesting like this is so out right pathetic and attention seeking

User 26 (M) Dont you people have anything better to do;????????? How can the situation be so out of control that this needs to be protested in this manner?

Comments such as these indicate frustration and exasperation towards the protesters. Perhaps this is better understood within the context the #Endrapeculture protest took place. As previously mentioned, the #Endrapeculture campaign followed shortly after the 2015 #FeesMustFall campaign. It is important to note, that the media portrayal of the #FeesMustFall students' protests was not favourable, as video footage of students burning

buildings and causing damage to property was circulated. This left many South Africans with the impression that students participating in the protests were lazy, failing and promoting certain political agendas. However, the historical and cultural legacy of universities in South Africa vary greatly, and while the overarching goal of the protest (zero percent fee increase) was shared across protesting campuses, the tactics to achieve their goals differed.

Furthermore, despite the perception that the students were too lazy to study, it should be noted that the Fallist movements were based on narratives of decolonisation and informed by the works of black consciousness theorists such as Fanon and Biko (Gouws, 2018). Therefore, it can be argued that the negative public opinion of the student protests was largely framed by one-dimensional media portrayal. In this context, the #Endrapeculture protesters marching topless and carrying sjamboks must have presented quite a site for people who already established negative preconceived notions of student protesters. Despite this, it should also be noted that the physical destruction of property in the Fallist movements, and the topless protests are symbolic of the frustration, anger and pain felt by young people who have been disillusioned by the promises of a rainbow nation (Gouws, 2018). By using their bodies to disrupt classes, block administration buildings and call for nationwide shutdowns, students were raising the question of how diverse lives are valued and whose experiences are officially named, celebrated or repressed in the collective memory (Eileraas, 2014). By bearing their bodies, the #Endrapeculture protesters were asking the question: what is my body and what is my life worth to you (Eileraas, 2014). Commenters who focus more on what the protesters were wearing, claiming that the protest is a form of attention seeking, or stating that the protesters should use their time more productively, seem to suggest that they function in a way that trivialises the matter.

On the other side of the debate, other people called out the commenters who focused more on other aspects of the protest, rather than the message being conveyed.

User 27 (F) How is being raped by your fellow student nonsense? Everyone has a right to education and a chosen profession. If your a victim of rape should you judge carry on with your studies as if nothing happened. What if it happens to someone else?

User 28 (F) Wow, what is wrong with these kids that they expose their breasts, and not why is wrong with this society that rapes its women?

User 29 (F) These women are making a statement against rape and yet the only thing y'all can focus on is "eww they're naked." Please grow the hell up.

User 30 (M) You focus on the issue during a protest, not the protester.

User 31 (M) But why oh why is that what you decided to focus on?

User 32 (F) Are people so indoctrinated by rape culture that the ONLY THING they took from this video is the fact that there are exposed breasts?

User 16 (F) (User 24, F) You are focusing on one aspect of this protest and condemning it.

4.2.7. Role of Universities and Law Enforcement

The #Endrapeculture protests represented the culmination of students' frustration and anger with regards to the role university management plays in perpetuating rape culture on campus by victimising those who report sexual assault while treating the perpetrators with leniency. In the comment section, people reiterated these critiques. Some of the commenters pointed out disparities in how the university deals out punishment to their students.

User 43 (F) damage to property is more criminal than rape. Cameras are not installed in residences because they're too expensive, but men in black, who are employed at exorbitant prices, are deployed all over campus to intimidate and victimize protesting students. This is rape culture. Let it be known that the Central Disciplinary committee will act to issue notices to the #Stellies7 who protested to decolonize education, but have not issued notices to rapists in most rape cases on campus, particularly to cases pertaining to black womxn. Let it be known rape survivors on campus do not feel comfortable visiting the SSVO (refers Sentrum

vir Studentevoorlingting en Ontwikkeling SSVO or the Centre for Student Counselling and Development) *since it has often been accused of perpetuating rape culture*

User 54 (F) good for them its time these universities start protecting ALL students not just the males

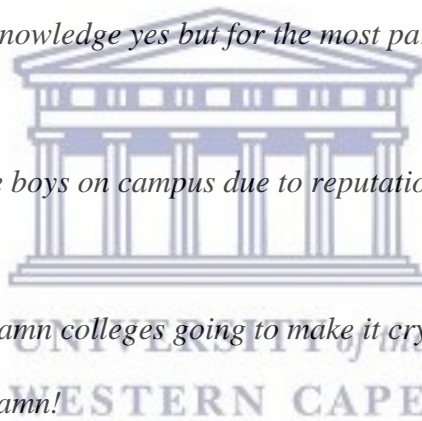
User 55 (F) as South African student it's deeply unsettling knowing campus is and was never safe.

User 27 (F) There is the harassment office, counselling centre, and camps protection unit. Now what these students are protesting about is that when they use these means to report a crime they are disrespected and not treated fairly, thus resulting in their cases never being heard or never making it to the police station

User 56 (M) Once it's public knowledge yes but for the most part no its swept under the rug and stomped on.

User 57 (F) They protect these boys on campus due to reputation its sick. Same as the military

User 58 (M) When are these damn colleges going to make it crystal clear that this behavior is not going to be tolerated! Damn!



These comments indicate that the university is more concerned about protecting its reputation and male students, rather than protecting all of the students. Despite services being made available, such as student counselling, these services are not well-informed and have been critiqued by students for perpetuating rape culture, yet the university management does not listen. This indicates that students feel a lack of trust towards the university as an institution. Considering that students spend a great deal of time on campus, this lack of a trusting relationship is problematic.

While some of the commenters pointed out the problematic nature of the university structure, others felt that the role of the university should be minimal. Many believed that the

students should have protested at the police stations. The problem of rape is thus conceptualised as a situation that should only be handled by law enforcement. However, previous studies have shown that rape culture is entrenched in all manner of institutions, and survivors of sexual assault are often victimised by law enforcement and the courts (Carroll et al., 2016; Salter, 2013; Wakelin & Long, 2003). Furthermore, many did not seem to understand that cases of sexual assault on campus are first dealt with internally before a formal case can be made at the police station.

User 59 (M) Isn't the right way to do it to go open a case by saps and let them handle it???

User 60 (F) I agree but it is a case for the police

User 61 (M) how about they go to the police and stop this nonsense.

4.3. Focus Group Discussions on Facebook

As previously stated, the three focus groups were analysed using Stenner's (1993) method of thematic decomposition. As with a traditional thematic analysis, I immersed myself in the data in order to explore dominant themes which arose from the focus group discussions. Following this, I traced paths of overarching themes and narratives' that revealed how the social concept of rape culture is first constructed by the participants and subsequently co-constructed as the discussion progresses.

Conforming to the theoretical framework of this study, the use of a thematic decomposition analysis allows me to trace the number of subject positions the participants have constructed in the online discussion, and explore the impact of these positions on the construction of rape culture (Stenner, 1993). Unlike traditional focus groups, the asynchronous SFFG allowed participants to; reflect on questions posed in the groups, and structure how they would answer questions, how much detail to put in each answer, what they wished to reveal about themselves and how they responded to other group members.

The following section presents the demographic characteristics of the participants (See Table 4.2.) and the dominant themes that were derived from my reading of the focus group discussions (See Table 4.3.), followed by a consideration of how subject positions were constituted in each theme. As this section will reveal, some of the dominant themes which emerged from my reading of the focus group discussions are related to themes which emerged from the comment section and will be further linked and considered in the discussion section.



Table 4.2.

Demographic characteristics of focus group participants

		Focus Group 1 (n = 5)	Focus Group 2 (n = 5)	Focus Group 3 (n = 6)
Age	18			1
	19			2
	22	1	1	
	23	3	3	2
	24	1	1	1
Gender	Female	4	2	3
	Transgender		1	
	female			
	Male	1	2	3
Race	Black	1		
	White	2	2	3
	Indian		1	
	Coloured	2	2	2
	Mixed race			1
University	Stellenbosch	3	3	4
	University			
	University of the Western Cape	2	1	1
	University of Cape Town			1

	University of the Witwatersrand		1	
Year of study	Undergraduate	2	2	3
	Postgraduate	3	2	1
	Graduated (2015/2016)		1	2



Table 4.3.

Themes derived from the focus group discussions

Themes	Sub-themes
Defining Rape Culture	Initial Definitions
	Victim-blaming
	Consent
	Cat-calling
	The role of Patriarchy and Feminism
	Gender
	Rape or Rape Culture?
Learning about Rape Culture	Protest
	Social media and the Internet
	Suggestions for Rape Culture Education
The Role of Social Media	Online Engagement and Identity
	Sharing Content on Social Media
	Potential of Social Media as a Tool for Rape culture Education



4.3.1. Defining Rape Culture

The aim of the current study was to explore what students understood about rape culture, and how they collectively made sense of the term. For this purpose, the participants were asked to define what the term rape culture meant to them. Seven sub-themes emerged from this; *Initial definitions, Victim-blaming, Consent, Cat-calling, The role of Patriarchy and Feminism, Gender and Rape or Rape Culture?*

4.3.1.1. Initial Definitions

All participants except one were able to state what they thought rape culture was. The participant, Matthew (FG 2), explained that he was unfamiliar with the terminology being used. However, as will be shown in the later discussion, through his engagement with the group he was able to learn more about rape culture. Some of the definitions were more conceptual than others. Participants who were involved in campus societies such as the SRC, or who studied in the field of Humanities provided more well-rounded definitions than participants who were enrolled in other faculties. Within the group, eight participants positioned themselves as being knowledgeable of rape culture, and they were the ones who were more willing to speak out against rape culture. Some participants were familiar with the term, but they did not position themselves as knowledgeable. These participants were aware of rape culture and how it affects their daily lives, but this was not a subject that they engaged with to the extent of being comfortable enough to form strong opinions and statements around the subject. Lastly, two of the participants were aware of rape culture but positioned themselves to be against rape culture based on their ideological beliefs.

Khabane (FG1) If I have to be completely honest, before 2015, thought it was the actual physical act of rape. However, not to sure exactly on a meaning but my meaning has been expended a little bit to include illicit comments and innuendos that have a sexual connotation to them.

Megan (FG1) Rape culture, to me, is the normalization of behaviors and actions adds to the sexual and domestic violence against women. Wow I didn't think it would be this difficult to "define" it but this includes sexual jokes, the objectification of women's bodies, catcalling, when someone touches you in an inappropriate manner, these small actions are "normalised" (I use this lightly) in society. And sexual violence and rape as well

Stephanie (FG3) I believe rape culture to be a normalization by society concerning quite serious matters such as sexual harassment including inappropriate comments which make one feel uncomfortable (people in the general public do it so often) NOT realizing the discomfort it brings another at that moment, it's quite scary. It also includes the way woman and sometimes men are seen as objects and powerless. I think also men know most woman are defenseless against their strength and thus they glamorize the idea of sexual violence.

Brandon (FG2) I think there is a lot of ambiguity surrounding the term 'rape culture'. I think it speaks to a patriarchal society that subjects women to a object, whereby women need to act in a certain manner. Hence, when females complain about guys harassing or assaulting them, their dress code and demeanor is questioned.

Kendall (FG2) It is a culture rooted in the systemic oppression of women and queer bodies. It is meant to objectify and sexualise bodies while at the same time demonising those bodies' autonomy.

It is insidious in the sense that the victim/survivor is made to account for why they were raped (victim-blaming). Bear in mind, this is in the rare instance that people actually acknowledge that sexual assault/harassment has occurred. Oftentimes, victims' lived experiences are invalidated by:

- what they wear
- the company they keep

- *their sexual history*

- *their behaviour (the "good woman" VS "bad woman" paradigm).*

In cases of corrective rape, lesbian women (and even gay men and transgender people) are assaulted or raped to teach them a lesson. This is akin to aversion/conversion "therapy" that was used for a long time by bogus psychiatrists. The aim is to associate sex and gender identity with trauma so as to "correct" what is deemed "defective/abhorrent/socially unacceptable"

Mia (FG1) *It's where oppression and sexual violence towards any gender (specifically women: trans or biological) becomes normalised. From physical rape to the innuendos in advertising, rape culture surrounds us in all shapes and forms. It poses the body as a sexual object and nothing more. It's being used to promote capital and increase the power dynamic that already exists in so many institutions.*

To me it's about sustaining power and control, rendering others voiceless. The victim is usually at the receiving end of guilt and shame, as well as blame.

James (FG3) *I see it as a mechanism in the maintenance of patriarchy. I consider it to represent an culturally promoted hegemonic ideal of what it is to be "man" in society that serves to subjugate and oppress women by normalizing sexual violence and rape. It to my mind represents the entitlement and ownership over a woman's body that serves to not only cause great personal harm but fosters gender inequity.*

Luke (FG3) *A culture that normalises sexual abuse in society.*

Zoe (FG3) *The term is still new to me. I feel that it speaks about the different types of behaviour or acts that is considered under the term "rape" this includes gang rape, prison rape etc. I also think it draws on the understanding of different individuals around the term "rape " and everyone's different views and opinions.*

Matthew (FG2) *Sorry to sound ignorant. But there is a lot of terminology usef here that I am not familiar with.*

Through these initial definitions, participants defined rape culture which can be categorised into the following themes; normalisation of sexual violence; objectification and oppression of female and queer bodies; catcalling; victim-blaming; women needing to police their behaviour; and inappropriate comments and sexual jokes that are associated with feelings of discomfort. However, as the conversation continues, the participants interact with each other by asking questions and sharing information they expand on these definitions. Through these discussions additional sub-themes emerged as participants engaged and elaborated on rape culture, thereby adding to their initial definitions to collectively make sense of rape culture

4.3.1.2. Victim-blaming

Through the discussion, participants demonstrated that rape culture is mostly recognised and associated with victim-blaming. In this discussion, examples of victim-blaming are given as the most visible indicators of rape culture

Saajidah (FG2) *When students protest (look at Rhodes last year) - news channels that cover the protest apologise to sensitive viewers because women are displaying their boobs. Why not apologise to the students that they have to feel unsafe in an educational institution? Again with making the female/ victim feel they should be ashamed for their actions*

James (FG3) *I feel rape culture exists in how females are blamed for rape over their clothing or because they were out drinking rather than men being blamed for raping . I think it exists in the way rape is trivialised through jokes. That is not even to mention how men don't seem to understand how consent works. Expecially the fact that It can be retracted at anytime or that when a someone is drunk and says "yes" it is not consent*

As previously mentioned, Matthew was not familiar with rape culture. However, through asking questions and interacting with the participants, Matthew positioned himself as being curious and willing to learn more. In one instance, Matthew reveals that an article he read discussed how rape culture can negatively affect both men and women in the case of false accusations. However, through the discussion with other group members, Matthew learned that the process of victim-blaming is integral in the legal system.

Matthew (FG2) I see. Did not know about the default. As for what she was wearing I, personally, don't see how a female's apparel is relevant to a rape case

On the other hand, the two participants who positioned themselves against rape culture believed that the problem was being exaggerated.

Luke (FG3) Once again I think the problem is massively exaggerated. Sure there may be some scenarios where women are blamed but that is, without a doubt, the exception to the rule. If a man rapes a woman the argument that she was wearing a short skirt would never hold up in court for example - in fact it would be laughable. No decent human being would ever put the blame on a woman for being raped by a man.

4.3.1.3. Consent

When discussing matters of rape, the implication of consent seems evident. However, feminist scholarship has highlighted that the perception of consent as a 'sexual contract' between persons serves to reduce the complexity of the concept by obscuring the exercise of male power and violence over women (Cowling & Reynolds, 2016). The ways in which we differentiate consent from non-consent has very real consequences in society, especially concerning the legislation around rape.

Recently, Sweden has taken major steps in reforming their legislation regarding rape. Starting from 1 July 2018, rape will be tried as an act in which no explicit consent was given

(The Gaurdian, 2018). Under the previous laws, a person could only be prosecuted for rape if it was proven that the perpetrator used threats or violence (The Gaurdian, 2018).

Furthermore, the issue of consent has recently garnered attention in the media following the launch of consent apps. According to Horton (2018), these devices ask the user to confirm they consent to sexual activity with another user by tapping or writing on the screen of their smartphones. The increase of apps such as these indicates that there is a greater awareness of navigating matters of consent, which is largely attributed to the growth of millennial digital culture and the rise of social media campaigns against sexual assault. In the focus group discussions, consent was discussed in two ways. Firstly, consent or the lack of consent was seen as a predictor of rape. This represented the simplistic definition of consent that feminists have argued against, which may in part be related to socialised binary patterns of thinking. Secondly, from this discussion, the participants reconstructed initial ideas of consent and non-consent by discussing ways to teach others about consent. Through this, the conversation turned towards realising the complexity of consent and the practicality of it in society.

Of particular interest was the discussion that occurred between Luke and James regarding consent. Since the start of the focus group, Luke positioned himself as being against the idea of rape culture and feminist agendas, while James positioned himself as someone who has knowledge of rape culture and has an interest in challenging rape culture. By taking up these two seemingly contrast positions, both Luke and James brought forth an “us versus them” mentality. During the initial days of the focus group, Luke further distanced his position from the other group members by claiming that his opinions are different from the other members in the group, and he does not wish to start a keyboard argument. This implies that Luke decided that confrontation would be inevitable and that a clash of opinions would happen. As it were, Luke’s self-fulfilling prophecy was realised as he eventually

entered a debate with James. In the course of their debate, the two argued over issues concerning consent and non-consent, thereby bringing attention to the complex ways in how consent is viewed, under what, and within which contexts.

Luke (FG3) Thirdly, the matter of being able to consent when drunk is not as clear cut as you make it seem - in fact it is a highly debated matter. Personally I think that different levels of drunkenness plays a huge role in the argument. When you are blackout drunk, sure you can't give consent. Legally "too drunk to consent" is "basically unconscious or damn close to it". Other than that, you can give consent.

James (FG3) As for being drunk and consent, yes it can be a contentious area. But i do not agree with your statement that one needs to be nearly black out drunk before one can't consent. If someone is intoxicated rational decision making is impaired so i think a "yes" is equatable to a "no". I'll give you the levels of drunkenness, but in what way would that even be defined much less detected in social settings? Like, if a man wants to fuck why do it when a woman is drunk? Is it easier perhaps?

4.3.1.4. Cat-calling

During the focus group discussions, cat-calling emerged as a theme as participants reflected on their own experiences and understanding of rape culture. According to Farmer and Smock Jordan (2017), cat-calling involves men using verbal and non-verbal cues to comment on a woman's physical appearance in a way that objectifies women. Cat-calling is an example of a type of sexual harassment that has become tolerated and normalised in society. As the quote by Khabane shows, not everyone knows or understands that catcalling is a form of harassment. This is because women who speak out against rape culture are silenced and their experiences of this type of harassment become trivialised. However, as the quotes indicate, women and men who are educated on rape culture, are more likely to speak out and challenge discourses meant to silence their experiences.

Khabane (FGI) *Two days, I drove a group of people and one of the men in the vehicle cat called a woman on the street and the female passengers called him out and said that what he did was wrong. He did not understand, what he had done as he thought he was complimenting the lady by whistling at her. The lack of understanding I think also contributes to rape culture. In my understanding this is also a form of rape culture. I do not know if I make sense, but that is my understanding.*

Amy (FGI) *ZO well I've been harassed many times, as most womxn have been I'm sure... It's kind of sick when people tell you it's because you're attractive and should view it as flattering, because it makes you feel cheap when someone gropes you or says something disgusting to you. I feel like disappearing when that happens and men that I'm with usually laugh it off or say I'm overreacting. So because of my experiences, hearing about rape culture opened my eyes to how men just tend to normalise bad sexual experiences and harassment in general*

Stephanie (FGI) *Yes because it has opened my eyes to what actually happens out there that is not often discussed, Amy made a great point when she mentioned how you feel when a stranger comments on your looks in a non flattering way, it's actually creepy and how they mock you for taking it seriously and tell you to chill out, this just proves how alot of people often don't realise the effect of their comment at the given time and how they assume it's alright to act that way. The respect for females has declined rapidly.*

The comments made by Amy and Stephanie speak to the ways in which women are silenced when speaking out against being catcalled. Their experiences of being catcalled are described as uncomfortable and unwanted, yet they were met with responses that undermined their feelings and experience. This minimization results in challenging the recipient(s) (in this case, Amy and Stephanie) to view the attention as a compliment rather than an act of sexual harassment.

In this discussion, both Amy and Stephanie refer to learning about rape culture as an empowering experience. Learning about rape culture and applying this knowledge to their own experiences allowed them to realise that their feelings and personal experiences with catcalling were valid.

4.3.1.5. The Roles of Patriarchy and Feminism

Throughout the discussion, participants implicated the role of patriarchy in the development and perpetuation of rape culture.

Brandon (FG2) Because our society is rooted in a patriarchal society, whereby the actions of victims is questioned, as 'men' wouldn't just rape or assault you, without provocation

Saajidah (FG2) I might be going off at a tangent here, but maybe the patriarchal systems are still in place because that is what we are familiar with and what we know? Let's go back 50-60 years. Women were not in universities/the workplace like they are now. Who wrote the laws? Men. Who had the opportunities to go to university? Men. Women have historically been "trained" to be submissive and accept what comes their way.

Brandon and Saajidah both draw attention to the ways in which patriarchal systems exist to undermine the position of women against men in society. The way in which Brandon uses quotation marks to describe 'men' suggests that the system favours male positions, but also indicates that the system perpetuates the archetype of the sexually aggressive male figure that is entitled to act upon his urges if presented with provocation (Brownmiller, 1975; Gqola, 2015; Mardorossian, 2014). This links to the justification of victim-blaming because women who are victims of sexual assault are believed to have provoked male figures in some manner.

Saajidah draws attention to the ways in which society perpetuates patriarchal systems through socialisation. This speaks to the difficulty of challenging gender inequality, as we have been socialised to believe that the way things are normal. According to Chapleau and

Oswald (2014), gender-specific system justification (GSJ) refers to the belief that women have the same opportunities as men, and any structural or status differences between the two are just and fair. In order to challenge gender inequalities and GBV, it is necessary to address GSJ beliefs. These GSJ beliefs support victim-blaming and catcalling attitudes by perpetuating the notion that women should be aware of male sexual aggression and should conduct themselves appropriately to avoid assault (Chapleau & Oswald, 2014). In a patriarchal system, men are the dominant group and are therefore not expected to adjust their behaviour (Chapleau & Oswald, 2014)

Two participants in the group positioned themselves as anti-feminist. While other participants implicated patriarchy, Luke and Isaac problematized feminism.

Luke's narrative represents a group mentality way of thinking and problematising GBV. Luke perceives that third wave feminism is an ideological tool to perpetuate a narrative that despises and undermines men. From this perspective, feminism can be seen as an attempt to replace the patriarchal system with one that favours women over men, rather than promoting gender equality. As a man, Luke feels intimidated by this perception of feminism and resists the narrative by pointing out cases in which men are more frequently victimised than women. For Luke, women may be victims of sexual assault. However, this is balanced out as men are frequent victims of other violent attacks. He undermines the problem of rape culture by claiming that the narrative is used by feminists to justify their position against men. In essence, rape culture is used as a tool to overthrow patriarchal systems to the detriment of men.

***Luke (FG3)** The whole notion of rape culture is very much a feminist topic - modern feminism being something I believe to have become the ultimate fight against a non-existent (or at least largely overrated) problem - and the way rape culture nestled itself into the narrative of third-wave feminism should have been expected, as rape is the only violent crime*

that affects women more than men (if we exclude prison rapes of course). Men outnumber women 3:1 in homicide victims, 3:2 in robbery victims, 2.2:1.8 in assault victims, and 3.5:1 in suicide victims. This is why rape culture fits so nicely within the third-wave feminist narrative that seems obsessed with hating men. It is essentially the only (sort of) legitimate point left to be made that can (sort of) be backed by stats.

Isaac (FG3) *Modern feminism (third wave feminism) is detrimental towards creating a solution for rape culture.*

Isaac did not share many opinions in the group. However, when he did post something it was to solidify his position against feminism. The abovementioned quote is interesting as Isaac does not deny the existence of a rape culture, but rather takes issue with feminism as a hindrance in finding solutions to the problem. Isaac failed to respond to prompts from myself and another group member to elaborate on this statement. It could be that he did not want to go into detail concerning his opinions, or perhaps he felt that his agreement with Luke was sufficient. Regardless, the short insights Isaac provided indicates that addressing rape culture in society goes beyond the availability of information concerning the topic, but also needs to address ideological beliefs that undermine these assumptions.

4.1.3.6. Gender

In the discussion, the theme of gender emerged in various and often over-arching ways. At a glance, the statements made by Khabane and Megan may seem different. However, both reveal an inherent gender-based group mentality.

Khabane (FG1) *Is rape culture only a female narrative? Those are the questions I struggle to think about as well? I know that men are not marginalized not even one bit to the extent of woman.*

During the focus group discussion, Khabane consistently showed that he understands rape culture and he engages with others to learn more. This quote reflects that while he

understands that GBV affects women more than men, he is trying to reconcile how male sexual assault fits into rape culture. Khabane discusses cases in which boys and young men were victims of sexual assault as he tries to understand where the male voice should feature, without overshadowing the female experience. This reflects Khabane's attempt to relate to rape culture as a man.

Megan (FG1) *I like how the women called out the man for his behavior. This is how we can call out men on their problematic behavior. It is ultimately a result of being in a patriarchal society. Also I do understand where ur understanding comes from Khabane personally I get catcalled at least once a week. This forms apart of rape culture and I call them out on it. Perhaps, and I hope, if other women see another call a man out on his behavior, they might do so as well.*

Megan's quote demonstrates her alliance to other women and implicitly indicates that women can and should take a more active role in calling out problematic behaviour in society. The ways in which Megan and Khabane try to relate their understanding and experiences of rape culture to their identified gender group is also reflected in the earlier anti-feminist position taken up by Isaac and Mark. This reflects a group-mentality way of thinking which can hinder progress concerning rape culture education.

4.1.3.7. Rape or Rape Culture?

A theme that came up during the discussion is a discrepancy surrounding the definitions of rape and rape culture. It is worth addressing this, as this presented itself as a theme during the comment section analysis. Some participants perceived the term 'rape' and 'rape culture' as synonymous.

Khabane (FG1) *Yes, men do have a big role to counteract rape culture, however what happens when they themselves face incidence of rape culture. I hope its a little clearer?*

During the focus group discussion, Khabane posed this question in the group as this is something he has been struggling to understand.

Jessica (FG1) So are you asking whether men can be oppressed by rape culture as well? If men are raped in society, are they victims of rape culture? Hmmm interesting question. Well, let's start off by saying that they are definitely victims, of course. But I am not certain whether they are victims of rape culture. Emphasis on culture here, when we are talking about cultures here we are referring to whole communities. I suppose this question ties to how one defines rape culture. I would want to emphasize the culture part of rape culture. If a man or men are immersed in a society/community/culture that daily sexually objectifies and/or sexually harasses (and even rape) men then yes they are oppressed by that rape culture. However, that is rarely the case. I suppose it does happen in some cases in the world where WHOLE communities and societies are socialised into sexually harassing and objectifying men, but rarely. If a woman is raped in a community where the people respect women, tend to not sexually objectify or sexually harass women - is she a victim of rape culture? I would say no. And to your question. I would say that men can be victims of rape, but not necessarily rape culture. What do you think?

Jessica (FG1) However, if I had to twist my argument. I suppose prisons could be an extreme example of rape culture for men - there are prison communities who foster and develop a culture where men are sexually objectified, sexually harassed and raped every day. This is an example, where men are not only victims of rape, but also victims of rape culture.

Jessica responds to Khabane by highlighting that while men can be victims of rape or other forms of sexual assault, they are not oppressed by the same societal narratives and structures that serve to oppress women. She further illustrates this point by considering the prison community in which sexual assault is normalised. According to Medina and Nguyen (2018), prison rape is not just about sexual intercourse, rather it is a conduit for the

expression and maintenance of power relationships, dominance and control. Sexual violence becomes normalised in prison as the criminal justice system utilises rape as a means to discipline, divide and distract those trapped within the system (Medina & Nguyen, 2018). Similarly, rape outside prison is not only about sexual pleasure, but also about dominance, control and power. Therefore, the term rape culture is used not only to problematise the act of rape, but also to diagnose the structures in society which perpetuate the notion that the female body, or the feminine, is an object subjected to the power of male dominance and aggression.

Despite reading the group members definitions of rape culture, Matthew was surprised to find out that street harassment and cat-calling are synonymous.

Matthew (FG2) *Street harassment = cat calling?*

Matthew (FG2) *Ok so rape can be verbal? Is rape an extreme version of harassment? Surely there are levels to this. Can street harassment have the same impact as physical rape? Your thoughts?*

Kendall (FG2) *The act of rape is far more severe than just the physical component. The mental scars endure for a far greater time than the physical wound.*

As a frequent victim of street harassment I (and many of my peers) can vouch for the severe psychological impact street harassment has. The comments are not merely sexual - they imply violence and destruction. I.e. "Lemme wreck that pussy", "I'd love to tear that ass up", "Let's find a nice dark bush and I'll fuck you raw". Those are personal accounts.

Here, Kendall uses her personal experience to draw attention to the effects of sexual harassment. While it may not be considered as 'violent' as the act of rape, it serves to assert control over the person being harassed and consequently affects the emotional and mental well-being of the one being harassed.

Luke (FG3) *Something is either rape or it isn't. We can't possibly rely on what someone "perceives as rape" in individual situations. If the only way we could decide if someone was*

raped is if they feel they were, we're not sticking to a factual basis of what rape is. We need to find an agreed upon textbook definition of rape and stick to that. If every person can just decide what any crime means to them the criminal justice system would be an absolute joke. I could for example decide that you murdered me because you stepped on my toe and it would have to be seen as valid because I "perceive it as murder".

Something is either murder or it's not. Something is either rape or it's not. Your feelings don't change the facts.

Luke (FG3) *That being said, I would never try to trivialize actual rape cases in men or women but then it has to be that - actual rape. To apply a term as strong and meaningful as rape to the things feminists are trying to tie it to these days, is disgraceful and an insult to actual rape victims whose lives have been completely destroyed by it. Rape is, according to me, the most disgusting violent crime out there. But cat-calling is not rape, being drunk and having sex with some guy and then feeling bad about it the next morning is not rape. Real rape culture is a girl walking to school in Nigeria and there being close to a 35% chance that she will be taken against her will and made a sex puppet. Now that's a legitimate fight to fight.*

James (FG3) *Yet again, I think your argument is based from a place where you presume superior knowledge surrounding what a woman should perceive as rape. I don't think it comes from a place of understanding what does equate (and legitimately so) to rape for certain women.*

4.3.2. Learning about Rape Culture

During the focus group discussions, participants reflected on where and how they first learned about rape culture. The following sub-themes emerged; *Protest, Social media and the Internet and Suggestions for rape culture education.*

4.3.2.1. Protest

The majority of the students first heard or learned about rape culture after witnessing the events of the student protests that swept across South African universities in 2015 and 2016. Socio-politically charged events such as student protests allow students and activists to raise awareness concerning a variety of issues that require attention and transformation. According to Khabane, he first heard about rape culture during the Fees Must Fall and Rhodes student movements. While these movements were more concerned about providing free education and decolonisation, issues of gender and subsequently rape culture came to the forefront as members within the movement were accused of sexual assault. Furthermore, gender relations within the movement came into play as the majority of the leaders across the universities were female and could, therefore, raise awareness of fees and decolonisation in an intersectional space, which evolved into addressing concerns regarding rape culture and campus safety.

Khabane (FG1) I first heard about it during the 2015 Fees and Rhodes movements

Megan (FG1) I agree with all the women's comments/views. Also as mentioned I first heard of it during the Rhodes chapter 2.12 protests which sparked rape culture protests across campuses. Upon further investment I found that the term/concept already existed in literature

Kendall (FG2) 2015 when students began to protest structures that enabled mass injustices such as rape culture.

4.3.2.2. Social Media and the Internet

Other participants first heard about rape culture on social media and the internet. It should be noted that the protest action addressing rape culture consequently resulted in greater coverage on Facebook during that time. Therefore, the protest action may have influenced the ways in which rape culture information become available on social media. Other participants with an interest in feminism received information concerning rape culture

from the feminist orientated pages they follow. Participants who have an interest in feminism and gender relations are more likely to be exposed to topics such as rape culture earlier than those who do not. As previously mentioned, this type of digital feminism allows for the spread of ideas to be proliferated outside the academic realm. However, this information will only reach those who are interested in the first place. With events such as the #Endrapeculture protests, the use of the hashtag activism allows the information to become trending, thereby reaching a greater audience that may not have heard about the concept otherwise.

Amy (FG1) I first heard about rape culture through a feminist page that I started following in my third year of undergrad and it kind of just made sense to me and I could relate to it. I started reading more about it after that

Brandon (FG2) I heard about rape culture through different articles or video's online, was streamed on feminist sites or posts. Also through various incidents occurring on uni and then protests following the lack of acknowledgement of those incidents.

Luke (FG3) Probably been made aware of the term on the internet.

4.3.2.3. Suggestions for Rape Culture Education

Reflecting on their own learning experiences, participants recommended various strategies to improve rape culture education.

Brandon (FG2) I would want it to look at the behavior and entitlement of men, towards women, like also to elaborate on why authority figures or institutions, play on victim blaming. Also, having a discourse, about where rape culture comes from, looking at the patriarchal roots, and how it can be rectified, from a young age. Teaching boys to respect women, and society to respect the marginalised.

As a man interested in aspects of gender and feminism, Brandon's suggestion is to target rape culture education from a socialised perspective.

Mia (FG2) *I think it should include various mediums, all from primary sources. While creativity is important (poetry etc.) - I think it would reach a lot of people if the content was raw and first hand. So non glitzy interviews, personal diary entries from those who consent, the recording of the first person a victim called.*

Khabane (FG2) *Yes indeed, I think students partaking in focus groups like this will be very effective. It creates a feeling of safety and non-partisanship, so you can express your views and still learn. I agree with Amy, that people are not always keen to engage online, but in my view creating groups like this will be an effective starting point.*

Throughout the discussion, Khabane engaged with the other group members and felt free to raise his opinions and questions. Finding this interaction to be valuable, it is of no surprise that Khabane suggests similar group discussion to be used as a tool for rape culture education.

4.3.3. The Role of Social Media

The objective of this focus group was to understand how a group of students who experienced the #Endrapeculture university protests discussed rape culture in an online space, to explore the usability of social media as a pedagogical tool to address rape culture on campus. As previously mentioned, the participants revealed that the majority of the information they received about rape culture came from online sources and social media platforms. The participants in all three focus groups expressed similar views on the current role and potential of social media as a platform to constructively engage with their peers to discuss rape culture. The following sub-themes are discussed: *Online engagement and identity, Sharing content on social media and Potential of social media as a tool for rape culture education.*

4.3.3.1. Online Engagement and Identity

While the participants agreed that social media is a useful tool to acquire information, there was a general consensus that interacting with others online to debate topics such as rape culture may not be useful. This is attributed to previous experiences in which participants would attempt to engage with others on such issues only to be verbally attacked or trolled.

Amy (FG1) *Not really. I didn't have anything to add to the conversations around it.*

Sometimes the emotional investment takes it's toll on me when I'm defending movements that I deem important.

Tasneem (FG3) *People will encourage for others to talk about these issues but the problem is not everyone has the same outlook or opinion and most people don't know how to or refuse to acknowledge someone else's point of view because they feel their views are more important or more accurate . That is the reason why people don't talk about it fearing that they might be attacked for their thoughts or opinions. Which is a problem in the sense that we have to get more people talking about it and if they are wrong it is better to educate them than to just refuse their opinion straight out, because opinions are the first thoughts based on what someone may know so if they understand better their point of view hopefully changes.*

Luke (FG3) *It may seem like I am avoiding the issue but I consciously try not to get into keyboard battles about things like rape culture anymore. My arguments have been dismissed with "fragile masculinity" and "woman hater" far too many times for this to be a productive use of my time. More often than not the people engaging in these discussions (especially online) are not there to hear different points of view and consider them fairly - instead they resort to ad hominem attacks and strawman arguments. It becomes tedious after a while.*

The above quotes indicate that participants felt that debating with others online is an emotionally draining experience, especially since the majority of the time participants felt

that their identity was being attacked rather than having a productive discussion concerning the issues.

4.3.3.2. Sharing Content on Social Media

Participants reasons for sharing or not sharing content on social media differed. Those who shared content on social media found practical value in sharing information.

***Kendall (FG2)** I always share content focused on the effects of rape culture. I'm constantly faced with people's accounts of it and I share to raise awareness of an often-ignored problem.*

During the conversation, Kendall positioned herself as a transgendered woman committed to speaking out and addressing injustices and inequalities. For her, sharing content on social media plays a role in raising awareness. According to Kendall, the people on her social media may not have to like it. However, they cannot avoid seeing it. Furthermore, sharing content on social media reinforces her identity as a “social justice warrior” committed to speaking out against problematic behaviours in society.

***Saajidah (FG2)** I don't share on Facebook, because of older family members being friends, in fear that they may read too much into it, or reprimand me for posting such "suggestive" things. I come from a fairly reserved family. On WhatsApp however, due to privacy, I do, especially with my colleagues, since it's something we're all interested in.*

Other participants did not share either because they were against feminism and rape culture, or they did not believe sharing content would make a difference. However, for people like Saajidah, socio-cultural factors may play a role. During the discussion, Saajidah did not make any reference to cultural or religious identities. However, her quote here suggests that while she may not have structured her identity according to these factors within the group, she remains cognisant of her ties to her conservative family which in turn limits the way she

may present herself on social media pages where they may observe and make assumptions of her actions.

4.3.3.3. Potential of Social Media as a tool for Rape Culture Education

Through the focus group discussions, participants revealed that social media has a great deal of potential as a tool for rape culture education. However, like all forms of technology, its effectiveness and outcomes would depend on the ways it is presented and used.

Jessica (FG1) Posts about rape culture often comes up on my Facebook, but I rarely see any posts about rape culture on my other social media platforms, such as Instagram or YouTube.

Saajidah (FG2) Yes. It works off some algorithm thingy like Google. So it picks up what you like, or search for, so you see more of that? I'm probably not the best techie person, to explain how it works exactly, but when you search for something, or regularly like/comment/share/watch a certain type of thing, it will show you more of that. I'm sure you've all seen "suggested posts" or "suggested pages" which is similar to stuff you've already liked? It works the same as YouTube/Netflix - you search for 1 thing, and then it recommends similar vids/shows? Hope I'm making sense. I myself only learnt about it recently

The algorithm Saajidah speaks of operates on social media platforms, as well as other online sites. It monitors a user's online activity to suggest certain posts users might be interested in. The content that appears on a user's social media platform is also related to the type of content their social media friends post and like, as well as the type of pages they follow.

Stephanie (FG1) I think social media has the power to do alot of things if it is handled and voiced in the correct manner. Many people use social media, particularly Facebook and you're always seeing posts on missing children, protests that are on the go, news reports so

on, the media is aware that social media is one of the best ways to get to the general public and inform the majority, few read magazine's and newspapers these days, generally those who do such as my dad... don't engage with social media. I've also learnt that social media gets the message across a lot quicker too. So if other posts can reach a large population then I believe putting rape culture out there is a great way to help educate people and get feedback from a very wide population with different views and experiences perhaps. It may even be beneficial to have a list of psychologists available on the website that one may post on social media to help those who have had experiences get closer to a source of help and closure

Luke (FG3) *I don't think social media is the problem, people are the problem. Whether online or in real life, you'll always find intolerant people unwilling to hear any other opinion than their own*

As Stephanie points out, social media has various benefits that can be capitalised on. However, as Luke points out, people seem to be the problem. The interaction between Luke and James in the SFFG represented a microcosm the type of conflict that can arise in social media debates. Unlike the conflict that can occur in social media debates, the smaller scaled, facilitated nature of the SFFG provided the two with the space to talk through the conflict. Ultimately, both participants described the group discussion as a good experience.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore the digital discourse of rape culture in relation to South African campuses, in order to provide a broad and condensed understanding of the phenomenon. To accomplish this, I collected and analysed comments relating to the 2016 #Endrapeculture protests and conducted online focus groups with young people who were students at the time of data collection, or had been students at the time of the protests.

Similar and complementary themes emerged from the comment section and focus group analysis to provide insight concerning rape culture. I specifically chose comments related to the 2016 #Endrapeculture protests as it represented a moment in South African society in which dominant ideas concerning rape and sexual assault on campus were rejected and openly challenged through the production of online counter-publics. Therefore, the observation of the comment section allowed me to observe a multitude of voices contributing their thoughts of resistance, defiance, outrage, support and camaraderie. The amalgamation of these voices demonstrated a rape culture narrative with some users perpetuating rape culture through their comments, but also the resistance of rape culture narratives through the construction of the counter-public. The focus group discussions provided a more controlled insight into the ways participants, who experienced the #Endrapeculture protests as students, positioned and structured their thoughts and opinions to engage with one another to discuss rape culture in an online space.

The student protests were trending across social media. The role social media played in the protests was instrumental. These protests did not only draw attention to the structural safety precautions that the universities need to address, but also to the institutional culture which perpetuates a rape culture. The trending nature of the protests on social media resulted in responses from universities to employ task teams to investigate the context and culture to make further recommendations for action to be taken.

In line with the aims of the study, I wish to highlight three key themes which emerged both in the comment section as well as the focus group discussions namely; Victim Blaming, Patriarchy and Rape or Rape Culture. These themes provide insight into understanding the perception and presence of rape culture on South African campuses. Furthermore, based on my observations of the comment section and the focus groups, I will discuss the role of social media in addressing the issue of rape culture on campus.

5.1. Victim-Blaming

The phenomenon of victim-blaming is well-established in the literature concerning rape, and in modern discourse, understanding victim-blaming is essential to understanding rape. Over the years, various theories have emerged to explain why people engage in victim-blaming. In this thesis, I referred to the JWB to make sense of the victim-blaming comments that arose from my data. Despite academic attempts to make sense of victim-blaming, the concept still eludes many who practice and engage in victim-blaming scripts on a daily basis.

The results from comment section show that while there are people who have knowledge of victim-blaming and actively challenge it, there are also those who perpetuate it and those who simply do not understand because they have not accessed that information. As previously mentioned, what was most surprising was the emergence of victim-blaming discourse in the Facebook comment section.

Following the premise of a JWB framework, the commenters perpetuating the victim-blaming discourse against the protesters are engaging in cognitive exercises which presume that marching topless through the streets is a deviation from societal norms. What they are doing is seen as wrong, therefore they should not be surprised if they lure in ‘potential rapists’. But why was being naked considered wrong? Was it the display of naked bodies that ignited the moral fire and outrage of some of the commenters? To unpack this further, let us consider that these bodies are not only naked, but they are also black and they are angry.

Would the reception of this demonstration be different if it were majority white bodies on display? There are various contexts where nudity is accepted, celebrated and revered as artistic expression, especially in mainstream media. Yet, marching through the street naked or even breastfeeding in public is seen as a horrific event, even though these scenarios present the body in its most natural state. As some of the commenters pointed out, being topless is part of traditional African cultures.

While the JWB framework explains why people engage in victim-blaming behaviours, it fails to give insight on how people acquire these beliefs or why they maintain them. As Brownmiller (1975) argues, all women can be victims of rape. We have seen news reports of old women, young girls, babies, commercial sex workers and niqabis being victims of sexual assault. Yet, the commenters and some of the participants in the focus groups perpetuated the idea that being naked in public would result in sexual assault. The idea that a woman's clothing has any impact on either preventing or precipitating sexual assault has received criticism and is openly challenged during the #Endrapeculture naked protests (and in similar international protests such as SlutWalk). The nature of the victim-blaming comments that emerged suggest that it was not the nudity of the protesters itself, rather the context and performance of these bodies.

The naked female body marks a site of friction, empowerment and politics (Eileraas, 2014). Therefore, I argue that the victim-blaming comments aimed at the protesters were based on the belief that these bodies were disrupting the patriarchal narrative, and the resistance that lies within the victim-blaming discourse represents an attempt to protect this patriarchy and to provide a warning to those who do not abide by the rules of patriarchy. In this way, we perpetuate a culture of fear that is meant to keep women in line. Unfortunately, this fear is not unfounded considering the high rates of GBV in South Africa. As Gqola (2015) argues, South African women are a collective majority (52%) under siege. The victim-

blaming discourse serves to perpetuate the notion that women who do not follow the rules are punishable, which in turn serves to normalise sexual violence in our society (Morales, 2015).

The findings from the comment section also suggest that we may need to critically rethink what constitutes ‘victim-blaming’. In 2013 the hashtag #safetytipsforladies trended on Twitter as a result of women’s exasperation with anti-rape advice which was critiqued as perpetuating victim blaming. Women who used this hashtag criticised rape prevention strategies for placing the responsibility on women to protect themselves from rape, rather than teaching men not to rape (Rentschler, 2015). This suggests that feminist hashtags represent a symbolic rerouting of anti-rape discourse, which in turn influences how discussions and politicise the prevention of sexual assault and GBV (Gouws, 2018; Rentschler, 2015).

From a postmodern feminist perspective, this demonstrates how language can impact dominant ideas and influence how we view concepts such as victim-blaming. The findings from this study and previous works suggest that the way we conceptualise victim-blaming should be expanded to look into the mechanisms which serve to perpetuate victim-blaming practices.

While the comment section provided insight into societal views of victim blaming, the focus group demonstrated how a group of students engaged with each other on the topic. While there were group members with polar opposite views on the topic, there was a sense of learning and co-construction that occurred within the groups. Group members were able to debate, provide information and ask questions concerning various components of rape culture. The majority of participants understood rape culture through the concept of victim-blaming.

5.2. Patriarchy

Through my reading of both the comment section and focus group discussions, I found the theme of patriarchy emerging in two ways. The first was the perpetuation of a patriarchal discourse through victim-blaming and trivialising (denial of) rape culture. This finding was to be expected concerning the literature on rape culture in South Africa.

However, I was surprised to observe the ways in which people in the comment section and the focus group participants specifically implicated patriarchy in perpetuating rape culture on campus and in society, and drew attention to the dire need to specifically aim efforts toward male education. More specifically, the discourse surrounding male education suggests that men should be active participants in their education. It also indicated that there is a desire to see more men as allies. Furthermore, in the focus group discussion, it was the male participants that argued for educational efforts to be targeted at men and boys.

The purpose of the focus groups was to understand how students communicate on matters of rape culture in an online space, in order to better understand how to utilise the potential of this technology and facilitate educational discussions around rape culture. The debate between Luke and James during the focus group discussion presented an interesting moment for reflection. In this case, there are two white males debating the realities of rape culture. While there were three other women in the group, neither of them interfered in the discussion (they only shared their thoughts after I prompted). It was clear that the argument was between the two men. During their debate, James generally argued that ‘men don’t seem to understand consent’, to which Luke pointed out (twice) that James himself is a man. From my reading of the data, I presume this was done to get James to reveal the fallacy in his argument by claiming he is not one of those men. However, James seemed more educated than most on the topic and argued the point through feminist discourse and drawing on his female friend’s experiences. The debate was on the verge of escalating into an argument, but

the two ultimately decided to ‘agree to disagree’. Reflecting on this moment and the aforementioned comments, I realised that there are very few spaces for men to have these types of discussion.

The data from this study reflects the need to educate men, but there is little to suggest what this can and should entail. Even though they did not reach consensus, I highlighted the debate between Luke and James because it suggests that these online focus groups provide a potentially engaging space for people (and men) to learn and discuss these issues. What was lacking was a formal pedagogic structure. To formalise rape culture education, there is a need to first understand the complex historical, social and cultural factors that gave rise to the rape culture context in South Africa.

In both international and South African scholarship, rape and GBV is understood as a manifestation and demonstration of unequal and gendered power. Therefore, high levels of GBV should be situated within local contexts. The role of a patriarchy has been at the forefront of discussions concerning rape (Brownmiller, 1975; Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Gqola, 2015). However, it is important to note that patriarchy manifests in various ways, and these manifestations emerge within a society’s socio-political, historical and cultural contexts (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Watson & Mentor-Lalu, 2015).

There is a need to understand the context-specific manifestation of patriarchy, as a failure to do so perpetuates assumptions that some countries are more patriarchal than others (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016). Countries such as South Africa with higher rape statistics are constructed as being more patriarchal because the unequal gender power relations are made visible through these reports of GBV. However, by viewing South African society as being ‘more patriarchal’ we are in danger of conceptualising GBV in relation to a broad patriarchal framework that lacks tangible approaches to address the problem. Furthermore, by conflating patriarchal societies as being rape-prone in comparison to non-patriarchal societies we risk

silencing the discussion regarding the variations and subtleties in patriarchies, of which rape may or may not be a symptom (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016). For example, recent social media movements following the Harvey Weinstein scandal suggest that countries such as the United States of America (USA), which are constructed as being more gender progressive continue to perpetuate their own brand of patriarchy. The type of GBV we have seen from these social movements reveal the subjugation of the feminine from powerful men who have the resources to maintain patriarchy by silencing their victims through fear and intimidation. This expression of a patriarchy appears more subtle than in South Africa, nonetheless, it is still present. It is a testament to the type of patriarchy that exists in those sectors of society that can maintain silence and control for so many years. Therefore, there is a critical need to understand what exactly constitutes patriarchy, and the complex factors that may influence how this translates into higher counts of rape and GBV (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Gqola, 2015). According to Moffett (2006)

while useful, western aetiological models that highlight the anger, fear and inadequacy of individual men or the monstrosity of patriarchy as central to the “story” of why men rape, fail to provide sufficiently nuanced explanatory or analytical frameworks for the current South African experience of pervasive sexual violence (p. 131).

In South Africa, rape is evidence of the ‘quest for gendered power’ and the perpetuation of patriarchal hierarchies in post-apartheid South Africa (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Gouws, 2015, 2018; Gqola, 2015; Watson & Mentor-Lalu, 2015) As previously mentioned, South African women are living in a paradox. The increased representation of women in positions of power sends the message that South African women are in fact empowered. Research shows that there is a substantial gap between the vision of the progressive South African constitution and the lived realities of women (Buiten & Naidoo,

2016; Gqola, 2015; Watson & Mentor-Lalu, 2015) The question then is, why this gap continues to exist? What is it about South Africa's social circumstances that result in high rates of GBV?

According to Watson and Mentor-Lalu (2015), the high levels of GBV in South Africa reveals something about hegemonic constructions of masculinity and femininity and the underlying patriarchal norms which perpetuate these constructions and allow conditions in which violence can thrive. Studies on rape and sexual violence in South Africa suggest that the high prevalence of rape is deeply embedded in ideas about masculinity (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Watson & Mentor-Lalu, 2015). However, Buiten and Naidoo (2016) argue that the majority of these studies utilised populations from the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng (Watson & Mentor-Lalu, 2015) provinces, often resulting in samples in which the majority of the participants are Black males from low-income communities. This is problematic as it perpetuates discourse around Black masculinities as being inherently dangerous, patriarchal and culturally prone to sexual violence (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Gqola, 2015).

Fears about Black male sexualities were made real during the apartheid era, as the government used this discourse to justify the control of Black male bodies through various legislation. While these laws have been abolished, the fear remains in the public subconscious. The lack of similar studies concerning masculinities and sexual violence in relation to white and/or middle class (or even upper class) men is a revealing omission (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016). Additionally, it erases the experiences and history of sexual violence against Black women by powerful white men (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Gqola, 2015). Perhaps it is because the sexual violence Black women experienced during colonial and apartheid times was not framed in terms of rape, as black female bodies were sexualised (fetishized) property.

What Black women experienced as rape, white women saw as a threat to their relationship with white men (Gouws, 2015). Through the violation of the white man and the scorn from white women, the black female body became a site of sexual shame. The lack of addressing these past realities translates into modern-day consequences as Black women continue to face stigma and shame that is associated with colonial and apartheid narratives (Gouws, 2015; Gqola, 2015). By appearing naked in public, the protesters verbally and physically challenged the gendered power of patriarchy. The comments towards the naked protesters included moral outrage and disgust. It is the combination of these comments that are suggestive of a patriarchal discourse shaped by colonial and apartheid practices and constructions concerning race and culture. The discourse emanating from the comment section reflects this patriarchal position by reinforcing notions of fear (possibility of rape) and intimidation (trivialising the message behind the protest, resorting to insults) upon the protesters and the commenters who align themselves with the protesters.

In the comment section and focus group discussions, points were raised concerning the role of the law and government in addressing the issue of sexual assault on campus. These represented two opposing points; 1) those who critiqued current actions (or lack thereof) against GBV and sexual assault and demonstrated mistrust towards law enforcement and; 2) those who felt that the problem should be addressed by the police and government. Evidence suggests that the government policies and structures in place to address these issues are more for show, and rarely result in meaningful action. For example, the rape and murder of Anene Booysen, a young woman from Bredasdorp attracted the attention of the media and public, resulting in the government spending a substantial amount of money on creating job opportunities for young people in Bredasdorp (Watson & Mentor-Lalu, 2015).

While youth unemployment is indeed a problem and a risk factor of sexual violence, the complexities underlying the problem of rape was not addressed (Watson & Mentor-Lalu,

2015). Therefore, government involvement following the Booysen case was seen as a political stunt by passing up a teachable moment and an opportunity to enact change. As Gouws (2015) argues policymakers only view deviant behaviour as a problem when it is perceived to threaten the social order. As the current social order continues to favour a patriarchal hierarchy under the guise of working towards gender equality, there is no imminent need to explore alternative strategies.

Moments of political unrest, such as the #endrapeculture protests are important as it works toward disrupting the dominant narrative. This disruption serves to influence the way people talk about and frame the problem of rape, which in turn influences the way the problem is addressed. In this case, students are situating the problem within a rape culture framework, thereby highlighting the need to not only address campus safety but also problems within the institutional culture (dealing with victim-blaming and reporting perpetrators). The success of the students' disruption is evident in the response from a South African university that formed a task team to investigate rape culture on campus following the protest events.

5.3. Rape or Rape Culture

According to Brownmiller (1975), early scholars rarely engaged with the topic of rape, preferring to set the concept aside as an act of deviance and deep-seated perversion. This construction of rape has persisted over the years, despite research reports and public service announcements detailing that more often than not, rape occurs at the hand of someone who is familiar. Despite the statistics that demonstrate that GBV is not ordinary; it is everywhere (Gqola, 2015).

While it was never made explicit in the Facebook comment or the focus groups, I observed that people who talk about rape and rape culture as if it were synonymous were the ones who showed the most resistance. It was like watching people talk about mandarins and

oranges – on the surface level it appears that they are discussing the same thing, but in actuality, they are having two separate conversations. Those who were talking about rape culture were referring to a broader culture that normalises sexual violence and that we are all complicit in. However, some people hear the word rape and conjure up outdated constructions of deviance and perversion, and proceed to argue that they do not condone rape and that they abhor rapists.

As previously mentioned and as my focus group participants argued, people do not want to believe that they know someone who is capable of such ‘deviance’ and ‘perversion’, they do not want to acknowledge the role they may have played in perpetuating this behaviour. It is easier to blame the faceless, violent criminal who should be found and exercised from society. But this figure is rarely found, and he is rarely brought to justice because his existence is a caricature. The ones who are accused of rape do not always match this profile. They are accomplished, they have families and friends and they lead normal lives. According to Gqola (2015), we know what is responsible for the high rates of GBV in this country and we need to confront these masculinities. We need to have conversations about rape culture, but first, we need to ensure that people are aware of the differences between rape as an act of physical violence, and the rape culture we engage in that serves to perpetuate it.

5.4. Can Social Media be used to Address Rape Culture on Campuses?

Research suggests that social media has arguably become a key aspect of contemporary culture and cultural change (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017; Rentschler, 2014; Zaleski et al., 2016). The use of social media as a valuable tool and resource for informing feminist theory and activism has resulted in an increase of research efforts to better understand the possibilities of using these platforms (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017; Rentschler, 2014, Zaleski et al., 2015). The ultimate goal of my study was to gain insight

into the ways in which information concerning rape culture within South African university communities are disseminated and reproduced on social media platforms, to understand if or how social media can be used to address these issues on campus. As previously mentioned, research has shown that social media serves to provide a counter-public, in which feminists and activists can challenge dominant narratives about sexual violence and gender inequality (Rentschler, 2014). The comment section and focus group discussions support these findings and reveal certain challenges and advantages that need to be taken into consideration.

The limited body of evidence focused on rape culture and social media speaks more to people's perceptions of rape culture based on emerging narratives on social media platforms) (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017; Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018; Zaleski et al., 2016) or the role of social media in mobilizing people to speak out against sexual assault (Armstrong & Mahone, 2017). While this provides much-needed insight into understanding rape culture and the potential of social media to raise awareness, it does not go further to understand the contextual factors that influence people's beliefs and opinions concerning rape culture, nor does it provide substantial comments regarding the possible ways social media can be utilised.

In this study, I examined the comments people made relating to the #Endrapeculture protests to understand how rape culture narratives emerge and are (re)produced within this context. I proceeded to conduct the online focus groups to observe how students interact with each other and discuss rape culture. In essence, the focus groups represented a microcosm of the Facebook comment threads and allowed me to better understand the emergence of rape culture discourse in context and the more practical ways of using social media to address these problems.

Like any other technological advancement, the utility of social media is determined by the person or entity using it. This point was easily recognised by the focus group

participants. Some people prefer to use platforms like Facebook for recreational purposes, keeping in touch with friends and family, acquiring trending news, discussing politics, sharing narratives and experiences or a combination these.

According to Baym and Boyd (2012), people engage in these online activities to construct safe public identities for themselves, effectively juggling multiple identities and audiences and resulting in the emergence of multiple and diverse publics, counter-publics and other social arrangements. Just as feminists and activists have found value in using social media to disseminate their counter-publics, so too have other groups, such as the Alt-right, discovered spaces where their messages are heard and validated. That is to say, social media is not a value-free space.

Furthermore, as one of the focus group participants stated, Facebook and other social media platforms use algorithms to predict what content their users enjoy and want to see more often, based on how they engage with similar content on the platform (Milan, 2015). For example, one of the focus group participants stated that she sees a lot of content related to rape culture on her profile. This can be attributed to the fact that she shares and likes content that raises awareness of rape culture. The Facebook algorithm determines that this is content she enjoys and can then ensure that similar content is prioritised on her newsfeed. The same principle can be applied to the participants who took a stance against feminism. Based on this premise, it can be argued that the algorithm works to prioritise anti-feminist content. While social media holds the potential to disseminate information and challenge dominant narratives, it also has the potential to reinforce people's perceptions and core beliefs.

During the focus group discussions, the participants pointed out that people often resort to personal attacks during online debates. This is attributed to the fact that people feel personally attacked when their beliefs, opinions or ideologies are criticised. This was prevalent in the comment section, as people often resorted to insults rather than discussing

the points of the argument. As Baym and Boyd (2012) argue, social media mirrors everyday life, but the perceived public nature of social media also brings into question practices that are presumed stable by shedding light on contested phenomena.

In a society such as South Africa, much of the population remains segregated. Consequently, people are rarely exposed to diverse ways of thinking. Social media presents with both public and quasi-public qualities, in that people can manage their online identities and social circle. However, they are also situated within the public sphere. Therefore, while social media content serves the user's interest by perpetuating content the user may find enjoyable, it also allows for interaction between people who may challenge each other's knowledge frameworks. In open public threads, such as the comment threads analysed in this study, it is difficult to find resolve between diverse viewpoints as both parties believe their frameworks are valid. Within the smaller focus group discussions, there was less pressure among participants to prove a point. While similar debates arose among participants, the presence of a facilitator helped to ease the tension between the participants and bring the focus back to the topic at hand.

Based on my observations of the comment section and the input from my focus group participants, I argue that social media can be used as a pedagogical tool to address issues around rape culture and sexual violence on campus. It should be noted that efforts to use social media should be multifaceted to raise awareness and spread useful and relevant information on a macro level, and be interactive by engaging students on a micro level. Firstly, to effectively utilise social media platforms, users need to understand the role of the social media algorithm. The algorithm is not neutral and could, therefore, be used to increase the reach of rape culture awareness social media pages. Secondly, universities could engage students by creating online chat groups similar to the focus groups in this study. However, these discussions should take place within smaller, more controlled groups in order to

prioritise the topic of discussion. The presence of an experienced facilitator can help participants navigate their online social identities in a way that is constructive to the debate, rather than defensive. In order to effectively utilise social media platforms, users need to understand the role of the social media algorithm, to utilise it for the purpose of creating awareness of rape culture on campus



CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusion

The findings show that the public reaction towards the 2016 #Endrapeculture protest was divided, with some criticising the protesters and the protest method, while others showed their support. Those who criticised the protest perpetuated rape culture through discourse, which was predominantly expressed as attitudes that perpetuate victim-blaming, sexualise the female body, and trivialise the message behind the protest. Those who voiced their support for the movement formed a counter-public which directly and indirectly challenged rape culture by dismantling dominant ideas around rape and sexual assault. The focus group discussions were conducted more than a year after the protests concluded and demonstrate that the majority of the participants have heard of and knew what rape culture was, regardless of their personal opinion towards the topic. Therefore, it can be concluded that the #Endrapeculture protests were successful in creating awareness on social media.

Findings from the comment section and focus groups show that victim-blaming is perpetuated in society through discourse that normalises male sexual aggression and places the onus on women to protect themselves, thereby keeping all women in a constant state of fear. Furthermore, the findings indicate that many people equate rape culture with the act of rape. In the comment section, this resulted in miscommunication between those who spoke about rape culture and those who spoke about rape, thereby halting engaging debates. In the focus groups, the participants had the space to engage with each other to discuss the differences between rape and rape culture, and the ways this affects both men and women.

The findings indicate that social media has the potential to be an effective tool for raising awareness on a larger scale and engaging people in discussion on a smaller scale. The findings from the comment section show that social media is effective in creating awareness and providing information on the topic. However, in public posts, there is little control over

the conversation, which can quickly turn negative as people are more likely to result in personal verbal attacks rather than engaging in the issue at hand. On the other hand, the focus groups provided a more controlled space for participants to engage and freely discuss their opinions with one another. This suggests that social media is a multifaceted tool that can be used to address rape culture on university campuses.

6.2. Reflecting on Methodology

The methodology I used in this study proved to be useful in achieving the aims and objectives. Initially, I hypothesised that conducting both the natural observation of the comment section and the SFFGs would provide necessary insights regarding how people talked about and understood the concept of rape culture following the #endrapculture protests, and the potential use of social media to address sexual assault on campus. I was not sure how or if the findings from the comment section and SFFGs would fit together. After the completion of the data collection phase, I was both excited and slightly overwhelmed by the amount of data I had acquired. Once I started analysing the data, I was pleased to see how the data from the comment section and SFFGs proved to be complementary.

Using both of the aforementioned methods allowed me to collect a large amount of rich data in a short period of time. Additionally, it was useful in providing insights into rape culture discourse at a macro-level (comment section) and micro-level (SFFGs). The discussion that came from the SFFGs provided information that helped me to better understand the mechanisms underlying social media communication, such as the points that were raised by participants regarding the Facebook algorithm. In the comment section, I observed that the debates between commenters often deteriorated into insults and arguments rather. The participants in the SFFGs talked about their own online debating experiences which mirrored the interaction I observed in the comment section. Since the comment section was observed in retrospect and only called for observation, I was unable to pose questions

regarding the nature of the conflict. However, I could ask the SFFG participants to learn from their experiences.

6.3. Reflecting on Theory

The use of a postmodern feminist framework was well-suited for this study. As previously mentioned, earlier studies utilised both feminist standpoint theory and postmodern feminist theory to explore and investigate questions around power and gender identities in electronic communication (Ratliff, 2006). While I considered both these theories, I ultimately chose postmodern feminism as suitable for my study as it aligned well with the aims and the overall methodology. That is not to say that the standpoint theory is not suited for studies exploring rape culture and/or social media.

The strength of this theoretical framework is that it allowed me to draw on the works of various feminists and scholars to understand rape culture and rape culture discourses as historically situated and socially constructed through language as a tool of power. Through the use of this framework, I was able to unpack how people spoke about rape culture at a macro and micro level, what these narratives revealed about peoples understanding of rape culture, how ideas of traditional gender roles, sexuality and morality were co-constructed and subsequently de-constructed through talks about the #nakedprotest and SFFGs discussions.

By paying attention to language I was able to observe how the miscommunication around the terms ‘rape’ and ‘rape culture’ emerged and reflected on how this may be influenced by historical constructions and narratives which perceive rapists as violent and depraved deviants in society. The emergence of the online-counter public further supported that these constructions are not static, and open to being challenged and replaced by new ideas.

6.4. Limitations

The limitations of my study are related to the use of the Facebook social media platform as part of my methodology. While I found Facebook to be a valuable tool for data collection, there are inherent aspects of the Facebook application which in turn influenced the data collection process.

For the first part of my data collection, which involved searching for posts related to the April 2016 #Endrapeculture protest, I attempted a systematic search by utilising all possible trending hashtags that were used during that time and I limited the search to the defined time period. However, the way the Facebook algorithm is structured may have influenced the results that came up in my search. According to Facebook, when you use the Facebook search function, the results are sorted into four different categories: Top, Latest, People, and Photos, allowing you to view them in any of those ways. Furthermore, Constine (2015) reports that: “Once you’ve chosen one or entered, you’ll get a results page personalized based on around 200 factors including what you Like and engage with, what you’ve searched for, and info about your identity”. Therefore, it may be that another person conducting the same search and following the same procedure I did, would yield different results. Based on this limitation, I would recommend that more research needs to be done on understanding how social media algorithms work, specifically for social research purposes rather than commercial and business purposes.

Using these online focus groups have both benefits and limitations when compared with traditional face-to-face focus groups. The use of the SFFGs for the second part of the data collection yielded valuable results and insights. However, there were also certain challenges that required careful consideration. Firstly, the role of facilitator becomes more complex as there is no way to read and observe participants in real time. As such, it is very important to carefully consider ways to enhance rapport between the facilitator and

participants. For example, the debate that occurred between the two participants in the final focus group was a little tricky to navigate since I was unable to respond in real time.

However, this also allowed me space to first reflect on both parties narratives before I responded.

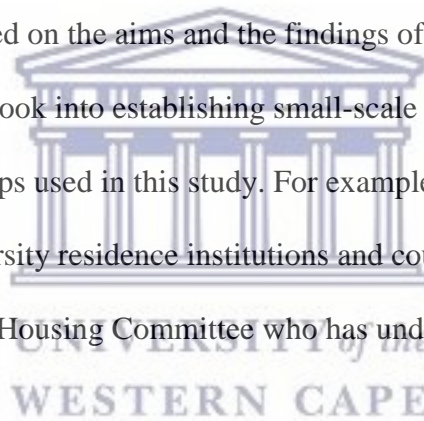
Additionally, the ability to send private messages to each participant proved beneficial in navigating these situations and the more challenging aspects of facilitation. Secondly, with online focus groups, the question of the authenticity of the participants comes into play. Even though I could check on the participant's personal page once we became 'friends' on Facebook, it is difficult to say with surety if the person on the other end is truly who they say they are. Thirdly, while the SFFGs were asynchronous, participants were asked to try to be online at certain times to ensure discussion. In some cases this worked, in other cases, the participants responded when they had time. While this is beneficial in that all participants had the opportunity to answer questions and respond to topics, it did not result in the same type of interaction that comes from face-to-face discussion. While it is more challenging to try to organize synchronous focus groups, I would recommend that future research should look at conducting SFFGs in real time.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, there are limits with regards to generalizing to the population. Additionally, in both parts of the data collection, this study was limited by only looking at participants who had active Facebook accounts. I would recommend that future studies focus on exploring rape culture on other prominent social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram or Tumblr. It would also be beneficial to explore how people who do not have access to the internet talk about rape or rape culture for comparative purposes.

6.5. Recommendations

Based on the findings, there is a need to develop structured platforms of rape culture education. While it is recommended that this be implemented in school curriculums, it is also necessary to target other avenues that are accessible to all members of the public. Social media may prove to be a cost-effective strategy to target people. However, more research needs to be done to understand how people position themselves and interact on social media. This will help to guide online interventions aimed at engaging people in discussion on the topic of rape culture.

There is a need for more empirical evidence to understand the ways in which social media algorithms function to better understand the benefits and limitations of conducting research on social media. Based on the aims and the findings of the study, I argue that university institutions should look into establishing small-scale social media discussion groups, such as the focus groups used in this study. For example, these groups could be implemented within the university residence institutions and could subsequently be facilitated by a member of the residence Housing Committee who has undergone some training.



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Appendix A



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INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: *Rape culture and social media: Exploring how social media influences students' opinions and perceptions on rape culture*

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Zaida Orth at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are between the ages of 18-25, you are currently registered as a student at a university in South Africa, and you possess a personal Facebook account. The purpose of this research project is to explore the role that social media plays in influencing student perceptions and opinions about rape culture.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to participate in an online focus group discussion. The discussion will be centred on rape culture in South Africa. This discussion aims to understand what participants think off rape culture. A further aim is to explore how a group of students discusses the topic of rape culture in an online platform. You will be asked what you think rape culture is, and you will be expected to discuss this with the other members in the focus group. The focus group will be mix gendered, meaning that there will be male and female participants. This is important as the study is focused on different students' opinions on rape culture. Should you agree to participate, you will receive a link inviting you to join a Secret Facebook Focus group (SFFG). Only those who have received accepted the invitation will have access to the SFFG. Each SFFG will consist of 5-6 members. There will be 3 groups in total. Participants will be randomly assigned to each group. Once all the members of the group are selected, the discussion will begin. The SFG will be conducted asynchronously. The SFG will remain active for a period of two weeks.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researchers undertake to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. However, since this study will use focus groups, the extent to which your identity will remain confidential is dependent on participants' in the Focus Group maintaining confidentiality.

Before the SFG discussion begins, members in the group will be asked not to share any personal information about group members, outside of the SFG. Members of the SFFG are also required to sign a Focus Group Confidentiality Binding Form.

Members of the SFG will know each other's names. However, as per Facebook regulations, members of the SFG will not be able to contact or „see each other's posts unless they have become

„friendson Facebook. Members of the SFG may “friend” each other at their discretion. Only members in the SFG can talk to each other. To ensure your confidentiality, once data is collected your name will be removed from the discussion transcript and it will be replaced by a random code. As the data will be taken of Facebook, it will remain in electronic form and stored on a private laptop in a private folder. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the information. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

What are the risks of this research?

Since this study is focused on rape culture, there may be some risks from participating in this research study. Discussing this topic can be triggering for some individuals as it is related to other themes such as rape, sexual assault, gender based violence (GBV) or misogyny. Since the focus groups will be mixed gendered, there will be a variety of opinions on the topic at hand. The SFG members will be asked to respect each other and to conduct the discussion respectfully. All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention. All members of the SFG will receive contact information for the rape crisis center, as well as the relevant student counselling services (depending on which university the student is registered at)

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about how students engage in social media to discuss issues around rape culture, and how students learn about topics such as rape culture via social media. This is important as the information can help us understand how social media can be used as a low-cost, easily accessible platform to address issues around sexual assault and gender based violence on campus.

We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the role of social media in influencing student's perceptions and opinions on topics such as rape culture.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify

If a member of the SGF act in a way that is disrespectful or hurtful towards other members, the member's participation will be ended by the researcher. This is done in order to protect the participation of all members in the group.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Zaida Orth, department of Psychology at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Zaida

Orth at: 0728718490 zaidaorth@gmail.com/ 3743915@myuwc.ac.za

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Dr Maria Florence

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Prof Rina Swart

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

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This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Ethics Reference Number: HS17/5/23

Appendix B



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FOCUS GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY BINDING FORM

Title of Research Project: Rape culture and social media: Exploring how social media influences students' opinions and perceptions on rape culture

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone by the researchers. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits. I understand that confidentiality is dependent on participants' in the Focus Group maintaining confidentiality.

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WESTERN CAPE

I hereby agree to uphold the confidentiality of the discussions in the focus group by not disclosing the identity of other participants or any aspects of their contributions to members outside of the group.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

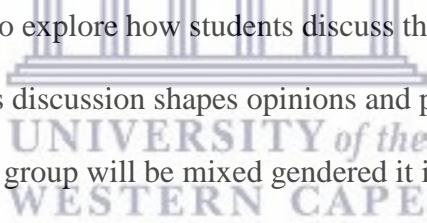
Date.....

Appendix C

Biographical Questionnaire

The following questions are asked with the aim of gathering biographical data. This information will not be distributed, and is only used in order to describe the demographics of the focus group.

Name:
Age:
Gender:
Race:
Do you have any Disabilities?
University:
Degree:
Faculty:
Year of Study:
Student Number:



The purpose of this study is to explore how students discuss the topic of rape culture in an online platform, and how this discussion shapes opinions and perceptions of rape culture. Due to the fact that the focus group will be mixed gendered it is important to ask the following question

1. Have you ever been a victim of sexual assault?
2. Do you know of anyone who has ever been a victim of sexual assault?
3. Would you be comfortable discussing matters concerning rape and rape culture in a Secret Facebook group chat?

*This information will not be shared with members of the focus group, nor will it be distributed anywhere else. The reason for asking these questions is to protect the participant during the focus group discussion, as the topic at hand is of a sensitive nature.

Appendix D

Facebook post inviting people to participate in the study

*****ATTENTION*****

Hello everyone!

Do you want to have the opportunity to have your voice heard and to make a difference?

I am looking for people to participate in a research study I am conducting. By participating, you will be able to express yourself and share your opinion with students from across South Africa. I am interested in exploring how a group of students understand and discuss issues of rape culture on social media. You can take part by becoming a member of a secret chat group on Facebook. The chat group will be a space where you can give your honest opinion on the topic at hand, ask questions and engage in discussion with other students from different backgrounds. Only people who are members of the group will be able to see and participate in the conversation. This means that your views and opinions will be kept confidential. If you are between the ages of 18 -25, are currently registered at a university, or have graduated in the past two years and you are interested in the study please inbox me or contact me at:

0728718490

zaidaorth@gmail.com

I will provide you with further information on the importance of the study and what it entails.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Please share ☺

Appendix E

SFFG Opening message

Hello everyone! Thank you all for showing interest in the study and agreeing to participate. Before we get started I would just like to suggest some guidelines for this group chat so we can all enjoy and benefit from it. Please let us all respect each other's opinions. You are diverse bunch so chances are you are going to say something that not everyone will agree with and that's okay 😊. This is a space where you are free to say what you think or feel as long as you are not being rude towards another member of the group. Since this group will be active for a week you are free to post/comment anytime but if someone can maybe suggest a time period of the day when most of us can be active to try to chat together (example between 3-4 pm or 7-8pm?) that would be great! I know some of you are busy with exams as well as even if you can't be online with everyone else it's okay. Just please check that you answer the questions 🙏. Also please feel free to ask any of your own questions (you can ask me or each other) or if you find something related to the topic we are discussing that you want to share with us please feel free to post it in the group. I think we can start by having everyone just briefly introduce themselves (maybe add what you are studying or an interesting fact about yourself 😊) and if you want you can suggest a group rule of your own in order to make sure that this is a space where everyone is comfortable and can speak their mind. Thank you and I look forward to engaging with you all

SFFG Closing Message

Morning everyone! I just wanted to thank you all for your participation. It's been great chatting with you and hearing your opinions. This group is officially done, meaning there will be no questions from my side, but it will still be "active" so if you want to add a comment to a previous post you are more than welcome to do so. The other reason for keeping the group is so that I can give you feedback once I analysed the data. You are also welcome to ask me or any other members' questions if you have any. Thanks again, and good luck with your studies/work

SFFG cover photo



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Appendix F

Preliminary Focus Group Interview Schedule

1. What does the term „rape culture“ mean to you
2. Have you ever seen content on your Facebook newsfeed or twitter account that relates to rape culture?
3. How do you feel when you see such content on your newsfeed?
4. Do you ever share content related to rape culture on your personal platform?
5. Why did you share it?
6. Why wouldn't you share it?
7. Do you ever comment on posts related to rape culture?

*The focus group will be presented with an online news article related to sexual assault in South Africa.

1. What do you think about this article?



Appendix G

Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust

The rape crisis Cape Town trust offers counselling services **free** of charge. The counselling services are designed to make you feel safe, supported, respected and to enable you to make informed decisions on your journey to recovery. Office hours:
Mondays – Thursdays

09:00 am to 4:30 pm

Fridays

09:00 am to 03:30 pm

Appointments can be made by dialling the following numbers

Observatory Counselling Line: +27 (0)21 447 9762

Athlone Counselling Line: +27 (0)21 633 9229

Khayelitsha Counselling Line: +27 (0)21 361 9085

The rape crisis centre also offers 24-hour crisis line where survivors can speak to a counsellor in English, Afrikaans or isiXhosa

24 hr Crisis Line: 021 361 9085

Stellenbosch University

Centre for Student Counselling and Development

Tel: 021 808 4707

Tygerberg Campus: 021 938 9590

Emergency number: 082 557 0880

University of Western Cape

Centre for Student Support Services

University of Cape Town

The Student Wellness Service

28

Rhodes Ave

Mowbray 7700

Tel: 0216501017/1020

Operating hours: Mon-Fri 08:30 to 16:30

Emergency Number: UCT Student Care line 0800 242526 or sms 31393 for a “call-me-back” service

Rhodes University

The counselling centre is located on the top floor of the Bantu Stephen Biko

Building in Prince Alfred Street

The counselling services are free of charge

The centre is open daily from 8am to 5 pm

0828030177

counsellingcentre@ru.ac.za

Thuthuzela Care Centre

The Thuthuzela care centre are one-stop facilities that have been introduced as a critical part of South Africa's anti-rape strategy, aiming to reduce secondary victimisation, improve conviction rates and reduce the cycle time for finalisation of cases

Thuthuzela's integrated approach to rape care is one of respect, comfort, restoring dignity and ensuring justice for children, women and men who are victims of sexual violence. When reporting, the rape victim is removed from crowds and intimidating environments, such as at the police station, to a more victim-friendly environment before being transported by police or an ambulance to the Thuthuzela care centre at the hospital. Enroute, the victim receives comfort and crisis counselling from a trained ambulance volunteer or police officer



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Contact information

1. Ms Innocentia Dombo

Tel: 012-801 2717 Fax: 012-841 8384

Mamelodi Hospital

2. Sinakekelwe TCC

Mr Siphon Mkhonza

Tel: 011-909 1002/3/6/9 Fax: 011-909

2929 Natalspruit Hospital

3. Nthabiseng TCC

Ms Petunia Ubisi Tel: 011-933 1229 / 3346 Fax: 011-933 1140

Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital Chris Hani Road Diepkloof, Soweto

4. Ms Nomonde Ntshahla

Tel: 047-568 6274 Fax: 047-568 6004

St Barnabas Hospital Umtata: Eastern Cape

5. Ms Mandisa Nongonongo Tel: 021-691 6194 Fax: 021-691 7962 GF Jooste
Hospital Mannenburg Western Cape

6. Umlazi TCC

Ms Lusanda Khumalo

Tel: 031-907 8496 Fax: 031-906 1836

Prince Mshiyeni Hospital Umlazi, Kwazulu Natal

7. Phoenix TCC

Ms Thenjiwe Mthembu

Tel: 031-502 2338 Fax: 031-502 2372

Mahatma Ghandi Hospital Phoenix Kwazulu Natal

8. Galeshewe TCC

Ms Maud Kujane Tel: 053-830 8900 Fax: 053-830 8906

Kimberly Hospital Northern Cape

9. Kakamas TCC

054 431 0057 Tel 054 431

0058 Fax Kakamas Hospital

Northern Cape

10. Tshepong TCC

Ms. Precious Manong

(051) 448 5028 (t) (051) 403 9626 (f)

National District Hospital Roth Avenue, Willows Bloemfontein 9301

11. KaNyemazane TCC

Nokuthula Makhubela

013: 796 9412 (t)

Themba Hospital KaNyemazane

12. Mangkweng TCC

Nthabiseng Harrington

(015) 286 1261 (t) (015) 286

1045 (f) Mangkwng Hospital

Polokwane

13. Tshilidzini TCC

Nicolas Kwindu

015 964 3257 Tel 015 964 1072 Fax

Tshilidzini Hospital Thohoyandou Limpopo



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