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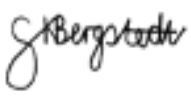

SIGNATURES Sarah-Kate Bergstedt and NashyaDunaiski

# Social Media Activism by University Students Against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: A discursive analysis on #IWillNotBeNext and #AmINext?

Sarah-Kate Bergstedt and Nashya Dunaiski

Supervisors: Professor Floretta Boonzaier and Skye Chirape

The University of Cape Town

Psychology Department

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## Abstract

Social media activism (SMA) in South Africa takes up space against the background of a patriarchal and hypermasculine society. The increasing visibility of SMA against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has not only called on the urgent need to enact socio-political change, but to examine its emotional effect on those who participate in this activism. Social media activism against SGBV challenges misogynistic discourses surrounding rape culture, victim-blaming, and the silencing of women. In South Africa, anti-SGBV activism has been transformed through social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter. It is used by university students who challenge the normalisation of sexual violence towards women.

This study explored the meanings South African university students make of SGBV in their SMA, and how they challenge deep societal problems that perpetuate cultures of hypermasculinity. Discourse analysis was used to examine the discourses that emerge on SMA against SGBV amongst South African university students. The study analysed twenty Instagram captions, Twitter posts (or 'tweets'), and images by university students who engaged in SMA using the #AmINext? and #IWillNotBeNext hashtags. All posts were written in the aftermath of the late Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder. Discourses of the distressing and pervasive nature of SGBV emerged, as well as of calling out men to participate in anti-SGBV activism. The study found that South African university students who use SMA against SGBV are deeply committed to dismantling our patriarchal society in order to seek justice for survivors and victims.


*Keywords:* Social media activism, sexual and gender-based violence, rape culture, victim-blaming, hypermasculinity, discourse analysis

## Contents

## Introduction

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) encompasses many forms of violent behaviours towards women, children, and genderqueer identities (Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottmoeller, 2002). This behaviour includes physical, sexual, psychological harm (Heise et al., 2002). SGBV is an intersectional global issue and a violation of human dignity.

South African universities do not exist in a bubble, but are a mirror of South African society where SGBV is rife. A total of 247 cases of SGBV were reported at 15 South African universities between 2011 and 2014 (Boonzaier et al., 2019). Rape and sexual assault are deeply set in university cultures, forming 'rape culture' (Boonzaier et al., 2019). There are three concerns around SGBV prevalence in South African universities: Universities rooted in patriarchal cultures encourage SGBV perpetration; universities pay insufficient attention to the safety needs of women and genderqueer students and staff; and university policies implemented against SGBV only focus on contemporary displays of sexual harassment, namely revenge pornography and online intimidation (Boonzaier et al., 2019).

Social media is a term encompassing all forms of digital media that enable participation on the Internet (Manning, 2014). Social media allows for easily accessible information, increased mobilisation of political activity, and far-reaching communication (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). During the rise of democracy in South Africa, the Internet sparked a digital revolution across social media platforms (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). Student movements in South African universities began using social media as a communication tool to mobilise protests (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). Thus, social media play a critical role in amplifying students' voices in political arenas where policy makers may produce the desired change. Social media also promote students' democratic rights to speak out against social injustice.

Social media has birthed popular social movements against SGBV such as #SayHerName and #MenAreTrash (Brown et al., 2017; Kahla, 2019). Social media campaigns organising resistance against SGBV in South Africa include hashtags such as #IWillNotBeNext on Instagram and Twitter, and TotalShutDown on Facebook (Mendes, Ringrose, & Keller, 2019b).

This study examined anti-SGBV discourses South African university students produce on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram using the hashtags #IWillNotBeNext and #AmINext? The study aimed to understand the meanings that students make of SGBV using SMA, as well as to explore how multiple lived realities of SGBV are spoken about on social media. The findings are significant as they show how university students in South Africa use SMA to participate in nation-wide protests against SGBV.

**Hashtag Feminism and Platform Vernacular**

Social media activism has limited us to understanding discursive narratives (Mendes, Keller, & Ringrose, 2019a). The rise of "hashtag activism" has created unique methods of communicating personal narratives (Mendes et al., 2019a). Social media platforms develop their own sets of grammar or "platform vernacular" (Gibbs et al., 2015; Mendes et al., 2019). Hashtags are paradigmatic of platform vernacular as they group together text, images, and videos on a topic (Altinay, 2014). Given feminism's historical attention to language, hashtag feminism shows that hashtags act as the unification of social justice and participatory journalism (Clark, 2016). This unification emphasises hashtag feminism's aptness to reframe oppressive discourses that perpetuate SGBV (Clark, 2016; Rentschler, 2015). Hashtag feminism's discursive strength is crucial for activism against SGBV. The disclosure of survivors' personal stories and experiences of SGBV enhances the ability to connect with a global community, and shapes how we come to interpret these narratives (Mendes et al., 2019a).

Although social media has played an integral part in reframing feminist discourse, the literature is yet to examine how this is enacted within the university context in South Africa.

**Increased Accessibility for Sharing Personal Narratives**

Social media provide easily accessible platforms that encourage people to influence social awareness and mobilise change in contexts of SGBV. Digital platforms create "safe spaces" and cultures of support for more SGBV survivors to connect with those who have similar stories (Schuster, 2013). Survivors of SGBV can share their stories on social media, raise awareness of the pandemic of SGBV, and create a supportive and informed network of activists (Bennett, 2007). This has also birthed "call-out culture", the public naming and shaming of SGBV perpetrators (Mendes, Ringrose, & Keller, 2018). Call-out culture has become instrumental in instigating change to protect SGBV survivors (Mendes et al., 2018).

However, there needs to be more critical engagement with the private lives of SGBV survivors and their communities. A more thorough exploration into how sharing stories of SGBV from private life into the public sphere may allow survivors to experience catharsis and healing, as well as justice (O'Connell, 2017).

**Increasing Visibility and Exposure for SGBV Cases on Social Media**

Social media provides an open platform for people to share their lived experiences with the world. While algorithms may hinder increased engagement and visibility with posts, there is a sense of solidarity that comes with sharing one's story online about overcoming adversity (Stewart & Schultze, 2019). Regarding this, there is an apparent gap in the literature surrounding how social media and its accessibility can promote increased visibility for the voices of SGBV survivors.

When Uyinene Mrwetyana, a former student at the University of Cape Town (UCT) was murdered in an act of SGBV in 2019, protests erupted across UCT campuses and the country. Hashtags critical to this study, namely #AmINext and #IWillNotBeNext, started as a way for university students to mobilise and join protests against SGBV (Morshedi, 2020). This was the start of a digital revolution (Morshedi, 2020). In spite of the increased exposure on social media, no scholarly research has been done to examine how South African university students use and respond to various online activist movements against SGBV.

**Social Media Activism in the University Context**

Previous research has examined how social media spurred increased political activity amongst the adult population, however there is little insight as to how this translates in the university context (Valenzuela, 2013). The university context is an important contribution to understanding how students encounter opportunities to participate in political activism through social media. Additionally, research has not yet aimed to understand how South African university students have grappled with trauma in the aftermath of anti-SGBV activism for the late Uyinene Mrwetyana. These students have not had the opportunity to be represented in academic literature surrounding SGBV in South Africa, nor been recognised as having made a significant impact in the realm of SMA against SGBV.

More scholarly research must be done regarding the effects of increased exposure of SGBV survivors' stories and SMA in the university context. As a result, this study contributes to a new body of academic literature surrounding how students respond to SGBV in terms of language, collective action.

## Aims and Objectives

### Aim

The study explored the different kinds of discourses produced by SMA against SGBV. Specifically, the study analyses SMA against SGBV by South African university students. This analysis gave insight into how South African university students respond to SGBV, and how this comes through in discourse production against SGBV.

### Main Research Question

What kind of discourse on social media activism against SGBV emerges amongst South African university students?

### Sub-Question

- What meanings do South African university students make of SGBV?

## Theoretical Framework

The following literature provides a firm basis for the study. The first section introduces how social media has revolutionised the ways in which social movements operate. Following this is a discussion of how students are dissatisfied with universities' responses to SGBV. We then discuss how students are dissatisfied with universities' responses to SGBV and analyse intersectionality as a collective action frame for SMA.

### Social Media Revolutionising Traditional Social Movements

Social movements are defined as a group of people who work together through activism to change the status quo (Morshedi, 2020). Group members demonstrate loyalty to the social movement through abiding by a shared value system and a desire to achieve social change

(Steinberg, 2016). Social media has revolutionised the way traditional social movements operate. Previously, being an active member of a social movement meant dedicating hard work and consistency through attending meetings, planning protest action, and sometimes risking your safety to achieve social change (Morshedi, 2020). Social media allows people to join a social movement instantly by sharing, liking, or retweeting a post from the movement's social media account (Morshedi, 2020). This opens membership to more people as the requirements for participation and activism change to an online setting.

#BringBackOurGirls is a well-known example of how a social movement has been transformed by social media to have a worldwide activist following (Olson, 2016). In 2016, terrorist organisation Boko Haram kidnapped a large group of Nigerian schoolgirls (Olson, 2016). Millions of people started using the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls to share updates about the kidnappings and express their concerns (Olson, 2016). This brought together online and offline activists to create a united movement (Olson, 2016). Not only was the social movement able to garner more attention and followers thanks to social media, it was also able to spread updates on the kidnappings around the world faster.

**Students Dissatisfied by University Responses to SGBV**

South African universities reflect society in the increasing cases of sexual violence on women students and staff across campuses (Boonzaier et al., 2019). Students are the majority group in universities in South Africa, however they hold very little power to effect change. Protests led by students between 2015 and 2016 arose out of anger towards higher institutions' unsatisfactory responses to increasing cases of SGBV across campuses (Boonzaier et al., 2019). Students stated that these responses were not sufficiently implementing policies to address hypermasculinities that universities uphold through patriarchal cultures (Boonzaier et al., 2019).

This makes the university an unsafe space for women students and academic staff, resulting in a decline in their productivity (Ngwane, 2014). Student activists have articulated that university policies to SGBV on campuses are not aimed at reforming the underlying patriarchal cultures of the institution, but rather at protecting the university's reputation and avoiding further media stories (Boonzaier et al., 2019). This results in students feeling unheard and unprotected because universities are not taking the proper steps to challenge embedded norms of sexual violence and the hypersexualisation of women in male residences (Boonzaier et al., 2019).

**Intersectionality as a Collective Action Frame**

Social media activism involves four distinct processes which are consciousness, solidarity, collective identity, and mobilisation. Consciousness refers to how individuals create shared meaning for a movement that needs collective action (Gamson, 1992). Solidarity refers to how individuals commit their loyalty to the groups acting for them in the movement (Gamson, 1992). Collective identity involves the group members creating a moral connection between their values and the movement (Gamson, 1992). Lastly, micromobilisation involves the interactions connecting the individual to these processes (Gamson, 1992). In SMA, these processes are affected by intersectionality. Intersectionality examines how individuals involved in SMA not only develop a collective identity, but have an existing social identity with multiple locations of power and oppression that interconnect (Crenshaw, 1991). Social media activism thus requires that its participants and those in power in society pay attention to the many layers of privilege and marginalisation that overlap to create conditions wherein SGBV can occur.

Intersectionality becomes a collective action frame to shape and guide SMA against SGBV. A collective action frame is a way for individuals to knit together their contextually embedded thoughts against SGBV and weave them into meaningful activism (Terriquez, 2018).

Collective action frames can also assist in building a shared opinion of what kind of strategies are required to reduce cases of SGBV (Terriquez, 2018). Intersectionality calls for change that addresses the various levels of oppression and marginalisation (Crenshaw, 1991). As such, SGBV reform must address poverty, lack of education, alcohol abuse, and unemployment in South Africa.

Intersectionality as a collective action frame gives the study a basis from which to examine SMA against SGBV. University students across South Africa occupy many different facets of identity that affect their power in society, and this impacts their commitment to SMA against SGBV. For example, black women students may be more committed to achieving SGBV reform than white female students because their race and gender creates a location of double oppression where they are more vulnerable to experiencing SGBV (Bent-Goodley, 2009). This illustrates how SMA is affected by intersectionality, and how forming a collective identity as students against SGBV does not erase individual identity. Furthermore, intersectionality promotes addressing the different levels of oppression that allow for social inequality to grow (Crenshaw, 1991). Addressing this provides a basis for SGBV reform strategies in South Africa wherein various political and social inequalities like poverty and alcohol abuse could be addressed.

## Method

### Research Design

**Feminist qualitative research.** This study employed a feminist qualitative research approach. The study aligned with feminist research's aim of contributing to the transformation of science by amplifying the voices of this study's participants (McHugh, 2014). Qualitative

research seeks to understand participant's narratives and the meaning thereof in order to interpret participant's social and multiple realities (Watts, 2006). Thus, researchers found that these principles of feminist qualitative research were best suited to answering the main research question. As feminist research seeks to analyse power between researchers and participants by promoting empowerment and reducing power imbalances, it is vital that awareness and reflexivity attempt to equalise these imbalances (McHugh, 2014). As feminist research uses value-based collaboration, both researchers practiced an egalitarian approach in collecting data and producing results (McHugh, 2014).

**Discursive approach.** Discursive analysis was used to analyse data. Discursive analysis has three main assumptions: The first is that our social lives are made up of various discourses consisting of talk and text (Wiggins & Riley, 2010). Thus discourse is fundamental to the construction of our social world. This was particularly relevant to the study because social media posts against SGBV rely on discourse to communicate and construct the lived reality, thoughts, and feelings of SGBV survivors and activists.

The second assumption is that talk serves a purpose (Wiggins & Riley, 2010). Talk is never neutral, but is embedded in social norms that intrinsically shape thoughts. The social media posts against SGBV reflected thoughts and ideas about SGBV that have been shaped by the lived experiences of activists, the university where they study, and the social values guiding their thought processes.

The third assumption is that discourse produces multiple realities (Wiggins & Riley, 2010). The social media posts against SGBV collected reveal different versions of reality

through discourses that helped researchers understand how South African university students respond to SGBV.

**Sampling Strategy**

Purposive sampling was used to collect data. This sampling strategy was useful for this research because it did not aim to generalise its results to the population, but rather to build a well-rounded picture of the unique lived experiences of the participants (Riessman, 2008). Archival data from social media was used, and as such randomisation was impossible because the population of South African university students is too large (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2015). Additionally, all social media posts against SGBV could not be examined due to limited time (Etikan et al., 2015). Instead, a purposive sample of twenty social media posts against SGBV written by South African university students was chosen. This meant that posts were intentionally selected individually based on how well they suited the aims of the research (Babbie & Mounton, 2007).

**Data Collection Tools and Procedures**

Data was collected using archival data. Archival data is information that has been previously collected and stored by others for the purposes of research (Jones, 2010). Research mass media archives were used to collect the data (Jones, 2010). Instagram and Twitter were the two social media platforms where data was collected because these are where South African youths and students socially engage on political matters (Fisher, 2017). Both researchers have personal accounts on these platforms which allowed for instant access to the archival data. To narrow down the search for posts against SGBV by South African university students, the hashtags #IWillNotBeNext and #AmINext? were used. These hashtags started as a response to South African students' fears of being the next victim to SGBV (Mafolo, 2019).

The advantages of archival data were that the researchers could access the data at no cost (Jones, 2010). Accessing social media content is free on Instagram and Twitter, and researchers could access content at any time of the day without directly interacting with people. This was highly beneficial, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown when data collection took place. Despite both researchers being separated in lockdown in different countries, research collaboration continued as they were still able to engage with the same online content.

There were disadvantages to using archival data. The researchers needed to obtain permission to use data from the participants' social media (Jones, 2010). Researchers privately messaged participants on social media, however this became a lengthy process when researchers did not respond for a long period of time. It was taken into account that South African university students were already under pressure to be readily contactable on their devices for online learning during lockdown. The researchers remained patient and waited for a response instead of being overly persistent by asking participants repeatedly for permission.

**Data Analysis**

Data was analysed using discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is built on the assumption that the talk and text that make up social life actively construct our reality (Willig, 2001). Discourse analysts are interested in the systems of meaning that language provides which construct particular versions of the world (Wiggins & Riley, 2010).

Researchers used Foucaldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). FDA examines the relationship between discourse and subjectivity, that is how people think and feel (Wiggins & Riley, 2010). This analysis aligns with the sub-question posed by the researchers. Furthermore, FDA examines the coherent ways of talking about the world that become part of our common sense, and how

different ways of being are opened and closed because of this (Wiggins & Riley, 2010). Researchers paid attention to the different kinds of discursive objects constructed in the text. For example, what these constructions achieved, and what subject positions these discursive objects gave power to.

The step-by-step framework for FDA will be used as outlined by Willig (2008). It is as follows: *1. Discursive constructions,* which involves identifying how discursive objects are constructed in the text; *2. Discourses:* Here different discursive constructions will be placed under wider discourses; *3. Action orientation* involves examining what the different discursive constructions of the object achieve; *4. Positionings:* Here different subject positions that allow for power and rights to be granted and accepted will be analysed; *5. Practice* which involves examining how certain discourses legitimate and limit certain practices and actions; *6. Subjectivity:* The final step is concerned with analysing what can be thought and experienced from the different subject positionings (Willig, 2008).

## Ethical Considerations

This study upheld a commitment to gender justice and freedom from violence for all. Researchers treated all data collected with care and protected the safety all survivors of SGBV first, all while remaining firmly grounded in feminist and human rights principles (Sloan et al., 2017).

### Public versus Private Online Spaces

There is a debate as to what constitutes public and private space on social media (Ahmed et al., 2017). A person's social media account can be deemed public or private by the online setting itself. For example, private Instagram and Twitter accounts must be respected as private

spaces while open conversations or opinions using a hashtag can be seen as public (Ahmed et al., 2017). All social media data in this study were from public accounts.

**Informed Consent**

Informed consent is challenged when using social media data due to the debate concerning public and private online spaces (Ahmed et al., 2017). For the purpose of this study, researchers informed participants of the purpose of the study. Both researchers agreed that a consent form should be given to participants in order to increase participant awareness. Researchers sent direct messages to the participants on their social media accounts to inform them of the study's purpose and to ask for informed consent. The subject of SGBV is sensitive, so participants were allowed to give notice of withdrawal at any point during the research without consequences.

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is an important consideration in research ethics and in the fight against SGBV. Both researchers protected the identities of participants by not revealing their names or account handles. This was due to the sensitive nature of SGBV and to limit the risk of harm to participants through online intimidation or harassment. This study's purpose would not have been fulfilled if participants felt their lives were being threatened by speaking out against SGBV (Sloan et al., 2017).

**Deception of Respondents**

The research avoided misrepresentation of data. In line with feminist principles, researchers were transparent with all participants (McHugh, 2014). Participants had full

awareness of the purpose of this study, and both researchers presented data in support of survivors and victims, not the abuser.

### Risks and Discomforts

Participant anxiety and retraumatisation was managed by providing participants with contact information for psychosocial support from verified helplines and counselling services.

## Limitations of the Study

Social media activism has been criticised for limiting access to the masses due to the different algorithms social platforms have implemented (McCosker, 2015). For example, Instagram changed their algorithm from showing posts in chronological order to showing posts based on who you've recently followed and what you've previously liked (Warren, 2020). In this way, celebrity posts with more engagement and followers are given increased exposure, causing posts from social media activist accounts to become lost on social media timelines. To ensure that posts around SMA against SGBV were found, #AmINext? and #IWillNotBeNext were used as a search tool.

A further limitation is that SMA only benefits those who have access to the Internet. This was evident in the study of Twitter activists connecting after a New Delhi gang rape which found that only 20% of the Indian population has Internet access (Poell & Rajagopalan, 2015). This may be a reflection of how many other Global South countries, such as South Africa, are limited in how much exposure they have to SMA due to limited Internet access. The lack of representatives from rural communities and an array of many Global South countries' local languages challenge the accessibility of digital platforms (Poell & Rajagopalan, 2015). However, all South African universities grant students access to Wi-Fi on campus grounds. It was assumed

in this study that all South African students had equal opportunities to access the Internet to take part in SMA against SGBV if they chose to.

## Self-Disclosure and Reflexivity

Feminist qualitative research methods unearth the power relations between researchers, participants, and fieldwork (Bondi, 2009). Gender dynamics lie within these power relations, and so it becomes important to examine the effects these dynamics and relations have on the researchers using reflexivity (Bondi, 2009). Reflexivity is the process of acknowledging that knowledge is value-laden and contextually-produced (Bondi, 2009). Researchers are called upon to reflect on how their lived experiences, personal identities, and power relations come to affect the knowledge they produce (Bondi, 2009). Reflexivity allows researchers to ensure that the knowledge they build considers the impacts of unequal social and power relations including race, class, and gender (Bondi, 2009). In doing so, reflexivity reduces the risk of reproducing disempowering or exploitative power relations within research (Bondi, 2009).

We conducted this study as women students identifying as black and coloured. Our identities as students allowed us to understand the plight of South African students who participate in SMA against SGBV. As women, we found it difficult at times to work with Instagram captions, Twitter posts (or ‘tweets’), and images around sexual violence against women. Additionally, being at UCT where the late Uyinene Mrwetyana was also a student was a continuous reminder that we are not separate from the discourses produced by our fellow students. This allowed us to present findings that were in favour of SGBV survivors and victims because of our shared belonging at UCT among SGBV activists. One researcher attended Uyinene Mrwetyana’s memorial on the 4th of September 2019, and in turn found it distressing to

analyse social media posts that discussed the nature of her murder. The other researcher is a survivor of sexual assault and felt triggered in being confronted with discourses of SGBV. Both of us were aware of the prevalence of SGBV in South Africa, however this study made this prevalence amplified and overwhelming. We focused on seeing the data through the eyes of the participants and not to let our own distressing feelings cloud our analysis by having meetings with our supervisors and private psychologists whenever we felt overwhelmed. We found an empowering sense of community and belonging amongst like-minded university students committed to using SMA to change the violent and patriarchal landscapes of South Africa wherein SGBV is rooted.

## Significance of the Study

This study opens a new body of research in the realm of anti-SGBV activism in South Africa: The discourses revealed in the findings show the multiple lived realities of South African university students constructed under the danger of SGBV.

In the aftermath of the late Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder in 2019 and the anti-SGBV protests lead by South African university students that followed, no research was conducted to analyse the effectiveness of the SMA that preceded. The students involved in these protests have not had their voices heard in academic works as having made a significant impact on anti-SGBV movements in South Africa. This research highlights the extreme power of SMA in producing nation-wide movements and protests against SGBV.

## Timeline

Data collection took place from September to the beginning of November 2020. Data analysis took place from November to December 2020. A compiled research report was submitted to UCT on the 15th of January 2021. All research findings will be presented at the Honours Colloquium on the 22nd of January 2021.

## Findings

This section presents findings of the discourses constructed around SMA by university students against SGBV in South Africa. The following discourses will be discussed: SGBV distress, SGBV as pervading and threatening the lives of South African women, positioning victims of SGBV on social media, ordinary, everyday men as perpetrators, calling out men, anticipating angered reactions and hostility from South African men, and the changes students expect to come from anti-SGBV activism.

### SGBV Distress

SGBV is the first discursive object that appears as the central focus in all social media posts. It is constructed as difficult to talk about and be exposed to on social media. This can be seen in the words of the following Instagram caption, "... it may be difficult for some people to constantly be exposed to posts and updates about gender-based violence." This caption was written by a UCT student with the hashtag #IWillNotBeNext three months after the news of Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder. The caption demonstrates that students were aware of how content concerning anti-SGBV activism increased on social media timelines in September 2019 in the aftermath of Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder. Social media platforms are increasingly being used by students in South Africa to challenge sexual violence against women in spite of this

content being potentially triggering and distressful (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). This Instagram caption demonstrates that students understand readers' sensitivities to the graphic nature of SGBV. However, this does not stop them from participating in SMA against SGBV.

**Figure 1**

*A protest poster that reads, "Fear is a language women are fluent in"*


The Instagram caption discussed above was accompanied by figure 1. The photographer and date of the image are unknown. In the image, an anonymous anti-SGBV activist is holding a protest poster board above a crowd that reads, "Fear is a language women are fluent in" in capital letters. Not only do South African women live in fear of being sexually assaulted, they are reluctant to report incidences of SGBV because they fear victim-blaming (Mahlori et al., 2018). Underreporting of SGBV is also attributed to survivors being scared of not being believed by society, or of being harassed further by the perpetrator (Mahlori et al., 2018). This creates a

culture of silencing and marginalising women who have been sexually assaulted. Not only does this amount to immense distress amongst survivors of SGBV, it results in SGBV perpetrators not receiving any punishment for their crimes (Mahlori et al., 2018).

Students also seem to understand that many people do not use social media to read world news, but rather to build social connections and view relaxing media. This was reflected in a study which demonstrated that individuals who routinely use social media experience positive outcomes like social support and civic engagement (Bekalu et al., 2019). However, SGBV on Instagram and Twitter is constructed as something that interrupts the happy content that is usually on social media. This is explored in the following caption from a student at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) posted on Instagram with the hashtag #AmINext?, "For those [on social media] who are confused or who don't quite understand what all the commotion [news reports about Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder] has been about this past week..." The news of Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder being reported on social media could be interpreted as a "commotion" from the point of view of students who use social media as a medium of escape from the stress of studies (Bekalu et al., 2019). This mindset of SGBV as a commotion on social media could see numbers of young South Africans disengaging from conversations around SGBV because they do not want to read about it on their social media. This potential disengagement presents a new lens through which the limits of SMA can be examined.

The distressing nature of SGBV on social media is also demonstrated through the emotional toll it takes on those participating in SMA. The words, "... I am even more heartsore, outraged and afraid than ever..." were written in an Instagram caption by a UCT student using the #AmINext? hashtag one day after the news of Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder. The post appears to communicate a powerful sense of disbelief and sadness. The words "than ever" imply

that the feelings of outrage and fear towards SGBV were present before, but that they have become stronger after a fellow student became a victim of SGBV. The reader is taken inside the emotional world of what it means to feel a perpetual state of heightened fear and danger in the face of SGBV.

The distressing nature of SGBV being discussed on social media does not deter South African students from participating in SMA. They work to encourage fellow students to become more outspoken about the national crisis on social media. A limitation on SMA against SGBV can be found in how many students use social media as a form of escape and relaxation, and thus may be disinterested in the distressing nature of SGBV and SMA on their timelines. It has also been found that students display very sad responses towards being confronted by SGBV both in everyday life and on social media as part of SMA.

**SGBV as Pervading and Threatening the Lives of South African Women**

SGBV is constructed as something that pervades the lives of South African women. The following caption was written by a UCT student on Instagram with the hashtag #IWillNotBeNext, "... this [the news of Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder] is yet another reminder about what South African women have to face on a daily basis." The words "yet another reminder" imply that there are many stories and news headlines about SGBV and how it directly threatens and endangers the lives of women. "On a daily basis" highlights how SGBV in South Africa has become normalised as a part of daily life. For South African women, dealing with various microaggressions from catcalling to stalking, which form part of SGBV, are frequently experienced and become a part of everyday life (Thobejane, 2012). South African statistics have included verbal advances, touching without consent, inappropriate staring, and sexual messages as acts of sexual harassment committed in the workplace (Biz Community, 2018). Social media

activism works in conjunction with these statistics to expose how normalised SGBV has become in South Africa, and how much it pervades and disrupts the lives of South African women.

SGBV violates the safety of women in South Africa and is an ever-present danger. This was echoed by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his national address on the 13th of May 2020 (Seleka, 2020). Ramaphosa addressed the increased rates of SGBV during the national lockdown by saying, “The men of South Africa have declared war on women…” (Seleka, 2020). The following caption was written by a UWC student on Instagram with the #AmINext? hashtag four days after the news of Uyinene Mrwetyana’s murder, “...what this means for South African women is that their life is in constant danger no matter what they are doing.” This shows that no woman is exempt from potentially becoming the next victim of SGBV. “No matter what they are doing” emphasises that SGBV perpetrators can attack at any moment, thereby making women vulnerable in any situation. This is echoed in literature where South African students have reported feeling unprotected on campuses where rape culture has become culturally embedded (Boonzaier et al., 2019). This ever-present danger is echoed in the Instagram caption, “Will we ever stop being scared?” written by a student at the Travel Practical Training Tours Academy (TPTT) using the #AmINext? hashtag. The words “ever stop” and “living in fear” are haunting as they imply a sense of never not being scared, or never having lived without being scared. Social media activism enlightens the reader to the lived experiences of women in South Africa that are characterised by a perpetual sense of fear and the threat of violence.

**Figure 2**

*An activist holds an anti-SGBV protest poster before the camera*


A student at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) posted the following picture on Instagram one year after Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder. In the picture they hold a protest poster that reads, "We are tired of saying rest in peace; We deserve to live in peace #ENDGBV". The poster is trichromatic with brown, black, and red colours while the background of the picture has been edited to be blurred and monochromatic. The poster demands attention as all the words are capitalised. The brown cardboard is the easiest and most accessible form of creating a poster from everyday resources. However, the brown colour of this specific poster may represent how SGBV seems to be experienced more by women of colour in the South African context (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). "We" gives context to the intersecting realities of being a woman and of colour, and creates a sense of shared experiences of SGBV (Crenshaw, 1991). "Tired" consolidates the pervasiveness of violence in South Africa and the exhaustion of living in the constant reality of SGBV. The black ink used is bold and authoritative, highlighting the sternness in tone of the words "We deserve to" and "end". Red ink is used for the acronym "GBV." The colour red is semantically diverse: In art, red can be used to symbolise war and wealth, blood and

lust, or love and beauty (Pastoureau, 2017). Given that it was posted to Instagram as a part of SMA against SGBV, we may relate this colour to the blood that continues to shed by the deaths of women in South Africa at the hands of perpetrators. This idea of blood-shed can be further explored as “rest in peace” and “live in peace” are also written in red ink. The words “rest,” “live,” and “peace” are written in red ink too, making one think that these basic human rights come at the price of blood when it comes to living in the ever-present danger of SGBV. This image uses editing, language, and colour to explore the theme of intersectional identity through women of colour in South Africa who experience SGBV, but also speaks to the pervasiveness and threatening presence of SGBV in South Africa.

Social media activism works to expose how much SGBV pervades and threatens the lives of South African women. However, in doing so it creates “safe spaces” online where survivors can share their experiences of SGBV. This further reveals how normalised SGBV has become in South Africa. Additionally, it shows that women in South Africa live in a perpetual state of fear as they could be threatened or attacked even while performing daily activities like jogging or shopping. An analysis of a picture posted to Instagram shows that women of colour in South Africa bear the brunt of SGBV, and that their intersectional identity creates a culture of shared experiences of SGBV. Furthermore, South African women feel exhausted by the ever-present danger of SGBV, and feel that living in peace could cost them their lives.

**Positioning Victims of SGBV on Social Media**

The social media campaign #SayHerName is a well-known form of SMA worldwide against SGBV (Brown et al., 2017). Initially it centered around creating awareness for increased police violence towards black cisgender women in America, but soon expanded on social media to include SGBV towards black cisgender and transgender women in America (Brown et al.,

2017). In South Africa, the #SayHerName campaign is used to humanise the representations of murdered sex workers in the media by collecting their names and writing their eulogies (Thorpe, 2016). Students in South Africa have adapted the #SayHerName campaign by collecting the names of those murdered in acts of SGBV and writing on social media in their memory. The following words are from a poem written by a UCT student on Instagram with the #AmINext? hashtag, "YOU [Uyinene Mrwetyana] have changed the justice system. YOU have changed this country." The use of "YOU" in capital letters makes a bold statement about how the untimely loss of Uyinene Mrwetyana will not be in vain. It also speaks to Uyinene Mrwetyana's positionality and how she should be remembered as someone who united students across South Africa to protest in her memory and against SGBV. This can be added to new literature on how #SayHerName has been redefined by South African students to include the names of SGBV victims and honour their memory on social media.

However, South African women also appear to hold the fear that victims of SGBV will be forgotten one day. This is shown in the words of the same student above, "And we will NEVER forget" and "UYINENE. UYINENE. UYINENE." The capital letters in "NEVER forget" reinforce a sense of assurance that victims of SGBV will not be forgotten. Not only is Uyinene Mrwetyana's name in capitals, it is also repeated. This creates the image of her name being used as a chant of remembrance and a call to protest. Victims of SGBV are positioned as revered on social media as their loss is felt deeply by society (Regter, 2020). Social media activism by students works to keep the memories of victims alive as a constant reminder that protests against SGBV in South Africa should not lose momentum. This kind of response to SMA by students is absent from existing literature, but is becoming a key feature of SMA through the growing popularity of the #SayHerName campaign (Thorpe, 2016).

Social media activism posts by students also address society's tendency to victim-blame SGBV victims and survivors. Past studies have indicated that victims of SGBV have felt that they were responsible for being sexually assaulted (Gordon & Collins, 2016). This suggests that there are precautionary strategies women need to follow to prevent SGBV from happening (Gordon & Collins, 2016). Such rules include: Do not wear short skirts; do not walk by yourself at night; do not drink alcohol with men (Gordon & Collins, 2016). This normalises the hypersexualisation of women and excuses perpetrators of SGBV at the expense of policing women's social freedom. victim-blaming is condemned in the following caption written by a UWC student on Instagram with the #AmINext? hashtag, "... she [Uyinene Mrwetyana] was not out at night or dressed provocatively or whatever might delude you into thinking she deserved it…" The use of the word "deserved" reveals that victim-blaming is often used to excuse SGBV (Gordon & Collins, 2016). It also refutes the notion that women can successfully avoid SGBV by changing how they dress or who they interact with (Gordon & Collins, 2016). This post uses the murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana to illustrate that victim-blaming is harmful and prejudiced.

Students participating in SMA have adapted the #SayHerName campaign through using the names and memories of SGBV victims as a call to protest against SGBV. This positions victims of SGBV as revered by the protests they inspire. Students keep the momentum of anti-SGBV protests through keeping the victims' memories alive on social media. Additionally, students condemn victim-blaming of SGBV victims.

**Ordinary, Everyday Men as Perpetrators**

Social media activism emphasises ordinary, everyday men in South Africa as perpetrators of SGBV. Such men include fathers, brothers, husbands, and boyfriends (Zulu, 2020). Hegemonic masculinity is promoted as the most desirable presentation of masculinity in

patriarchal cultures such as in South Africa (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). Some common features of hegemonic masculinity include men being the breadwinners of the family, having uncontrollable desires for sexual activity, and displaying physical strength to control others (Graaff & Heinecken., 2017). These features combined often result in men being violent and aggressive towards their families and strangers. “We’re not even safe in our own homes!” was tweeted by a student at the Management College of South Africa (MANCOSA) under the #AmINext? hashtag. One’s home is supposed to be a place of safety, comfort, and love. However, for many South African women, this is far from the truth as the men in their homes, families, and relationships commit violent and threatening acts of SGBV. Studies have observed that where men are unsuccessful at becoming the family breadwinner, a male identity crisis ensues (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). In order to reaffirm their manhood and societal power, men may resort to rape and intimate partner violence (IPV) (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). Social media activism creates a discourse of proximity to warn other women that the men in their lives can commit violent acts of SGBV. It also reveals the heightened states of fear that women in South Africa constantly live in not fully trusting ordinary men. This generalises South African men as dangerous, and South African women as vulnerable in their company.

This discourse of proximity of SGBV perpetrators is also a direct challenge to the notion that men who commit such violent acts are “monsters" or “sub-human” (Baillie, 2010). This is explored in an Instagram caption with the #IWillNotBeNext hashtag by a student at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), “Too many people think that most rapists lurk in the shadows and with [noticeable] behavioural issues when this is not the case...” The idea that SGBV perpetrators are monsters who “lurk in the shadows" is problematic because it allows rapists to be grouped away from society (Baillie, 2010). Because of this, ordinary men in society

distance themselves from the plight of women living in fear of SGBV by blaming the "monster" perpetrators (Zulu, 2020). Ordinary men thus struggle to think of men like them as potential SGBV perpetrators (Baillie, 2010). This distorted view of SGBV perpetrators as anomalies in South Africa is not only false; it allows ordinary men who commit sexual violence to hide behind their relational titles to women and escape from being brought to justice.

The discourse of proximity is explored further in the caption written by a student at UWC on Instagram with the #AmINext? hashtag:

> They do not only fear men like Luyanda Botha [Uyinene Mrwetyana's murderer], but the men they allow into their lives. The men that are meant to protect them, the ones that [they] see at gatherings where they wait until you're too drunk to say no. The ones that feel licensed to grope you when you're dancing.

Stating that it is also the men women "allow into their lives" that perpetrate SGBV communicates that the men that women think they can trust are also capable of violating and endangering their lives. This shows that South African men have developed hypermasculinities wherein violence and sexual assault are believed to be acceptable forms of attaining power and controlling others (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). In turn, hypermasculinities create increased opportunities for sexual assault to take place. The text "meant to protect" implies that the men that women trust with their friendship and intimacy are not upholding their end of respecting and reinforcing women's safety. Non-consensual sexual advances are also explored in the words "too drunk to say no" and "feel license to group you". These words highlight rape culture in South Africa and men's sense of entitlement through violent and forceful encounters.

There is a socially embedded view that SGBV perpetrators are monsters separate from ordinary men and society. Social media activism works against this view by revealing that hegemonic masculinity encourages ordinary men to value power by violent means. In doing so, a discourse of proximity is created as family men and partners are revealed to be capable of committing sexual assault. Hypermasculinities promote rape culture through its view of violence as acceptable to assert control and dominance in society, thus enabling perpetration of SGBV.

**Calling Out Men**

SGBV is constructed as something that South African men do not talk about. However, SMA reveals that many students believe that men should actively participate in SGBV discourse construction. The White Ribbon Campaign identified three barriers of accountability, awareness, and privilege which prevent men from being more involved in ending SGBV against women (Minerson et al., 2011). Literature demonstrates that South African women believe that men actively speaking out against SGBV is essential to reducing cases (Mthimkulu, 2019). The following caption, "... men don't get to CHOOSE to be complacent anymore!!!" posted to Instagram with the #AmINext? hashtag reveals a UCT student's view on men's absence from discussions and movements against SGBV. "CHOOSE" in capital letters calls out South African men for being aware of SGBV and deliberately choosing not to change or hold themselves accountable for violent behaviour rooted in hypermasculinity. Literature has positioned men who do not speak out against SGBV as cowardly and irresolute (Sozi, 2019). The word "complacent" implies that men are unconcerned about participating in anti-SGBV activism. South African men are seen by students as lacking critical awareness of how hypermasculinity creates violent environments (Gibbs et al., 2017). Social media activism positions these men as unthinking and unsympathetic with no concern for the consequences of their hypermasculinity.

**Figure 3**

*An activist holds an anti-SGBV protest poster*


Figure 3 shows an image that was posted on Instagram four days after the news of Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder. In the image, an anti-SGBV activist is holding a protest poster that reads, "I can't tell my friends to be safe cause it's not up to them." The words "I can't tell my friends to be safe…" in black ink opposes the accountability barrier wherein men believe it is the responsibility of women to protect themselves against SGBV (Minerson et al., 2011). Literature examining the #MenAreTrash Twitter movement has reflected how South African women take the firm stance that they are not responsible for managing men's violence (Fileborn, 2018; Kahla, 2019). This stance is mirrored in the words "... it's not up to them." in red ink. This poster not only refutes the accountability barrier, it also calls out men who do not see SGBV against women as something they should speak out against.

South African men are called upon to be more conscious of how hypermasculinity endangers the lives of women. This is communicated by a UWC student in an Instagram caption with the #AmINext? hashtag. They write, “I beg you, if you’re a man, just consider how your actions or even your presence could affect the women around you.” The word “beg” conjures the image of the student pleading with all South African men to understand the consequences of their gender performativity. Gender activists draw on a number of tools to enable men to challenge hegemonic and hypermasculinity (Jewkes et al., 2015). One such tool is reflexivity, that is encouraging men to think about how their gendered identity and societal power influence the lives of those around them (Robertson, 2006). The word “beg” is repeated in the words of the same student, “I beg you not to be idle…” This repetition emphasises the desperation that South African students feel about reducing SGBV, and the urgent need for men to be active in the fight against the SGBV by developing skills of accountability and reflexivity.

Students use SMA to encourage South African men to be proactive in the fight against SGBV. It is believed that this is needed in order to end sexual violence against women. Men are called out for not engaging in anti-SGBV discourses or holding themselves accountable for reproducing hypermasculinity. Students counter the accountability barrier with the belief that women should not be responsible for controlling men’s violence. Additionally, men are urged to develop skills of reflexivity in order to understand how their gendered performances of hegemonic and hypermasculinities are threatening to women.

**Anticipating Angered Reactions and Hostility from South African Men**

While students participating in SMA attempt to inform men of the accountability they need to take, they do not do so without expecting angry and hostile reactions. This is evident in a Twitter conversation between two UCT students as one states, “Don’t act like women don’t

abuse us, Net nje we don't talk about it publicly..." This deflective response was made in order to divert the 'blame' for SGBV acts from men to women instead of focusing on the violent statistics that render women more endangered by SGBV than men (Thobejane, 2012). There is a fear that men will misunderstand women's frustration towards their lack of accountability as a personal attack on their character. Many South African men responded to the #MenAreTrash movement on Twitter in a hostile manner (Kahla, 2019). Instead of centering #MenAreTrash on how all women are vulnerable to sexual assault by men, men misunderstood the movement to be a threat to hypermasculinity (Kahla, 2019). Students using SMA aim to avoid such a misunderstanding by encouraging men to join protest action rather than fight against it. This is highlighted in a UCT student's Instagram caption with the #AmINext? hashtag, "The fight against gender-based violence is not a fight against men, it is a fight that should be fought BY men." The text displays an understanding of the anti-SGBV movement from the perspective of South African men and communicates that it could potentially trigger violent responses from men if they think it is a personal attack on their manhood. Social media activism attempts to position anti-SGBV movements as not being about men versus women, but about all South Africans against the crisis of SGBV.

Social media activism posts attempt to quell misdirected emotional responses to anti-SGBV movements. One post by a UCT student posted to Instagram after Uyinene Mrwetyana's murderwith the #AmINext? hashtag reads, "Yes, you should be angry. But don't let that anger be shaped or directed by your ignorance or your ego." This post anticipates that men will be angered by anti-SGBV movements because of misunderstanding the movement as a personal attack on their masculinity, as was seen in the defensive responses towards #MenAreTrash (Kahla, 2019). This post encourages men to direct their sense of injustice towards fighting

alongside women in anti-SGBV movements. This is emphasised again in the words of the same student, "... your anger should be aimed at the men that are hurting your loved ones… at your friends who are mistreating women…" Here South African men are shown that their anger should not be towards women or anti-SGBV movements, but rather towards men in society who reproduce and perform violent and toxic masculinities. It also informs men to speak out against these aggressions that amount to SGBV, and channel their emotions towards changing the normalised occurrences of SGBV.

Students participating in SMA recognise that South African men may respond in a hostile manner towards anti-SGBV movements. This is because of similar past reactions by men towards the #MenAreTrash Twitter movement (Kahla, 2019). These reactions do not hinder their activism . Instead they promote emotion regulation and encourage men to direct their emotions toward speaking out and reducing incidences of SGBV.

**The Changes Students Expect to Come from Anti-SGBV Activism**

Students express their anger in SMA at the thought of daily life continuing while SGBV increases in South Africa. Hegemonic masculinity and hypermasculinity, both of which create environments for increased sexual violence, have been addressed in literature as acceptable forms of behaviour in patriarchal societies (Mokgokong, 2020). South African universities have been challenged by academic staff and students in their public announcements and emails about sexual violence perpetrated on campuses (Boonzaier et al., 2019). In their activism, students write that issues pertaining to SGBV are not being addressed properly by higher institutions and people in power. This is highlighted in an Instagram caption with the #AmINext? hashtag written by a Wits student, "It's crazy how [universities] take plagiarism more seriously than sexual assault." The caption critiques how higher education institutions do not react or do enough for

the fight against SGBV. This links to studies conducted on South African university campuses that have shown students' dissatisfaction with university emails and announcements in response to SGBV perpetrated on campuses (Boonzaier et al., 2019). The caption expresses the need for universities to take cases of SGBV more seriously in order to protect its students. Literature recommends this be done through policies that address cultures of hypermasculinity and rape culture that allow for SGBV to increase (Boonzaier et al., 2019).

**Figure 4**

*An activist holds an anti-SGBV protest poster above a crowd*


Figure 4 was posted to Instagram by a UCT student with the hashtag #IWillNotBeNext three months after the news of Uyinene Mrwetyana's murder. The image shows an activist hold a poster board during an anti-SGBV protest on the 5th of September 2019. The poster reads: "CONSEQUENCE FOR RAPE; EMANCIPATE & CASTRATE" with a cartoon of a man tied

by his ankles to a guillotine and being castrated. Castration involves removing the testicles that produce 95% of testosterone (Tsai, 2007). As a result of castration, libido is reduced and erections of the penis are less frequent (Tsai, 2007). Although sexual violence is not necessarily driven by sexual arousal, statistics have shown that less than 10% of castrated sexual offenders repeat their crimes (Tsai, 2007). The guillotine has been discussed in literature as representing the instrument of a rupture: In a singular moment, it breaks apart something that was once whole (Humphrey, 2019). This radical split represents a "cut from" the past and a "cut towards" the future (Humphrey, 2019). In the context of the anti-SGBV protest in Cape Town, the act of castration using a guillotine represents a political and societal severance from the patriarchal cultures that encourage toxic masculinities and sexual violence (Boonzaier et al., 2019). It also imagines a future where sexual offenders in South Africa are punished for their crimes to such an extent that their chances of reoffending are significantly reduced.

South African students use SMA to write about how they think anti-SGBV protests and movements need to be conducted in the future. Literature recommends that more South Africans need to participate in conversations around SGBV in order to reduce sexual violence, rape culture, and victim-blaming (Mthimkulu, 2019). This is reflected in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (Discovery, 2020). South Africans are encouraged to speak about and report incidences of SGBV using emergency helplines (Discovery, 2020).This recommendation is echoed by a UCT student in an Instagram caption with the #AmINext? hashtag, "It is time to be loud, radical and have the UNCOMFORTABLE conversations." The word "conversations" speaks to students wanting people in power to listen to their grievances, understand them, and respond compassionately through interaction rather than simply watching or hearing about a protest. However, there is no mention of exactly who needs to be having these

conversations. A conversation is carried out between two or more people, but it is not clear whether SGBV conversations need to be had between women, between men, or between men and women. Perhaps it is unclear for a reason: Students could be recommending that all South Africans need to be present in these conversations.

Students use SMA not only to protest against SGBV, but also to critique universities' apparent lack of compassion when responding to cases of sexual assault. This presents a gap in the literature as students express that universities in South Africa do not take SGBV seriously. Students also give their own recommendations that all South Africans be included in SGBV conversations so that all lived experiences and grievances can be heard and understood compassionately.

## Conclusion

Seven overarching discourses emerged amongst South African university students participating in SMA against SGBV. The range of discourse explored allowed researchers to understand the meanings that these students make of SGBV.

University students are not deterred from participating in SMA against SGBV because some may find it distressing to read and hear about. Instead, they encourage each other to participate in it in order to raise awareness towards its prevalence and to challenge social the norm of violence against women and children. The story of Uyinene Mrwetyana’s murder is used to galvanise students into action by remembering the sheer brutality through which a young life was lost to SGBV. Social media activism against SGBV is not only used as a form of protest, but also as a way to create safe spaces on online platforms for survivors of SGBV to share their experiences. These safe spaces expose how prevalent SGBV is in South Africa as women from

all walks of life discuss how much SGBV pervades and disrupts their lives. Social media activism works to expose the danger and threat that South African women's lives are perpetually under in our heteropatriarchal society that breeds hypermasculinity. University students take inspiration from successful social media campaigns in order to strengthen their own anti-SGBV movements, for example with the #SayHerName campaign. Uynene Mrwetyana's name and legacy are used as a rallying cry to keep the momentum of SMA against SGBV. Students also position themselves firmly against victim-blaming through humanising survivors and victims of SGBV. Social media activism refutes the idea that perpetrators of sexual assault are different from ordinary, everyday men. Students emphasise a discourse of proximity in order to warn women that the men in their lives are capable of committing sexual violence in a society that favours displays of hypermasculinity. SMA is used to call out men who are complacent or absent from anti-SGBV activism. Additionally, students encourage men to employ reflexivity for them to understand how hegemonic and hypermasculinities create dangerous environments for women. Men are also encouraged to participate in activism against SGBV rather than react with hostility and misunderstanding. Finally, SMA is used to critique the manner in which South African universities respond to sexual violence on campuses.

We encourage further research on SGBV in South Africa. It is apparent through the findings of this study that SGBV is a distressing and painful crisis. South African women are tired and angered by the lack of sociopolitical change that contributes to women's oppression. Further research needs to be done consistently in order to contribute to law reform in South Africa. It is necessary that voices and narratives of those affected by SGBV are able to render stricter repercussions for perpetrators. Furthermore, more research can be done on how to challenge hypermasculine and misogynist cultures as the world adapts to the current COVID-19

pandemic. Research concerning SGBV's increase since the pandemic would aid in compelling the South African government to make drastic changes to address this calamity (Medecins Sans Frontieres, 2020).

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# Appendix A

## Informed Consent Form

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**


**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

Social Media Activism by University Students Against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:

A discursive analysis on #IWillNotBeNext and #AmINext?

This is a research study on social media activism (SMA) and discourses around sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). We will be looking at social media posts written by South African university students to understand activism against SGBV. This will give insight into how South African university students engage with cases of SGBV.

1. **Invitation and Purpose**

    - You have been selected to take part in this study which explores discourse that university students use to protest against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) on social media.
    - Your post came to be included in this research because it uses the hashtag #AmINext? or #IWillNotBeNext.

2. **Procedures**

- We have used hashtags such as #AmINext? and #IWillNotBeNext to find posts on Instagram and Twitter written by South African university students against SGBV.
- These posts will be analysed to explore the kinds of discourses they produce around SGBV.
- You have been contacted because you are a South African university student who has participated in SMA against SGBV using the #AmINext? or #IWillNotBeNext hashtags.
- You are free to withdraw your consent for us to use your social media post at no penalty or any other consequences. These posts will be removed from the study.

3. **Risk, Discomforts, and Inconveniences**

- Rereading your social media posts against SGBV could be potentially emotionally distressing. However, you have full control over which posts you give consent to sharing as part of our research.
- If you need to talk to someone for further psychosocial support, here is contact information for professional help:

- National Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Command Centre at 0800 428 428
- Rape Crisis at 021 447 9762
- UCT Student Wellness at 021 650 1017/20
- UCT Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) at 072 393 7824
- South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) 24-Hour Helpline at 0800 456 789
- SADAG Suicide Helpline at 0800 567 567
- SADAG counselling services can be booked by emailing zane@sadag.org
- People Opposed to Women Abuse (POWA) at 011 642 4345
- POWA counselling services can be booked by emailing info@powa.co.za
- The Trauma Centre at 021 465 7373

4. **Benefits**

- This project gives you an opportunity to contribute to a growing body of research surrounding South African university students' responses to SGBV.

5. **Privacy and Confidentiality**

    - Your identity and social media account handle will remain confidential throughout the research process.
    - Only the researchers will have access to your name and social media account handle.

6. **Contact Details**

    - If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study please contact Sarah-Kate Bergstedt (BRGSAR003@myuct.ac.za) or Nashya Dunaiski on (nashyadunaiski@gmail.com). Alternatively Professor Floretta Boonzaier (floretta.boonzaier@uct.ac.za) and Skye Chirape (CHRSKY001@myuct.ac.za) at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town (UCT) 021 650 3429. The contact for the ethics committee is Rosalind Adams (rosalind.adams@uct.ac.za) on 021 650 3417.
    - For professional psychosocial support, please make use of the contact information provided on page 2-3 of this consent form.

7. **Signatures**

{Subject's name} _____ has been informed of the nature and purpose of the procedures described above including any risks involved in its performance. They have been given time and contact details to ask any questions and these questions have been answered to the best of the investigator's ability. A signed copy of this consent form will be made available to the subject.

_____

Investigator's Signature Date

_____

Investigator's Signature Date

I have been informed about this research study and understand its purpose, possible benefits, risks, and discomforts. I agree to take part in this research as a subject. I know that I am free to withdraw this consent and quit this project at any time, and that doing so will not cause me any penalty or loss of benefits that I would otherwise be entitled to enjoy.

_____

Participant's Signature

Date

# Appendix B

## Ethics Application

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**


**Department of Psychology**

Research Ethics Committee

Rondebosch, 7701

Tel: 27 21 6503417 Fax: 27 21

6504104

**APPLICATION TO CONDUCT PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

1. All applications must be submitted with the documentation outlined in the attached form.

2. All documents should be submitted electronically.

3. The University of Cape Town's Department of Psychology actively supports research as an essential academic function. It is essential that all applicants consult the UCT Code for Research involving Human Subjects (available from the UCT website).

4. In the case of research involving clinical populations, drug trials, neuroimaging, and recruitment from Groote Schuur Hospital or any affiliated medical institutions, approval must also be obtained from the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (FHS REC).

5. Final responsibility for the ethical and effective conduct of the research lies with the principal investigator.

**HONOURS STUDENTS:**

**Complete this application form, and submit it to Rosalind Adams with the formal research proposal that forms part of your research methods module in the Honours programme.**

**MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL STUDENTS:**

**Complete this application form, and submit it in electronic form to Rosalind Adams attached to the research proposal you will present to a departmental thesis committee.**

**DEPARTMENTAL STAFF, VISITING SCHOLARS AND POST-DOC STUDENTS:**

**Complete this application form, and submit it in electronic form to Assoc. Prof. Lauren Wild (lauren.wild@uct.ac.za). The application must be accompanied by a detailed proposal (maximum length 25 1.5-spaced pages).**

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL TO CONDUCT PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Section A | Proposal Identification Details | To be completed by all applicants |
| Section B | Study Information | To be completed for all studies |
| Section C | Financial and Contractual Information | To be completed by all applicants |
| Section D | Declaration on Conflict of Interest | To be completed by all applicants |
| Section E | Ethical and Legal Aspects | To be completed by all applicants |
| Section F | Checklist | To be completed by all applicants |

**Section A: Proposal identification details.**

1. Title of the proposal/protocol:

Social Media Activism by University Students Against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:

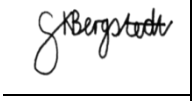
A discursive analysis on #IWillNotBeNext and #AmINext?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Has this protocol been submitted to any other Ethical Review Committee? | Yes | | No |
| 2.1 If so, list which institutions and any reference numbers. | N/A | | |
| 2.2 What was/were the outcome/s of these applications? | N/A | | |
| 3. Is this proposal being submitted for ethical approval for an amendment to a protocol previously approved by this committee? | Yes | | No |

3.1 If so, what was the previous protocol's reference number?

N/A

3.2 Principal Investigator (if a student project, the student is the principal investigator):

| Title | Initials & Last Name | Department and Institution | Phone | Email | Signature | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Miss | S. Bergstedt | University of Cape Town, Department of Psychology | 081 279 9219 | BRGSAR003@myuct.ac.za |  | 17 May 2020 |
| Miss | N. Dunaiski | University of Cape Town, Department of Psychology | 081 381 9943 | nashyadunaiski@gmail.com |  | 17 May 2020 |

3.2.1 (If different to 4.1 above) UCT Principal Investigator

| Title | Initials & Last Name | Department and Institution | Phone | Email | Signature | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |

3.3 Co-investigators: (if a student project, add the supervisor's name here)

| Title | Initials & Last Name | Department and Institution | Phone | Email |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Prof | F. Boonzaier | University of Cape Town, Department of Psychology | 021 650 3429 | floretta.boonzaier@uct.ac.za |
| Ms | S. Chirape | University of Cape Town, Department of Psychology | 021 650 3429 | CHRSKY001@myuct.ac.za |

| 4. Is the study being undertaken for a higher degree? | Yes | | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| If yes:<br>4.1 What degree? Honours degree in Psychology | | | |
| 4.2 Student name: Sarah-Kate Bergstedt and Nashya Dunaiski | | | |

| |
|---|
| 4.3 Supervisor name: Professor Floretta Boonzaier and Skye Chirape |
| 4.4 In what department is the degree? Department of Psychology |

**Section B: Study Information (summarize the information contained in the proposal).**

| |
|---|
| 5. Who will act as participants in the study?<br><br>Data will be collected from the Instagram and Twitter accounts of South African university students.<br><br>6. Estimated number of participants:<br><br>Twenty social media posts<br><br>7. Estimated duration of study:<br><br>Data collection will take place from September to the beginning of November 2020. Data analysis will take place from November to December 2020. A compiled research report will be submitted to UCT on the 15th of January 2021.<br><br>8. Location of study (e.g. UCT, school, hospital, etc., where you will gather data from the participants): |

The study takes place entirely online on Instagram and Twitter.

1. Recruitment: Please describe how and from where the participants will be recruited. Attach a copy of any posters or advertisements to be used.

We will be using hashtags such as #AmINext? and #IWillNotBeNext to find posts on Instagram and Twitter written by South African university students against SGBV. Participants will be contacted on their social media account if their post is chosen to analyse activism against SGBV.

2. Vulnerable groups: Are there pre-existing vulnerabilities associated with the proposed participants, e.g., relating to pre-existing physiological or health conditions, cognitive or emotional factors, and socio-economic or legal status?

Yes No

If yes, explain briefly what vulnerability would entail in the study, and how you propose to safeguard participants' wellbeing.

Both researchers intend to debrief participants where there might be anxiety and retraumatisation in bringing up their past social media posts on SGBV. We intend to manage the anxiety of the account owner in the event of retraumatising them by providing contact information for

psychosocial support from verified helplines such as Rape Crisis, UCT Student Wellness, and the SADAG 24-Hour Helpline. Both researchers also take on the duty and responsibility of reporting any abusive or threatening behaviour online to the appropriate platforms and channels during the collection of online data.

3. Risks: Briefly describe the research risk associated with your study, i.e. the probability and magnitude of harms participants may experience. Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm due to participation in the research are no greater than that encountered by participants in their everyday lives.

There are minimal risks associated with the study. Researchers are equipped to deal with potential anxiety and retraumatisation of participants by giving them contact information for professional psychosocial support.

4. Costs: Give a brief description of any costs or economic considerations for participants.

There is no fee to participate in this research, nor will there be monetary incentive for participating.

5. Benefits: Discuss any potential direct benefits to the participants from their involvement in the project.

This project gives participants an opportunity to voice their opinions and share their feelings about SGBV, thus contributing to a new body of research surrounding South African university students' responses to SGBV using social media.

6. Compensation: If participants are to receive compensation for participation, please provide details.

Participants will not receive compensation for participation.

7. Consent. Describe the process to be used to obtain informed consent. Where applicable, attach a copy of the information letter and consent form.

The consent form is attached as Appendix A.

8. Confidentiality. Please describe the procedures to be used to protect confidentiality of the data.

The identities and social media accounts of the participants will remain anonymous throughout the research process. No one but the researchers will have access to the names and social media account handles of the participants.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9. Does the protocol comply with UCT's Intellectual Property Rights Policy (including ownership of the raw data)? | Yes | No |

**Section C: Financial and contractual information**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Is the study being sponsored or funded? | Yes | | No |
| If yes:<br><br>10.1 Who is the sponsor/funder of the study?<br><br>N/A | | | |
| 10.2 Are there any restrictions or conditions attached to publication and/or presentation of the study results? | Yes | | No |
| 10.3 Does the contract specifically recognise the independence of the researchers involved? | Yes | | No |
| (Note that any such restrictions or conditions contained in funding contracts must be made available to the Committee along with the proposal.) | | | |
| 11. Will additional costs be incurred by the department? | Yes | | No |
| 11.1 If yes, specify these costs:<br><br>N/A | | | |

**Section D: Statement on Conflict of Interest**

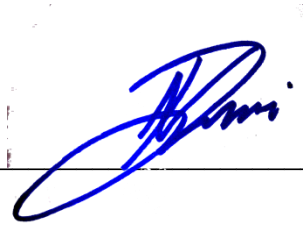
The researcher is expected to declare to the Committee the presence of any potential or existing conflict of interest that may potentially pose a threat to the scientific integrity and ethical conduct of any research in the Department. The committee will decide whether such conflicts are sufficient as to warrant consideration of their impact on the ethical conduct of the study.

Disclosure of conflict of interest does not imply that a study will be deemed unethical, as the mere existence of a conflict of interest does not mean that a study cannot be conducted ethically. However, failure to declare to the Committee a conflict of interest known to the researcher at the outset of the study will be deemed to be unethical conduct.

a) As the Principal Researcher in this study (Sarah-Kate Bergstedt), I hereby declare that I am **not aware** of any potential conflict of interest which may influence my ethical conduct of this study.

Signature:  Date: 17 May 2020

b) As the Principal Researcher in this study (Nashya Dunaiski), I hereby declare that I am **not aware** of any potential conflict of interest which may influence my ethical conduct of this study.

Signature:  Date: 17 May 2020

**Section E: Ethical and legal aspects**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Have you read the UCT Code for Research involving Human Subjects (available from the UCT website)? | Yes | | No |

**Section F: Checklist** **Tick**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Application form | 1 electronic copy | ✓ |
| ~~Covering letter and all other correspondence (e.g., ethics approval from other bodies, letters to parents, etc.)~~ | ~~1 electronic copy~~ | |
| ~~Detailed proposal, including a 200-word summary/abstract~~ | ~~1 electronic copy~~ | |
| Consent/Assent form/s | 1 electronic copy | ✓ |
| ~~Participant information sheet/Debriefing form (if separate from consent form)~~ | ~~1 electronic copy~~ | |
| ~~Other documents (e.g., advertising posters)~~ | ~~1 electronic copy~~ | |

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- All applicable sections of this application form must be filled in OR justified why not.
- All applicable signatures must be sought
- All additional number of copies must be included with application
- All incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant, leading to delays in review.