Empowering young people in advocacy for transformation: A photovoice exploration of safe and unsafe spaces on a university campus

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ABSTRACT

Globally and locally, research conducted with young people about safety on university campuses focuses primarily on risk and danger, particularly sexual danger. In this body of scholarship, the voices of young people are often elided. Our study intends to address both of these concerns, firstly by foregrounding the voices of students themselves through a photovoice method, and secondly by emphasising the ways in which safe and unsafe spaces are mediated by group and social identities. The aim of the study was to explore how students' perceptions of safe and unsafe places are mediated by group and social identities. A group of third-year students at an urban South African university used photovoice, a methodology that encourages participation and empowerment of young people in transforming their communities, to conduct a study identifying and photographing spaces they perceived safe and unsafe in and around campus. Narratives explained these photographs. The paper draws from this project, whose findings show that the construction of safety on campus is mediated by different factors of marginality within the student body including gender, class, citizenship and race among others. These findings are not only significant in raising concern about issues of safety on campus, but they also draw the attention of university stakeholders to these concerns, giving students a voice to be agents of transformation.

Keywords: *Campus safety, university students, gender, citizenship, race and class.*

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INTRODUCTION

Campus safety is an important part of a student's overall university experience. A considerable amount of research has been done on how students experience feelings of being safe and unsafe on university campuses globally, with most of the literature focusing on social groups like female, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students on campus, and of late sexual harassment of students, crime and security. In South Africa, literature exploring safe and unsafe spaces on campus is very scant. Available literature seems to approach safety from different angles, such as exploring risk and protective factors to ensure prevention of injury on campus (Rodriguez, Kramer, & Sherrif, 2013), and safety and security in halls of residence, particularly focusing on issues of sexual assault (MacKay & Magwaza, 2008). Scholarship also covers issues of coercive sexual practices and gender-based violence (Clowes, Shefer, Fouten, Vergnani, & Jacobs, 2009; Gordon & Collins, 2013; Hames, 2009), as well as victimisation, with high numbers of female students indicating that they have either been sexually harassed or abused on university campuses (Sass, 2005; Smit & Du Plessis, 2011). These studies reiterate that, with the overwhelming prevalence of sexual violence in South Africa in general, female students' safety in universities remains an issue of concern. Evidence further shows that experiences of fear around gender-based violence constrain daily behaviours and activities of those concerned (Dosekun, 2007). Yet female students are expected to tolerate, as well as manage violence, which tends to restrict their movement on campus (Day, 1994) and interferes with the overall quality of their campus experience. In reacting to this fear, female students have adopted what Currie (1994, p. 33) terms 'avoidance strategies', which include walking in groups when necessary, carrying weapons and approaching campus security guards to be escorted. These tactics seem to instil female students with a sense of safety (Currie, 1994).

Due to the scarcity of studies on safety and unsafety on South African university campuses, it is difficult to refer to statistics that show the representation of male and female students in this regard. Literature on American universities seems to accord female students more attention than male students. In one such study, David and Sutton (2011) found that 50% of female students felt unsafe walking alone on campus during the day. Bryden and Fletcher (2007) further noted that female students have also indicated their fear of walking alone on campus even if they do not specify the time of day. This fear is intensified when students are in a particular space, which shows that spaces matter in how students feel safe or unsafe on university campuses.

This is not to suggest that male students do not experience feelings of unsafety. Studies conducted by Ratti (2010) and Hales (2010) on American university campuses show that male students are twice as likely as female students to experience violence on campus, and it is indeed not surprising that they also indicated feeling unsafe, particularly at night. Violence experienced by male students ranged from harassment by faculty staff to physical assaults by other male students (Clearly, Schmieler, Parascenzo, & Ambrosio, 1994). Like female students, male students have resorted to carrying weapons and moving around in groups.

Studies pertaining to students' safety on campus are significant to universities, and any information that contributes to knowledge on students' well-being is paramount for prevention of injury. This study foregrounds prevention of injury as university students explore how perceptions of safe and unsafe places are mediated by group and social identities.

METHODS

A key element of this study was the potential to empower young people to transform their community, the university campus, through adopting a photovoice approach. Photovoice is an action research participatory method where participants take pictures to express their subjective experiences on the issue being researched. The participants 'identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique'. Its feminist orientation gives voice to the voiceless as it encourages transformation in the process (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). A third-year undergraduate class took photographs on and around campus of spaces that they perceived to be safe and unsafe. Each photograph was explained in a 250-word narrative. Students shared their data with three other fellow students and each student had at least 16 photographs and narratives to analyse. Thematic data analysis was conducted as students drew on their fellow students' photos and narratives to generate codes, searching for emerging themes, defining and naming them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some of the students volunteered to present their findings in class and some photos and narratives were exhibited at the university library for the attention of the university stakeholders and the entire student body.

This paper draws on 64 photographs and narratives from this group of students who volunteered to present their work, and foregrounds how the constructions of safety/unsafety and possible ways of managing and preventing safety and unsafety are mediated by the identities of the student body.

The students had to be ethically considerate throughout the study. Due to the sensitivity of taking photographs, students had to ensure that they obtained informed consent and

permission to use or publish images of human subjects who were visible in the spaces photographed. Students also completed informed consent forms agreeing to the use of their own data for publication purposes.

Students focused on the intersection of gender, space and identity, underscoring how space shaped different notions of safety and unsafety for different social groups on campus. For the sake of this paper, participants' voices will be presented in a way that attempts to define some of these categories, but it should be noted that this way of defining participants and understanding their identity remains superficial. Further layers can still be explored for a more nuanced understanding of students' identity. We will consider sex, nationality and race in referring to the participants, as these categories feature prominently in the themes we discuss.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SAFE/UNSAFETY ON CAMPUS

The way students perceived and constructed their feelings of safety and unsafety was mediated by multiple identities, in ways that justify drawing from an intersectionality theory for a more nuanced understanding of their constructions of safety and unsafety. Intersectionality is very appropriate to probe below single identities, allowing questions that seek to investigate how certain positions occupied by students affect and shape their perceptions and constructions of safe and unsafe spaces on campus (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Students' perceptions show the intersection of multiple categories of identity. Some of these categories were used 'for the construction of inclusionary/exclusionary boundaries that differentiate between self and the other' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 199), as students found safety in historically categorised racial groups. Using an intersectionality framework would undoubtedly encourage the examination of these categories of identities and differences (Cole, 2009), highlighting how these categories shape experiences of feeling safe or unsafe on campus. At the same time, relying on one category to understand students' experiences would be 'incomplete and biased' (Cole, 2009, p. 173), as students' experiences are shaped by multiple categories. Students unpacked multilayered dimensions of gender, nationality, race and class, to mention a few, as they cited how they experienced feelings of safety/unsafety in different spaces on campus.

RESULTS

The paper draws from a study that foregrounds the potential to empower students to transform their environment, as university students explore how perceptions of safe and unsafe places are mediated by group and social identities. A key theme emerging out of this process include how gender, citizenship, race and class intersect with other categories of students' identities in the construction of safe and unsafe spaces at a university campus.

GENDER AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SAFE AND UNSAFE SPACES ON A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

Gender had a fundamental role in how students constructed their experiences of safe and unsafe spaces on a university campus. It was also quite apparent that social space ultimately produced gendered identities. One such space was the campus bar popularly known as the 'The Barn' and the adjacent parking lot students commonly referred to as 'Condom Square'. Participants, particularly female students, felt that the crowds at 'The Barn' posed a threat to their safety, as they were especially anxious about being possible victims of violence and sexual harassment. Students felt in danger because the clientele of 'The Barn' included people outside of the campus community and because of the intoxicated nature of the patrons.

The Barn and "Condom Square".

In their narratives students described personal experiences of violence in this space, as shown in the following excerpts:

> My predator was black, middle-class and early 20s. I never know which men get violent when you say no; he was one of those men, he insisted to buy me a drink, while his voice raising and deepening, when I said no, he called me a bitch and a whore, likely to impress his friends and he crossed the room to them. It seemed like his immediate response was to belittle me, making me feel valuable, as they stared at me, undressing me, whispering so I may hear them discussing my body with pelvic gestures. (black[2] , female, local student)

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2   South African communities remain tainted by the history of apartheid, and people are still defined by the racial groups. This paper will use this group identity to identify participants, as it is commonly used in South Africa.

> As a female student I do not feel safe in such an environment because a lot of the time guys become aggressive and often try to follow you to your room. (black, female, international student)

Whilst female students cited a number of cases of violence against women, some indicated that interpersonal violence made the space unsafe for female and male students alike:

> I have witnessed male students fighting, witnessing that fight made me feel unsafe to walk there alone because I thought I was going to get hurt ... I have heard stories about Condom Square, whereby a female student was gang raped by drunken male students. My female friends and I have seen condoms lying around this area, which shows that male students practise sexual activities in an open space or maybe rape has occurred. (black, female, local student)

In addition to these personal experiences of violence, students gave second-hand accounts of female fellow students who also had been victims of violence in this space. The following female participant gave this account of violence outside 'The Barn' in the adjacent 'Condom Square'. She said:

> Some of my fellow classmates reported that men would sometimes sit in the trees where they cannot be seen by passers-by, and attack them by jumping from the trees … the loud music which comes from the bar prevents the women's screams from being heard when they are attacked. (Coloured, female, local student)

Gender clearly mediates the feelings of fear felt by students at "The Barn" and "Condom Square" because of the sexual nature of the attacks that occur there. Students also cited violence prevention strategies associated with both "The Barn" and "Condom Square", such as walking in groups or avoiding the place altogether:

> ... it is important for me to walk with my group of friends at night because I feel unsafe. (black, female, local student)

> I avoid going to The Barn in the evenings and only go there to get food when there are few people. That way I do not get into any situations that make me feel unsafe. (black, female, international student)

> Young women mostly go to The Barn in groups as they feel safer than when they go there by themselves. The Barn seems to be an unsafe place for most females who live on campus. (black, female, local student)

"The Barn" and "Condom Square" were not the only spaces on campus that students felt unsafe because of their gender. Participants were also concerned that they would face gender-based violence in the campus residence halls. Some of the senior female students who lived in mixed-gender residences cited feeling vulnerable, anxious and in constant fear of possible sexual attacks by male residents:

> ... as a young female it makes me feel uncomfortable living opposite the male bathroom. It makes me feel/unsafe because I do not know how they look at me as a coloured girl. (Coloured, female, local student)

> As much as I may feel safe in my room some other women within my residence feel unsafe as there has been a lot of … violence within our residence. (black, female, local student)

Halls of residence

Gender-based violence is a serious concern on all South African university campuses and particularly in halls of residence (MacKay & Magwaza, 2008), and as the narratives show, it is of particular concern at this university. A similar fear of gender-based violence was also expressed by female students in a study conducted at another South African university (Gordon & Collins, 2013). These findings are in line with those of Gordon and Collins (2013) that fear of violence evoked anxiety in female students and forced them to be constantly alert, anticipating danger they associated with men. Living in a constant state of anxiety and fear as a result of potential danger makes one constantly feel unsafe. This can be detrimental to students' standard of living, affect academic performance and cause health-related issues. A few years back a student was violently murdered by an intimate partner in one of the halls of residences at this university (Hames, 2009). Perhaps such incidences contribute to students' constant state of awareness. Feelings of vulnerability among female students were further cited when students referred to transportation to and from campus.

Such students either used commuter taxis or trains. In both instances students indicated they felt unsafe and vulnerable in these spaces. Participants described their experiences commuting to campus:

> The lack of safety and ridiculous fear embedded in me as a female on trains is due to the fact that hardly police patrol the trains, when its dark ... I was robbed, almost raped and abused inside a train on my way to campus. (Coloured, female, local student)

> This is a photo of the place where I get the bus every morning 6:00 am to get to campus ... the number of people being robbed and raped is high … (Coloured, female, local student)

Student bus stop

As raised in other studies about student safety on university campuses (Ratti, 2010), students in this study equally emphasised the significance of the time of day in the way spaces produced gendered identities. The shift from day to night transformed students' experiences in some of these spaces, showing how spaces that were initially cited as safe are transformed into unsafe spaces. Gender continues to be a central factor in such experiences. Isolated and poorly lit areas were threatening to both female and male students, as seen in the following excerpt referring to a student pathway adjacent to the campus bar and parking lot:

I have a phobia to walk in that area because I feel unsafe. Firstly, the area is a pathway where there are no lights and you cannot see who is in front or behind you. Secondly, the fans that are in that area are so loud that one cannot hear who comes behind you so it is easy for someone to sneak up on you. (black, male, international student)

At the same time, when referring to well-lit areas such as the campus courtyard, another student said:

Students' walkway connecting the campus and halls of residence.

As for the evening the Quartyard still holds that feeling of security … for two reasons: the area is illuminated … and the fact that I know that security is not far away. (Coloured, female, local student)

As can be seen in the narratives above, the transition between day and night transforms feelings of safety to those of unsafety.

THE INTERSECTION OF CITIZENSHIP AND RACE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF SAFETY

The student body at this university is diversely represented by multiple national, ethnic and racial categories of students. Therefore, it was not surprising that students found that citizenship played a vital role in the way their feelings of safety and unsafety were constructed on campus. International students of various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds experienced spaces differently. In some instances, feelings of safety and unsafety were shaped by broader political discourses. For example, some American exchange students felt that the debates in one of the lecture rooms had an uncomfortable bias against the West, which silenced them in this space, as they were anxious about how their fellow students would react to their opinions. One female, white, international student said:

> I sometimes feel very unsafe in lectures. I stand out in a lecture hall. I speak with a funny accent, I dress differently than many … students ... I know that I attract attention...topics brought up in lectures often make me feel unsafe to speak my mind. Students voice very strong opinions in class, which sometimes take anti-American turns.

Similar sentiments were raised by a female international student as she described her feelings of fear and anxiety at the campus bar, "The Barn", because of the xenophobic remarks that drunken students sometimes made:

As an international student at times when people get drunk they make xenophobic comments and this makes it feel like a hostile environment which is uncomfortable. (black, female, international student)

It is not unforeseen that the student raises such a concern of xenophobia at the university, as there is a history of xenophobic attacks and presence in Cape Town (Dodson, 2010). The fact that similar comments are made at the university is therefore, unsurprisingly, a matter of concern. Although international students referred to such experiences, which are linked to broader political issues, they also cited incidents of feeling safe as international students particularly in academic spaces:

... the lecturers do not harbour any ethnocentric attitudes towards international students, which makes the lecture environment a place where I feel I can express myself freely and comfortably. This creates a safe and conducive learning environment for me, and it enables me to do better academically ... being from a different country … my ideas … may be vastly different from my South African classmates … however, these differences in opinion are accepted [in lectures]. (black, female, international student)

Lecture room

The same student also felt safe in the residences on campus for similar reasons. She wrote the following about her experience living in the residences:

> There is a great amount of diversity with varying…nationalities blending together and living in harmony, which creates a welcoming, accepting, enjoyable and secure environment for me. (black, female, international student)

While this student presented this cohesive and harmonious community, a number of local students still felt that there was more safety in racial categories, and mistrust of other racial

Passageway

categories was linked to students' feeling of safety and unsafety. This is what one student said about the depicted space:

> One day I was walking alone through C-Block on my way to the student centre and I decided to take this route through this space, and a 'black' male student came running-walking behind me. Based on other people's experiences and narratives of 'black' males attacking females, I instantly assume that he is going to violate me and fear and anxiety fill up my whole body. (Coloured, female, local student)

What the student found unnerving was not that a male fellow student was walking behind her, but the fact that he was black. The student invokes the image of the 'hypersexualised black male' as seen in feminist theorising on race and representation of bodies (Davis, 1981; Lewis, 2011). This kind of thinking about race was further emphasised in another narrative in which the student experienced safety when among students of her racial category. She described the cafeteria upstairs in the student centre in the following way:

> As a female student who was classified under the apartheid era as 'Coloured' I particularly highlight this space as safe based on my race, because this is a space

where most 'Coloured' students hang out… Seeing that this place is mostly occupied by 'Coloured' students, it may become an unsafe space for 'black' students as they could feel intimidated by the 'Coloured' population. (Coloured, female, local student)

In reference to the same space however, one international student said:

I feel safe in this space because the people who are frequently there represent a diverse array of cultural and religious backgrounds...I feel safer in a diverse group. I feel confident that I will not be discriminated against because of my nationality or religious beliefs. (White, female, international student)

Here, local students' feelings of safety and unsafety are constructed around broader notions of thinking about race in South Africa and the ideological conceptions of racial groups which find their roots in apartheid. This kind of categorisation raises the issue of inclusion and exclusion in students' perceptions of certain spaces (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Safety in one racial group is juxtaposed to unsafety in the presence of the 'other' racial category. Perhaps it is also important to flag that categories of race, nationality and gender as played out here do not only describe students' differences in perception of spaces, but strongly capture historical and continuing relations of racial and political positions among students (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Unsurprisingly, these types of racial ideas do not appear in the narratives of international students. What complicates such perceptions among students in South African universities is that the institutions continue to be divided largely according to racial categories (Pattman, 2007; Soudien, 2008; Vincent, 2008), which are clearly visible in the manner students associate, or think about race on campus. The student sees safety in being with her racial group, whilst 'othering' other racial categories and also thinking that 'black students' would not feel comfortable in the same spaces as 'Coloured students'.

CLASS MATTERS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF SAFETY AND UNSAFETY ON CAMPUS

It is difficult to talk about race and yet ignore class, as these categories remain interlinked, the one mediating the other. Even if class was not explicitly visible in students' construction of safe and unsafe spaces on campus, it was noticeable as students experienced certain spaces as safe or unsafe. The financial aid office, which is expected to liaise with students who need financial assistance, was cited as a hostile space, particularly to the black and Coloured students who are from lower economic classes and felt humiliated and embarrassed in this particular space, as expressed in the following excerpt:

Students have been ridiculed and embarrassed, shouted at than offered assistance they deserve. As a black man who has no one to pay for fees… it [financial aid] was

> a relief for me. But my experience has changed after contact with this office. (black, male, local student)

> This is an unsafe space when a student's finances are not properly attended…She goes on to say that: Staff members do not calm students' fears but instead they make them worse. (black, female, local student)

The discomfort that these students associate with the financial aid office is unique to students with lower incomes, because those from more affluent backgrounds would not need to have contact with the financial aid office. A similar correlation can be drawn between modes of transportation and class. Not all students can afford to buy cars, therefore experiences with public transportation mainly affect lower-income students. In their narratives, it seemed to be a universally unsafe and unpleasant experience. For example, one participant said:

This was not the only instance of transportation-related violence found within the narratives. The sentiment was echoed by male and female students alike. The following is a quote from a male student explaining the dangers of the train station by one of the campus gates:

> Often times there are no securities at the station and this leaves one vulnerable to be a victim of crime. What further makes it an unsafe space is that it is accessible to the greater public…this space is poorly monitored...this space is notorious for violence...however it is a place and cannot be avoided as one needs to use this space to get to and from campus. (Coloured, male, local student)

Students with the means to purchase cars have the ability to avoid dangerous situations by driving to campus, thus indicating that the unsafe feeling students had on public transportation was directly mediated by class.

In the case of some international students, there was an intersection between class and citizenship. Cost of living and standards of living differ from country to country, creating the illusion of wealth. For example, one American exchange student felt that her perceived wealth made her stand out among her fellow students:

> As an American international student...I stand out in a lecture hall...I take notes on my MacBook and I check the time on my I-phone...I am stared at frequently, but people rarely speak to me, and when they do, it is to question why I am at this university as opposed to ... (White, female, international student)

Class affected this student's feelings of safety in a very different way than it did local students; however, it still played a major role in the student's comfort and feelings of safety

on campus, showing how different categories and positions intersect in the way students perceive and construct safety/unsafety on campus.

DISCUSSION

Students adopted a photovoice approach to indicate ways in which safe and unsafe spaces are mediated by group and social identities at the university. Using photovoice as a research method empowered students to capture spaces and also to voice their concern about spaces of unsafety whilst endorsing spaces of safety. In this way students were able to actively participate in transforming their surroundings. Some of the photographs and narratives were exhibited on campus, a way to advocate for change and to engage authorities in discussion about prevention of injury or possible violence to the student body. Through this study, students had indeed been empowered to transform their environment, as is a key tenet of photovoice research. This is evident in some of the students' reflections on both the research and use of photovoice as a research method:

> I found the whole research process very interesting and exciting as it allowed me to probe deeper into understanding the ways in which I navigate, and other students navigate certain areas on campus and why we feel either safe or unsafe in these areas. (black, female, local student)

> Also, using photovoice research methodology was very exciting and made the research a lot easier as I was able to capture the essence of various spaces, and I feel like this made the research feel personal which also contributed to the ease in writing. (black, female, international student)

> As a student, conducting this research was highly empowering. It taught me a great deal about my own academic abilities, while introducing me to a research method that I know I will continue to use later in life. (White, female, international student)

> In the future, I hope to work in international development, and use the skills that I have learned to better understand the needs of communities that I will be assisting. (White, female, international student)

Students' experiences of safety and unsafety on campus raise a number of issues about the intersection of gender, sexuality, nationality, race and class, among other factors.

A key factor in the students' constructions of safety was the association of femaleness with extreme levels of vulnerability. Female students described incidents of fear of possible

attack, particularly from their male colleagues or strangers in various spaces on campus. One such space was the campus bar, raising concern around violence associated with alcohol consumption. Their fear of sexual attacks was heightened by mixed residence halls, poorly lit areas and deserted passageways on campus. Students' feelings of vulnerability associated with the female body and its potential for violation intensified for some during their daily commute to and from campus. These findings foregrounded gender and power dynamics in what students perceived as safe and unsafe, specifically referencing possible injury to the female body. Research shows that South Africa has some of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world, and most of the literature in this field positions women as victims and men as perpetrators of this violence. At the same time, gender-based violence is seen as an act of power and the fear women experience is 'a political tool to control all women' (Gordon & Collins, 2013, p. 94). This body of work foregrounds the victim's narratives and not the perpetrator's (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2004) in ways that seem to validate 'power and masculine sexual entitlement' (Gordon & Collins, 2013, p. 100). Since university campuses are microcosms of the larger society, it is therefore not surprising that female students live in perpetual fear of violence. It is worrying, although unsurprising, that in this study most of the male students did not raise concern about fear of violence in the same way that female students did. It should be noted though that male students indeed felt unsafe in some spaces on campus, even if they did not provide specific details on their fear of possible violence.

This research was encouraging because it showcased the agency demonstrated by female students when adopting strategic ways of dealing with this fear and taking measures to prevent possible injury or attacks, by moving in groups or seeking the company of fellow students when venturing into spaces perceived as unsafe. Similar strategic ways of managing fear and anxiety have also been raised in correlated scholarly work elsewhere (Currie, 1994; Day, Stump & Carreon, 2003; Gordon & Collins, 2013).

The intersection of race and gender, as highlighted in the students' narratives of safe and unsafe spaces, evokes images of the 'black male' as both the perpetrator of violence and the embodiment of sexual violence. When a student emphasises that she feared the 'black male fellow student' could violate her sexually in one of the deserted passageways connecting buildings, this is disturbing and of concern because, firstly, without being overly essentialist and simplistic, the student's narrative embodies the myth of the hypersexual black male as shown in colonial discourses on representations of black male sexualities (Davis, 1981; 2006; Lewis, 2011). Although discourses on gender-based violence are generally linked to gender, it is crucial to be critical of those responses that create and perpetuate 'othering' discourses (Shefer, 2013) as seen in the example given.

Secondly, a more nuanced understanding of the student's fear is necessary for the prevention of possible injury. Empirical evidence shows that a number of female students

have been murdered by male colleagues on university campuses in South Africa. In 2008 a black student was strangled to death by her former boyfriend in one of the residences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Three months later, in the same year, another black student was murdered by her boyfriend in one of the residences at the University of the Western Cape (Hames, 2009). In 2014 a black female student was murdered by her non-resident boyfriend in one of the residences at Rhodes University (City Press, 2014). The murders of the female students on university campuses are not only disturbing, but also send a strong message to university authorities to ensure more strategic ways of preventing further injury, particularly to the female students.

Gender-based violence remains a serious issue in South Africa. Available statistics show that in 1999, 30,6% of women who died from gunshot homicides had been shot by an intimate partner (Abrahams, Jewkes & Mathews, 2010). It is therefore quite disconcerting that the issue of race is evoked in this instance and yet the student's fear of a possible attack is understandable within the violence-infested microcosm and the particular violence that has a gender dimension. Race continues to be a matter of concern, as some students indicated that they found safety in racial categories, indeed showing that racial categories remain resilient in present-day South Africa (Vincent, 2008). A number of studies have shown that South African universities are still divided according to race (Bhana, 2014; Soudien, 2008), which is highly problematic but also calls for strategies that will consider such responses critically in the prevention of injury to students in these institutions.

The intersection of citizenship with fear of xenophobic attacks can also not be overlooked. As indicated, universities are a microcosm of a larger society and it is perhaps necessary to understand the students' fear by looking at the concern about xenophobic attacks in the larger society. At the time of working on this paper, xenophobic attacks had erupted in some parts of the country, with foreign nationals' shops being looted in Soweto, Johannesburg ("Foreigners' shops", 2015). The students' unease is of concern, as it is an evident xenophobic experience which remains a daily experience specifically for most African immigrants in South Africa (Dodson, 2010). It is crucial that universities challenge students in ways that will empower them to stand up against xenophobic tendencies in order to prevent such attacks, not only among the student body but also within the greater community. Finally, juxtaposed to the fear of xenophobia is the spirit of solidarity and unity that some students endorse as a form of safety.

The study draws from a project that used photovoice methodology to capture students' perceptions of safe and unsafe places on campus and how students' perceptions were mediated by their multiple identities. The study is of a qualitative nature and therefore not representative of the entire student body. It could be valuable for future research to engage a wider population of the university using photovoice or making use of other methods such

as surveys to explore students 'perceptions of safety and unsafety on campus. Different categories of students' identities should be taken into consideration, as this study shows the significance of intersectionality in dealing with students' perceptions of safety and unsafety on campus. We explore only a few of these categories in this paper. This area is under-researched, though crucial for the promotion of heightened safety on university campuses. The study also hopes that the university authorities will rectify some of the students' concerns, such as inadequate lighting and security issues on campus, following the photovoice exhibition that was held at the university's library. Most importantly, South African universities and this university in particular are challenged to open forums that will deal with issues of race and other challenges raised in this paper for the benefit of all students.

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