Communicating About Sexual Violence on Campus: A University Case Study

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ABSTRACT

South African universities are in the midst of highly visible struggles around decolonisation. Over the past two years, these struggles have foregrounded racialised, classed, gendered and other forms of exclusion. These are being challenged both by black academic staff as well as by black students. Most visibly and deeply connected, have been the challenges to the ways in which universities, as particular types of institutions, have dealt with sexual violence and harassment of its womxn[1] *students. In this context we ask how the University of Cape Town, as one particular case study formally communicates about sexual violence on its campus. In an archival analysis of the university's public communications on sexual violence during 2015 and 2016, we ask what kinds of messages it conveys about violence, victims and perpetrators. We are interested in the ways in which the university positions itself in relation to the issue of sexual violence. The paper finds that the university's institutional discourse on sexual violence produces and reproduces some of the same discourses on sexual violence in both the public and media more broadly.*

Key**words**: sexual violence, rape, institutional responses, discourse analysis, rape discourse

INTRODUCTION

Womxn[1] in South African institutions of higher learning (IHL) are not exempt from the pervasive levels of violence that affect South African womxn more broadly. Between 2011 and 2014, 247 cases of sexual violence[2], partner violence, and rape were reported at 15 universities across South Africa (SA) (Serrao, 2014). Minister of Higher Education and Training, Naledi Pandor, reported to parliament that in 2017 there were 47 cases of rape and sexual assault on students reported on campuses across South Africa (Nkosi, 2018).

It can be argued that sexual violence is sanctioned and embedded within institutional cultures, due to its prevalence and the fact that it has also been reported at IHL globally (e.g. Clowes, Shefer, Fouten, Vergnani, & Jacobs, 2009; Gardner, 2009; Canli & Kaya, 2016). In this paper, we explore how the university communicates about sexual violence in relation to violence perpetrated against university students. Students are a majority group in IHL but also those who hold very little power. Recent student protests have starkly called into question the 'student experience' at these institutions, warranting an exploration of how they might be affected by sexual violence.

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Students protesting across the country, between 2015 and 2016, have centred the issue of institutional responses to sexual violence, by claiming that 'rape culture'[3] has been allowed to develop on campuses (Rahlanga, 2016). At the time of the student protests, most institutions had or have since adopted systems for the reporting, as well as ratifying various policies on such violations. However, institutional responses to these violations have often been found to be unsatisfactory (Corke, 2015; Toerien, 2016). Exercising its constitutional mandate, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE, 2017) responded to these protests by calling on IHL to make presentations on how they were addressing gender discourses through their policies and practices. The commission also observed that sexual violence against womxn, as well as patriarchal practices narrow the opportunities that are available to womxn (CGE, 2017). This sentiment was earlier articulated in Ngwane (2014) whose research showed that sexual harassment, violence and sexist discrimination affects womxn's productivity and narrows their opportunities for advancement, whether they are staff or students.

Researchers and students across the country have raised concern with regard to three areas of sexual violence prevention policy and practice. Firstly, they argued that patriarchal cultures within IHL encourage the perpetration of sexual assault and violence (Clowes et al., 2009; Collins, Loots, Meyiwa, & Mistrey, 2009). This involves the idea that the masculinist and sexist cultures of institutions perpetuate ideas around womxn's subordination alongside ideas that sanction violence against them (de Klerk, Klazinga, & McNeill, 2007). These include an emphasis on the sexualisation of womxn and the positioning of womxn as potential sexual conquests; ideas that are especially prevalent in men's university residences (see Clowes et al., 2009). Secondly, it is claimed that IHL is unresponsive to the plight of womxn students. Students especially have argued that the systems that are set up to deal with the issue of sexual violence on campuses put the burden of addressing sexual violence almost exclusively on womxn survivors themselves. Thirdly, policies that are adopted take a narrow view on sexual violence to address contemporary manifestations of sexual violence and harassment such as online harassment and revenge pornography (DeKeseredy, 2014; see especially Hall & Hearn, 2018). Overall, researchers and activists have pointed out that university interventions and responses to sexual violence give the impression that they are more concerned with preserving their brands and reputations than they are about reversing the institutional cultures that allow 'rape culture' to fester (Collins et al., 2009).

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

In the 1990s, through the development of policies, some gains were made in the transformation of institutional cultures in higher education, especially in relation to issues of sexual harassment. Some scholars however, have posited that the commitment to reforming these institutions has been muted (Bennett, 2009). We know that campuses do not exist in a vacuum, nor are they immune to the larger social issues that are experienced in the contexts wherein they exist (DeKeseredy, 2014). Higher education institutional environments mirror the reality of society at large, including the 'rape culture' that permeates society; while at the same time holding the potential to address societal problems (CGE, 2017).

Studies highlight the context of campus life as a form of symbolic and sometimes material violence on those considered to be 'out of place' (Boonzaier & Mkhize, 2018). It has also been argued that violence against the marginalised (i.e. black, womxn, queer, poor students) is structurally embedded within the system (Clowes et al., 2009; Hames, 2009). In a Special Issue of the journal *AGENDA*, Clowes and their colleagues (2009) found that within the student populace at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), students expressed troubling essentialist views of gender regarding the nature of men.

Discourses of essentialism, which normalise the sexual predator tendencies of male students, were found to further legitimise the widespread sexually coercive practices on campus (ibid.). Mokgatle and Menoe (2014) later reported that 28% of women undergraduate students in their study at the University of Limpopo had experienced sexual coercion; that all women students are at risk of verbal coercion, attempted rape, and rape - irrespective of age and years of study.

Recent research with black queer students at the University of Cape Town also illustrates the extent to which institutions - where white, middle/upper class, heterosexual, cisgender men are considered to be the invisible norm - are experienced as alienating to those who do not fit the supposed norm (Boonzaier & Mkhize, 2018). The material realities of poor womxn students ensure that wider systemic and structural inequalities predispose them to predatory sexual relationships characterized by coercion and violence (Clowes et al., 2009). Coalitions formed by students and university staff, such as the UKZN Gender Based Violence Lobby Group, have proposed that institutional culture should be addressed in responding to the sexual violence experienced by womxn (Collins, et al., 2009). Furthermore, they have contended that an exclusive focus on physical security is not effective in curtailing intimate partner violence, with its many complex social underpinnings. (ibid).

The contestations and challenges to the ways in which institutional cultures enable sexism and violence against womxn has led to the initiation of systems and policies that aim at addressing the problem of sexual violence on IHL environments (see Corke, 2015). It is argued that these responses are motivated by a range of intentions, from avoiding future public relations scandals to ending gender-based violence (GBV) (Collins et al., 2009), and potentially avoiding litigation.

In this paper we argue that greater attention be accorded, not only to the policies and practices but also to the ways in which the university formally communicates about an issue such as sexual violence. There is a need to interrogate the manner in which institutions engage hegemonic cultures that give rise to elevated levels of normalised sexual violence against womxn. We take the University of Cape Town as an example to argue that a progressive feminist response and articulation of the issues are important in thinking about how one communicates about violence against womxn.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN: A CASE STUDY

In submissions made to the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) in 2017, UCT Vice-Chancellor at the time Dr Max Price indicated that the effectiveness of UCT's sexual harassment policy is evidenced by counselling and support services that are available to students 24 hours a day (CGE, 2017). Having noted presentations made by Dr Price regarding the patriarchal cultures endemic within the university residences, the commission enquired about the ways the university was working to change the institutional culture. The vice chancellor's response was that he "didn't know how patriarchal culture is addressed, and it's not done" (CGE, 2017, p. 20).

The institution's rape policy, promulgated in 2008, aimed to assist victims of rape (UCT, 2008) through supportive (crisis counselling, emergency medical services, para-legal advice, and other relevant services) as well as protective measures (no-contact orders, change of university residence, change of academic classes and academic relief, medical or health leave). The 2015 review of the Discrimination and Harassment Office (DISCHO) at UCT was the first assessment of the application of UCT's policy and its responses to sexual violence. The review highlighted the need for a transformational approach to sexual violence that considers the wider inequalities that students face (DISCHO, 2016).

In April 2016, UCT established the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) tasked with informing the university community about the state of and response to sexual violence on campus through the dissemination of quarterly reports (SART, 2016). This collaborative collective focussed on providing compassionate care to survivors but also aimed to move beyond a reactionary response to focus on violence prevention. The reports that SART have produced since its inception detail the number and nature of sexual offenses reported to DISCHO. While DISCHO reports that from 1 January -14 July 2017 there had been fewer complaints of sexual harassment, it is unclear whether these statistics indicate reductions in sexual harassment incidents or whether complainants are not reporting (SART, 2017). Within this period, DISCHO received reports and provided assistance to 16 complainants of sexual assault and rape and seven complainants of sexual harassment. Of the reported sexual offenses, ten occurred on campus many of which took place in student residences; these match the same period in

2016 (SART, 2017; Shange, 2018). It is worth noting that despite the efforts of the SART as well as DISCHO, students still face challenges when accessing the services offered to survivors of sexual violence by the institution (see UCT Survivors, 2017).

Policies can advocate for a change in norms and culture and institute practices towards the values to which an institution aspires. Tentative support for this position is given by DeLong and her colleagues (2018) who found that comprehensive campus sexual assault policies may be linked with somewhat lower campus, sexual assault prevalence. However, by themselves, policies have limited utility as means to change embedded institutional cultures. This is more so with policies considered 'politically symbolic' (see Jansen, 2001). Our position is that we should resist falling into the trap of thinking of policy formulation as having little to do with praxis. We should rather interrogate the implementation of those policies and simultaneously centre the reasons why they are necessary for particular institutions.

It has been argued that any earnest agenda for inclusivity in higher education necessarily entails "the duty of using 'the powers conferred by academic freedom' to substantively decolonise, deracialise, demasculanise and degender our inherited 'intellectual spaces'" (Badat, 2010, p. 18). Viewed from this vantage point, a critique of institutional responses to the material conditions of its constituencies does not negate institutional attempts at redress, nor does it seek to present an essentialist view of an institution. Such critique must be seen as part of the national imperative – as outlined in the South African Constitution as well as the Higher Education Act of 1997 - to transform IHL.

There is a growing consensus among scholars that GBV can be tackled effectively if measures are taken to change the underlying social norms and overall institutional cultures (Collins et al., 2009; Walsh, 2015). Interrogating and understanding how an issue such as sexual violence is represented and made collective sense of are important for challenging embedded norms and cultures. In this context, we provide an analysis of UCT's public communications of sexual violence. We ask what kinds of messages it conveys about violence, victims and perpetrators and we are interested in the ways in which the university positions itself in relation to the issue of sexual violence.

The language deployed by institutions to communicate with their constituents about incidents of sexual violence experienced by womxn within these communities informs us how both perpetrators and victims of sexual violence are perceived, it also tells us whose responsibility sexual violence is deemed to be (see de Klerk et al., 2007). We understand public communication as an important resource for capturing the ways in which an issue such as sexual violence can be made meaningful in our collective consciousness (see Boonzaier, 2017). Media representations have been shown to be important for drawing upon and shaping public discourse, especially in relation to topics such as gender-based violence (e.g. Boonzaier, 2017; O'Hara, 2012; van Niekerk, 2018). Media representations are additionally important, not only for collective sense-making but also for their potential to shape policy and legal opinion. As such, the ways in which they challenge or reinforce existing stereotypes should be an important focus of interrogation.

METHOD

DATA COLLECTION: ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

An analysis of the 2015/2016 public communications (n = 15 emails) from UCT was conducted. Such an analysis is useful because the communications were formulated without the researchers' presence or involvement as mitigating factors (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis requires the selection of data, as opposed to the collection of data, making it cost effective and time efficient. The communications were accessed on UCT's online database. The only communications that were accessible at the time the research was conducted were those from June 2015 to May 2016, thus this period was analysed. This time period is also significant because it was the time during which issues of sexual violence came to the fore most visibly at the university through student protests.

The two communication databases on which the present research is based were "Campus Announcements" (n = 8 emails) which are emailed to every student and staff member at the university to inform them about important day-to-day occurrences, and secondly the "From the VC/DVC's Desk" (n = 5 emails from the Vice Chancellor, n = 2 emails from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor) which are sent to all students and staff on campus, and serve as communications directly from UCT management around relevant macro issues on campus. In many ways these emails represent the relationship the average student has with UCT management.

The communications in the archive were read for relevance to issues of sexual violence, including a scan for words and phrases such as "sexual violence", "rape", "sexual harassment", "#PatriarchyMustFall"[4], and "DISCHO". The communications that contained those phrases were then included for further analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this paper, we understand language as important for revealing something about how meanings are produced and shared on a collective level (Sullivan, 2010). We employed Foucauldian/critical discourse analysis (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2007) to amplify the connections between language and power. We understand the role of discourse in producing particular versions of the world – in this instance, particular ideas about victims, perpetrators and sexual violence. These particular scripts have powerful effects in relation to the ways in which they re-inscribe and reproduce ideas about dominance and subordination and for the ways in which they reinforce hegemonic ideologies around violence and gender. In addition, we undertake a feminist decolonial reading (Lugones, 2011; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018) to foreground the ways in which the coloniality of race and gender are intersected and entangled with other social identities and oppressions.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: DISCOURSES OF RAPE

Three major discourses of rape were identified in the communications analysed for this paper. In the first, namely, *Rape as exceptional,* rape was constructed as an anomaly while its systematic nature was ignored. In the second discourse, the lens is very clearly and explicitly turned toward womxn and their victimization, resulting in a reproduction of problematic discourses around rape. We call this, *Discourses of 'victim' responsibility.* Finally, in the discourse we call, *Silencing patriarchy* there is a reproduction of the idea that rape has little to do with patriarchy and gendered power. It is, at the same time positioned as inevitable.

RAPE AS 'EXCEPTIONAL'

The language used in communication about sexual violence on campus insinuates that rape is a rare and shocking occurrence. For example:

> The University of Cape Town is devastated to confirm that yet another female UCT student was brutally attacked, assaulted and raped off campus on Tuesday evening, 8 March 2016. We were informed of this matter only late last night. Although we cannot be certain, all indications are that the attack has similarities to three previous recent attacks that occurred near Rhodes Memorial and that the assailant might be the same person involved in these other cases. (Kruger, 2016a)

There are many ways in which the communication here obscures the frequency of sexual violence. For example, the emotion (i.e. devastation) expressed in the above extract is compatible with the idea that rape is an anomaly, despite it being a common occurrence in South Africa. Furthermore, it connects the incidents described above to a single perpetrator. Finally, although Rhodes Memorial is virtually a part

of the university campus (it is often used by students and staff as an 'overflow' parking area), all the communications reiterate the point that the attacks occurred off campus – which appears to evade some responsibility. It can also be argued that the issue of sexual violence is 'othered' in the communication, as well as the perpetrator being 'othered'; creating a situation in which the university is able to position itself as being under attack from an 'outside other'.

South African studies show that there is a high prevalence of men who admit to having raped and having done so multiple times (Jewkes et al., 2006). It can thus be argued that rapists form part of the broad culture of rape, prevalent in South Africa today. The outrage at the injustice of the rapes in the communications seems incompatible with a country where South African police services recorded 41,583 rapes in 2018/19 (Africa Check, 2019). Furthermore, international research suggests university campuses are places where sexual violence occurs more often than in the general public (Banyard et al., 2009; Cantalupo, 2010). Nonetheless, UCT constructs itself as safe from rape, as illustrated below:

> Rape is unacceptable and criminal no matter where it happens or whom it harms. But it is particularly shocking that it has occurred in what should be a place of safety: a student's room at a UCT residence. (Klopper, 2016)

Rape that occurs on campus is constructed as particularly outrage-inducing; even though 32 cases of rape and sexual assault were reported in 2016 - most of which were reported to have occurred in campus residences (SART, 2016). In the first instance, this expression of outrage and 'shock' is consistent with media reports on rape and sexual violence more broadly and has been argued to mask how common sexual violence is (Judge, 2013). In the second instance, perpetrators are not 'addressed' in the communication of the rapes at Rhodes Memorial nor, in the above case, about a rape that occurred in a student's room. By not being explicit about the fact that the perpetrator may be a student, while being explicit about the fact that the survivors are students, the university constructed itself as an institution under attack by an outside individual and a problem located outside of it, perpetuating the 'stranger-danger' notion common in rape discourses. As such, the only link the university makes between itself and rape is that the survivors are students. The communication does not entertain the idea that perpetrators could possibly also be students themselves.

Given South Africa's high rates of rape, one might assume that these are not the first rapes to occur in the vicinity of (or at) the university (Dunkle et al., 2004; Jewkes et al., 2006; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002) and that many students who have been through the institution may themselves be rape survivors, whether on campus or outside of it. International studies on sexual assault on campuses will support this assumption (Anderson, Beattie, & Spencer, 2001; Banyard et al., 2009; Hartmann, 2015; Streng & Kamimura, 2015). Thus, we must question why these rapes (i.e. those at Rhodes Memorial) in particular were given such attention.

Almost all the rapes occurred such that the rapist was described as a violent stranger who abducted women as they were going about their usual daily activities, as described below:

> The student was running along the bicycle path in the area near the bridge of Princess Anne Drive in Newlands when a man attacked her, threatened her with a knife, assaulted her severely and forced her into the bushes and towards the Rhodes Memorial area. The man held her captive for some hours and raped her. The man later forced her to walk to a garage where she was able to break free from the attacker and was assisted by staff to phone the South African Police Services for help. She was admitted to hospital. UCT is assisting the student in a variety of ways and will continue to do so. (Kruger, 2016a)

There are common beliefs about what constitutes rape which function to make certain accounts of rape legitimate, while delegitimising others (Hartmann, 2015). Rape which is violent and involves a stranger perpetrator, and where the woman is not acting provocatively constitutes the most believable form of rape (Hartmann, 2015). The stranger-rape narrative is a clearly articulated and widespread one that

occurs in popular discourses around sexual violence. Those discourses that buy into this narrow definition of rape are replicated in research (Anderson et al., 2001; Shefer, Strebel, & Foster, 2000). Thus it could be argued that since these rapes followed this script, they are legitimised in the eyes of the institution and thus more worthy of attention (Hartmann, 2015). Despite this popular narrative, most rapists are known to their victims (Gqola, 2015; Streng & Kamimura, 2015).

Studies in the US have shown that university campuses are places conducive to rape, and places where rape often occurs, frequently perpetrated by students (Banyard et al., 2009). The manufactured idea that the rapes were exceptional encourages the notion of a single (stranger) perpetrator – outside of the university. The university then focusses its efforts on removing this individual perpetrator and advising students to attempt to avoid this individual rather than facing the much broader and potentially systemic problem of sexual violence on its campuses and in society.

DISCOURSES OF 'VICTIM' RESPONSIBILITY

In its communications about rape, we find that the university directs the problem of sexual violence at womxn by focusing on their victimization rather than on the perpetration of rape. Throughout this analysis, we see that all the incidents are strung together by having womxn victims, for example:

> The University of Cape Town is devastated to confirm that yet another female UCT student was brutally attacked, assaulted and raped off campus on Tuesday evening, 8 March 2016. (Kruger, 2016a)

From the communication, we know very little about the victim, other than the fact that she is 'female'. In this way, being 'female' is seen as relevant and useful information in a communication about sexual violence, thus linking sexual violence with the notion of female victimhood.

> UCT will make contact with the survivor of yesterday's attack, as we have done in previous related cases involving other students, to offer medical and counselling support. (Hatton, 2016)

In the above, we see an emphasis on post hoc care for the survivor and no attempt to address the perpetrator. We are of course, not suggesting that the provision of support for survivors of sexual violence is not important and should not be the first response to the incident. However, for perpetrators to be held accountable, some shift in the discourse from victimhood to perpetration must occur.

> We advise again of the establishment of the sexual assault response team [SART], a unit that aims to provide survivor-centred, compassionate and comprehensive services on campus (Kruger, 2016b)

Again, there is silence on the issue of perpetration, alongside the emphasis on survivor care. No information is provided on the penalties for perpetration of sexual violence or what constitutes sexual violence. This asymmetry contributes to the "female fear factory" (Gqola, 2015 p.78). This means that it makes potential victims of sexual violence aware of their vulnerability by recognizing the pervasiveness of rape but not acting to discourage its perpetration. By not addressing or acknowledging perpetrators of sexual violence on campus, the university separated the problem of rape from the agency behind its perpetration. This separation is congruent with international research on responses to sexual violence (Anderson & Doherty, 2007). Thus, there is no engagement with those patriarchal systems, which sanction the perpetration of rape.

In no way was the perpetrator addressed, threatened, or encouraged to stop their perpetration in these communications. In this way the perpetrator was left out of the communications about rape. This omission may be due to the assumption that the perpetrator is/was not a student. Those who were most implicated in the communications were those survivors of sexual violence and those potential victims

of sexual violence whom the university posits as womxn: "With such attacks in the area around our campus we feel deeply stressed for the safety of female students in particular" (Kruger, 2016a). "Whilst this is one incident, we know our society is one where rape, assault and murder of people (and particularly woman and children) is a common practice" (Price, 2015). While the second statement acknowledges sexual violence as a broader problem, unlike the communications which paint these incidents as exceptional, there was still no engagement with the role that men play in these situations while womxn were firmly situated as victims. This lack of engagement with the perpetrators of sexual violence is not unique to this institution (see for example CGE, 2017; Collins et al., 2009; Rahlanga, 2016).

What we see in other media discourse (as well as in academic discourse on gendered violence) is that the focus on womxn's victimisation – not only absolves perpetrators of responsibility – but also contributes to a notion that womxn live lives of inevitable risk (Boonzaier, 2018). Womxn are constructed as inevitable victims, at risk, and vulnerable. The effects of this discursive positioning are problematic, not only because it takes a binaristic approach to victimhood (Shefer, 2016) but also because it opens up a space in which it becomes possible, almost necessary, to focus on womxn's behaviour – as seen below.

> We firmly hold the view that every student and staff member should be able to move without restriction and go where they please. Society should be that safe. Yet, in the light of the fact that these assaults are happening, and the violence of the assault seems to be increasing, we again ask all students and staff (and women in particular) to avoid walking or running alone at all cost. It is important to avoid areas where you may be isolated or vulnerable to attack. Please think about your daily route and make arrangements beforehand so that you are walking or running in groups, particularly in the late afternoon, early evening or after dark. (Kruger, 2016a)

By telling womxn to avoid certain areas at certain times the university contributes toward the policing of womxn's behaviour and also toward placing the burden on womxn to avoid rape rather than stopping people from raping (de Klerk et al., 2007; Gqola, 2015). Discourses of womxn as victims who need to take defensive precautions are attested in other studies on the ways womxn speak about rape (Shefer et al., 2000). The discourse that womxn who walk alone, at night are making themselves vulnerable to rape is replicated in how rapists justify their attack (Gavey, 2005). Therefore, if another student was raped in these areas, the suggestion that she was responsible for her own victimisation would follow, as she had not heeded the warnings (Anderson et al., 2001). Furthermore, when the university recommends that womxn avoid certain public spaces it renders these spaces as not for womxn, and what was once a public space now becomes a space where, if womxn 'trespassed', they may be raped (Anderson & Doherty, 2007). In this way, the university's response to sexual violence is in alignment with the sexist underpinnings of GBV and thus upholds the very culture that allows rape to occur in the first place.

Gqola (2015) talks about rape as a powerful language used to keep womxn, ourselves and each other, in check. A language that is complicit in producing what she calls the female fear factory; don't go to his room; don't stop at the robots; make sure you go with a friend; stay away from the Rhodes Memorial area; "avoid walking or running alone; avoid areas where you may be isolated or vulnerable to attack; please think about your daily route and make arrangements beforehand so that you are walking or running in groups …". These last warnings were received in the first author's email inbox and via SMS around the time of the rapes at Rhodes Memorial. The female fear factory is the manufacture of female fear pervasive in our public culture. Gqola (2015) sees it as a way in which we are blackmailed into keeping ourselves in check – a way to be reminded that our bodies are not ours.

In response to the criticism, the university received after the rape incidents around its campuses the university set up a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART).

> SART comprises a multidisciplinary team of professionals who will work collaboratively to respond to those members of the campus community affected by sexual violence. SART's aim is to provide survivor-centred, compassionate and comprehensive services on campus and will be headed up by the faculty of health sciences Associate Professor Sinegugu Duma. (Petersen, 2016)

The above communication, alongside the many numbers given to call if one was in distress emphasises the university's attempt to be supportive of survivors and students in need. This rapid development, as well as the availability of information regarding who to contact must be commended, as it made reporting easier and more accessible, which research indicates, is often lacking in university policy (Streng & Kamimura, 2015).

Empirical studies argue that in order to prevent rape, community, collective cultures need to be addressed so that bystanders act with resistance to rape and sexism (Banyard et al., 2009). While the prevention of sexual violence as well as addressing the culture that promotes sexual violence were less prevalent in the communications about the SART, they were not altogether absent.

> This is one of the reasons why UCT has established the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART): a multidisciplinary team of professionals who will work together to address the culture of rape, sexual assault and gender discrimination that is so prevalent in South African society. In particular, they will identify and address ways that these types of criminal behaviour affect UCT and how we as a campus community can help prevent them. SART will also seek to provide survivor-centred, compassionate and comprehensive services on campus. (Klopper, 2016)

The above quotation was one of few instances where the SART receives mention in relation to the systemic issues around rape and the prevention of rape. This constitutes recognition of the need to address rape as a complex phenomenon, separate from other crime. This recognition was mostly lacking in other communications as highlighted earlier. Findings in international research on university policy differs from this, in that policies usually focus more on prevention, to the detriment of post-attack support for survivors (Joseph, 2015; Streng & Kamimura, 2015). Contrary to recommendations made by GBV researchers to focus on perpetrators and not survivors (see Naidoo, 2007; van Niekerk et al., 2015), perpetrators were not mentioned and in this way were not held accountable for the violent acts described in UCT's communications. This has contributed to a further burden of responsibility placed upon survivors and potential victims of sexual violence.

SILENCING PATRIARCHY

As illustrated earlier, by not addressing the issue of perpetration in its communication the university ignores the agency behind the perpetration of rape. This theme is followed through as rape is also described as something that just 'happens'.

> … it is deeply concerning that a UCT student was alleged to have been raped or sexually assaulted in Avenue Hall early Monday morning. It reminds us that even in a space where there is heightened sensitivity and understanding about these matters, the scourge of violence and abuse happens. (Price, 2015)

The discourse of distancing of the occurrence of rape from the perpetration of rape and the active agency involved therein has been identified in other media coverage of rape incidents (Hirsch, 1994). Such an acceptance of rape is often a consequence of a belief system that says men cannot control their sex drive, and thus cannot be stopped, or else that men can, and will always, do as they please (Anderson & Doherty, 2007; Weiss, 2009). We must acknowledge that the communications could have addressed perpetrators directly and presented the disciplinary powers at the disposal of the institution. However, by remaining silent the university may be seen to have fostered a safe space for perpetrators.

> There is no doubt that we must work even harder to change the environment and culture on campus so that survivors feel less afraid and more supported and enabled to tell their stories, to seek action against perpetrators and to reach out for help and support from staff and fellow students. (Price, 2016)

While it is important that survivors feel safe on campus, it is perhaps just as important that perpetrators of sexual violence feel unsafe on campus. In this quotation, the culture on campus is seen to be related to how survivors feel rather than related to how the perpetration of sexual violence is supported by this culture. These communications reached a wide audience, yet no links to information on what constitutes sexual violence are provided. Given that research has shown that rape is more likely to perpetrated by individuals who endorse rape myths (Banyard et al., 2009), this is an opportunity missed. Missing this opportunity contradicts the university's explicit desire to educate the community, as shown below:

> We must expose such offensive and criminal behaviour, express our intolerance of it, educate our youth at university about its evils, and ensure our environment supports the survivors and others affected by such trauma. (Price, 2015)

As such, the university fails to provide the education it mentions and, through the way it obscures the agency behind the perpetration of sexual violence, it does not expose the offensive behaviour. The university does not specify what frames its assertions of condemnation of GBV, whether that be a feminist stance, based on human rights, or some other position. While the university is supportive of survivors, its apolitical stance means that perpetrators are equally supported.

The emotive language in the above quote intends to persuade the audience of the university's seriousness and sincerity. Rape now moves from something that 'just happens' as earlier mentioned, to being 'offensive', 'criminal', and 'evil'. At a discursive level, the research and media reportage on violence in SA positions black men as those who are inherently violent – as the primary perpetrators of GBV in particular (Boonzaier, 2017, 2018) – with descriptions of men sometimes harking back to colonial tropes on Africa and of black men. Furthermore, within this expression of outrage, we may read the failure to address sexual violence perpetrators at this university as indicative of a wider societal trend – imagining a nameless, faceless and dangerous intruder (see Langa, Kirsten, Bowman, Eagle, & Kiguwa, 2018). We do not contend that Dr Price was making a claim about an imagined black rapist, however, we are cognisant of the importance of the contexts in which such silences on perpetration are coded in public imaginations, especially considering how race and crime are intersected to form social representations of crime in society (ibid.).

Additionally, the construction of rape as evil and offensive is consistent with the earlier construction of rape as 'exceptional'. While it is difficult to argue that rape is not offensive or evil, this language masks the 'everydayness' of sexual violence against womxn. It produces what Judge (2013) calls a 'shock and awe' response, "an incredulity which acts to conceal just how very normal and every day, violence is" (para. 10).

An analysis of the university's communications on sexual violence illustrates that it provides an apolitical stance on rape to describe it as something that just happens, something related to how survivors feel on campus and something 'exceptional', evil and criminal. In this way, the communications construct rape as everything except the patriarchal domination that it is. The construction of rape as exceptional, the simultaneous silence of the role of perpetrators in these acts, and the overt and almost singular attention to womxn as victims/survivors produces a context in which rape is depoliticised and stripped away from the deeply gendered and unequal power relations that produce it.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper has illustrated that despite their differing motives university communications around sexual violence do not depart significantly from the ways in which the popular media report on sexual violence (see Boonzaier, 2017; Boonzaier, 2018). The ways in which rape is communicated involve attention to victims and victimisation, the silencing of the issue of perpetration, the construction of rape as exceptional and "othered" which all produce a context in which rape can be seen as apolitical and not a manifestation and assertion of patriarchal domination.

Depicting rapists as subhuman 'monsters' or evil, is also misleading and serves to distract from the important societal factors which have led South Africa to have such high levels of rape. On the one hand, De Vos (2013) argues that one of the dangers of such expressions of outrage is that we distance ourselves from the problem, thereby neglecting to question those beliefs and practices in our own environments which form a part of South Africa's 'rape culture'. On the other hand, we must note that the way in which the rapist is positioned as 'other' must be read within a context of South Africa's history of colonisation and apartheid. Research has illustrated that the othering of violence to black men and black communities is frequently at work in academic, media and lay discourse (Boonzaier, 2017; Boonzaier, 2018; van Niekerk, 2018). In this regard, it bears noting what the effects of the UCT as a historically white institution – positioning both rape perpetrators, and rapists as 'other' might be.

Further research into how institutions, such as the police, the court, and schools, construct themselves in relation to sexual violence, may contribute significantly to our understanding of the ways South African society both confronts and ignores sexual violence. Empirical research into the impact of communications on student's perceptions of sexual violence at university would also be useful in formulating new communications.

Current research suggests that perpetration of rape is significantly related to the endorsement of rape mythology (Hartmann, 2015). It is thus suggested that institutions start communicating in an informed way about sexual violence to their communities. Students should have a clear idea of what it means to perpetrate sexual violence and what the consequences are of such behaviour. Perpetrators of sexual violence should be directly engaged and held accountable in public communication on rape. Thus, it is suggested that future communications should take an approach to sexual violence that acknowledges its intentionality, its effects, taking a feminist approach that clearly articulates sexual violence as an issue that involves gender and power.

NOTES

1. This is an alternative spelling for 'woman' or 'women' forwarded by black radical feminist movements to promote inclusivity among cis- and transgender 'women'. Our use of this term here aims at gaining independence from phallocentric linguistic norms (cf. Ndelu, Dlakavu, & Boswell, 2017; Abustan & Rud, 2016). We have preserved the spelling convention of 'women' where we cite publications that used that term either as the biological marker 'female' or where its use is in direct quotations.
2. In this paper, we use the World Health Organization (2011) definition of sexual violence. This states that it is: "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work" (p.2). In using this definition, we incorporate what is considered sexual assault (an unlawful and intentional act of sexual contact with another person) and rape (unlawful and intentional act of sexual penetration without that person's consent).

3. A term developed by feminists referring to a set of general cultural beliefs supporting men's violence against womxn, including the idea that this violence is a fact of life, and that that men have a right to sexual intercourse (Phipps, Ringrose, Renold, & Jackson, 2018).
4. A radical black feminist movement that emerged from the 2015 student-led calls for the decolonialisation of South African IHL. The hashtag movement drew great interest and citizenry participation on social media platforms as a protest against institutionalised cultures of machismo and patriarchy that lead to sexual violations of womxn in IHL and in South Africa at large. (see Daniels, 2016; Pilane, 2015).

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