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Safety and Belonging: Constructing a sense of a sense of belonging amongst young, middle-class, South African feminine bodies within an 'unsafe' place

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For Shoni

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Acknowledgements

Research at times can be a very lonely and stressful endeavour. Over the course of the past two years, I have been challenged in ways I never expected and pushed to the brink of giving up more times than I would like to admit. But now that the finish line is in sight, I can honestly say that this was a race I would run again and again.

I however did not run this race alone. Throughout this journey at my side stood a collection of incredible supporters. These individuals have not only made this whole endeavour possible but also one which I will look back on fondly.

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List of Acronyms

GBV – Gender-based violence

SA – South Africa

SAPS – South African Police Service

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Abstract

The affective dimension of belonging has been conceptualised to entail feelings of being valued, safety, stability, and agency. However, when applied to the lives of young South African women this conceptualisation falters, revealing its possible patriarchal underpinnings. The lives of these women involve a treacherous navigation of ‘their’ country’s violent socio-geographic landscape which has been aptly conceptualised as a “female fear factory” (Gqola, 2015 & 2021). In this factory, fear is a constant for feminine beings and thus so is a pervasive sense of unsafety. Furthermore, the gendered violence seemingly characteristic of this ‘factory’ (Dosekun, 2007; Gordon, 2015; Gqola, 2015 & 2021; Ngabaza et al, 2018; Tonisi, 2019) appears to consequently limit feminine beings’ agency, in terms of their ability to exercise their freedom(s), and devalues their unique gendered perspective. Therefore, the South African context seems to not allow for the apparently associated and/or necessitated theorised feelings of belonging, at least not for its feminine inhabitants. Despite this, the majority of participants in this study still felt like they belonged in/to South Africa.

In this study, twenty young, middle-class, South African women were firstly interviewed individually (approximately 60 minutes) about their sense of belonging and safety. Their interviews were transcribed verbatim and subsequently put through a thematic analysis with the aim of identifying commonalities within the participants’ individual narratives. Once identified, these themes were converted into discussion points for a focus group (approximately 50 minutes). The participants for the focus group were sampled from the existing pool of participants. After their interviews the participants were asked whether they would participate again at a later stage in a focus group discussion where they would discuss common themes which were ascertained from their individual interviews. This discussion was transcribed verbatim and put through a ‘dialogic/performance’ analysis to determine a possible ‘master/group narrative’ (Riessman, 2008). Following this, all the transcripts were re-analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (Griffin & May, 2012) with the goal of piecing together possible ‘master narratives’ (Riessman, 2008) concerning the (re)construction of the feminine South African sense of belonging.

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Together these narratives revealed that the participants affectively experienced belonging as a sense of comfort which was a result of them feeling accepted, understood, and familiar/similar. However, the construction of this sense of comfort-belonging was burdened by three elements of the participants' feminine South African beings: race, femininity, and safety. Each of these burdens differently effected the construction of the participants' sense of belonging in/to South Africa. Race problematised the belonging(s) of the, particularly white, participants due to a pervasive 'race-place' discourse concerning nationality and South Africa's racially segregated history. Femininity complicated the participants' ability to 'just be' due to their seemingly constant fear of entitled masculine behaviours which their feminine bodies/beings may 'encourage'. However, safety did not appear to be entirely disruptive to the construction of the participants' sense of belonging. The participants were intimately familiar with South Africa's violent socio-geographic landscape as they had grown up and subsequently been socialised to this unique context. As a result, their 'South African upbringing/socialisation' appeared to imbue the participants with a wealth of contextually bound knowledge concerning safety. This 'safety knowledge' seemed to manifest as an ability to belong safely, knowing *where* and *how* to 'just be', despite the extreme (gendered) violence of 'their' socio-geographic landscape. In fact, the participants' apparent preoccupation with safety, which was most clearly represented by the participants' various and extensive safety precautions, seemed to be an integral part of their place-identity, their 'South Africanness'. And thus, was a fundamental part of their belonging(s) in/to South Africa. Consequently, this preoccupation with safety suggests that as South Africans the participants had been brought up and subsequently socialised with a normalised sense of unsafety.

The socialisation of this 'normal' sense of unsafety was communicated to the participants by three central 'teachers': parental figures, publicised 'cautionary tales', and experiences of crime. Throughout their lives these 'teachers' had diligently subjected the participants to various, and often gendered, 'lessons in (un)safety'. These 'lessons' taught the participants about (a) where and how they could be safe, thus developing their extensive safety precautions, (b) the necessity of these precautions as well as their possible futility in the context of South Africa's

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pervasive culture of gendered violence, and (c) the actual futility of these precautions and of 'their' criminal justice system to keep them safe. Ultimately, these 'lessons' structured the participants' perception of safety as an uncertain personal ability to make oneself 'safe'.

Therefore, while it has been theorised that a sense of safety is entrenched in the sense of belonging, the (gendered) violence of the South African context appears to not allow for such. Instead, this seemingly characteristic violence appeared to require the participants to engage in a (re)negotiated acceptance of their South African unsafe (gendered) reality. Thus, for feminine South Africans the (re)construction of a sense of belonging in/to 'their' country is perhaps not only burdensome but also involves an unavoidable inclusion of unsafety.

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1 Introduction

This research endeavour is inspired by the results of my Honours research report, which in part uncovered the importance that safety plays in one's belonging(s). The research participants had explained that their belonging(s) in/to South Africa (SA) was at times disrupted by the country's high crime rates and apparent socio-economic/political instability.

In a discussion with my supervisor, it became clear that the gendered aspect of safety could play a potentially critical role in the lives of South African womxn[1] as they attempt to construct their belonging in/to a country which has aptly been referred to as the 'Republic of Sexual Abuse' (Tonisi, 2019). The notion of 'home' was central to this discussion, understood as a place where you belong because you feel safe, capable, and valued. However, this common understanding of home is misleading and is likely to be absent in the lives of many South African womxn if we are to account for the country's pervasive culture of (gendered) violence.

This then begs the question of how it would be possible for these womxn to construct a sense of belonging, an emotional sense of 'home', in/to a country whose gender-based violence (GBV) and rape rates mirror those of countries at war (Gqola, 2015; Tonisi, 2019)?

1.1. Problem statement

Belonging is central to our everyday lives as it is so closely tied with how we experience our various intersecting identities within a specific context (Carrillo Rowe, 2005; Kern, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; May, 2011; Wright, 2015). What it means to embody an identity is essentially what it means to *belong to* the socially constructed "cognitive stories" of particular "identities collectivities" (Yuval-Davis, 2006:202). A belonging which is socially determined and legitimised (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011). However, belonging is not just a political interaction

[1] The spelling of woman/women has been purposely changed to womxn in this dissertation when generalising outside of the research participants, so to include feminine bodies who may identify differently. 'Women/woman' are used when specifically discussing the research participants as all self-identified as such.

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between individuals and their society, it is an *affective experience* (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2015). In order to belong, individuals must *feel* as though they do; their socially determined 'sites of belonging' ought to invoke a sense of being in *their* place amongst *their* people, a space which they are intimately familiar with and supposedly provides them with a sense of 'home' (Fenster, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010; May, 2011; Wright, 2015). Thus, belonging is simultaneously an "emotional and political" experience that is both "personal and societal" (Wright, 2015:400).

These two interacting dimensions of belonging have been termed differently by scholars, but despite the semantics most of this literature on belonging relates to the public and private dimensions of everyday life (Fenster, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2015). For the purpose of this dissertation, these dimensions will be referred to as the 'politics of belonging' and the 'sense of belonging' respectively.

While the 'public' dimension has been researched extensively, the 'private' has been left undertheorized and under researched (Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2015). Thus, the focus of this research endeavour is placed on the affective dimension, not only to address a gap in the prevailing literature on belonging, but also to address the proposed intention of this study to investigate how young, middle-class, South African womxn *experience* their belonging in/to 'their' country.

One notion that is intimately tied to this emotionality of belonging is that of 'home' (Fenster, 2005; Kern, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2015). When scholars have attempted to conceptualise the affective dimension of belonging, they have often used the notion of 'home' to describe the emotions that ought to come from this sense: feelings of safety, agency, and stability (Fenster, 2005; Kern, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010: Wright, 2015). However, this notion of 'home' is too simplistic and overtly positive because of its patriarchal foundation which overlooks instances where 'home' is often not the supposed 'safe haven' for womxn as it appears to be for masculinity. Feminist scholars have critiqued this notion and have (re)theorised 'home' as a site that

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(re)produces the gendered division of labour, and thus consequently is the 'birthplace' of femininity's oppression (Young, 2005).

On the surface, South African homes with their literal fortification already communicate a narrative of unsafety. In this private space, which is the supposed ultimate affective descriptor of belonging, safety appears to be a complicated endeavour that requires much effort to (re)create. And when one considers how 'homemaking' involves the materialisation of identity into this space (Young, 2005), a troubling element of the South African identity is possibly revealed: a lived performance of unsafety conveyed through extensive safety precautions. In the public dimension of belonging, the 'homeland', South African society is not physically nor socially structured *for* womxn. It is a country where GBV is a constant reality for far too many (Dosekun, 2007; Gordon, 2015; Gqola, 2015 & 2021; Ngabaza et al, 2018; Tonisi, 2019) and where feminine voices are constantly made mute by systems of power (Gqola, 2015; Jacobs, 2016). Thus, it is a country where belonging is likely to be a turbulent lived experience for womxn.

Therefore, through a gendered lens, 'home' cannot possibly be the place that adequately describes a feminine sense of belonging, particularly in SA. Thus, the concept itself requires further investigation and consequently necessitates that the affective dimension of belonging, which the patriarchal conceptualisation of 'home' has (re)produced, be revisited.

1.2. Research question(s)

There are three central research questions to this study:

1. Do young, middle-class, South African womxn have a belonging in/to their country?
This question intends to establish the state of South African feminine belonging(s) and aims to obtain an understanding of how they are *emotionally* experienced.

2. How is this feminine belonging constructed/disrupted?
With the use of feminine narratives, obtained through interviews and a focus group discussion, this question aims to uncover aspects of everyday gendered life that either work to create or dismantle belonging(s).

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3. How do South African feminine narratives of belonging relate to their notion of 'home'?

The aim of this question is to obtain an understanding of whether it is possible for feminine bodies to have a 'home' in a place which does not appear conducive to the construction of the (theorised) feelings of belonging, perhaps as a result of how their society is physically and socially constructed.

1.3. Aim and objectives of the study

Using in-depth individual interviews and a focus group, this study aims to investigate the lived experiences of belonging(s) amongst young, middle-class, South African feminine beings as they navigate, and perhaps construct their sense of belonging in/to, the 'Republic of Sexual Abuse' (Tonisi, 2019).

1.4. Rationale of the study

Womxn living in SA can be said to exist within a paradox: their country is one with a "Constitution that affirms women's dignity and rights to full humanity" (Gqola, 2015:61), while their contextual reality does not exemplify this 'Constitutional empowerment' (Dosekun, 2007; Gqola, 2015; Ngabaza et al, 2018; Tonisi, 2019). It appears that SA's hard-won Constitution has been side-lined in hegemonic public discourse, because if South African womxn were 'empowered' in the ways that their Constitution has promised then they would "not live with the haunting fear of rape, sexual harassment, smash-and-grabs and other violent intrusions into their spaces, bodies and psyches" (Gqola, 2015:65).

Womxn in SA are, for a lack of a better analogy, hunted in their streets, bars/clubs, workplaces, university campuses, and homes (Dosekun, 2007; Gordon, 2015; Gqola, 2015; Ngabaza et al, 2018). These womxn are not free. How could they be if they cannot live without the pervasive fear of being sexually assaulted? Womxn cannot be free if their existence is continuously under threat, simply because of the social connotations that are attached to their feminine bodies.

Animating this research is the belief that the fear these womxn carry in their everyday lives must have an effect on their belonging(s). Thus, this dissertation aims to explore the impact that SA's pervasive culture of gendered violence has had on its

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feminine citizens' sense of belonging. It is vital that we come to understand this dynamic if SA is to achieve the future of freedom promised to us in our 'equal' Constitution.

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2 State of South African belonging(s)

Belonging is so closely related to Identity[2] that both can be viewed as part of the same 'family' of concepts (Anthias, 2018), and because of this relationship belonging is implicated in most, if not all, of our daily interactions with society. It is ultimately what connects individuals to their social world by constructing communities and structuring emotionally dense connections to these communities (May, 2011). Thus, belonging is simultaneously a political project that (re)produces communities and their socio-historical/political/cultural/spatial boundaries, and an emotional sense of what it means to belong to these communities (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2015). However, what does it mean for one to belong, in both the political and emotional sense?

Previous research on belonging has predominantly focused on the lived experiences of immigrants (Hewett, 2019; Yeoh et al, 2019; Harris, 2016) analysed within the primordial framework[3] (Pawlak & Gozdziak, 2020). This kind of research has attempted to understand the belonging(s) of individuals away from places that are 'legitimately' theirs because of their birth (Pawlak & Gozdziak, 2020). Furthermore, the affective dimension of belonging is one that is often overlooked, as researchers rarely "engage with belonging as an emotional affiliation" and seldom ask questions which "explore what belonging feels like; how it works as an emotional attachment and the significance for the emotionality of belonging" (Wood & Waite, 2011: 201 as cited in Wright, 2015:397). Thus, little research has been conducted on what it means to experience belonging(s) in a place that is 'legitimately' yours.

Throughout the literature on belonging, the notion of safety appears often, articulating how ones 'sense of belonging' is in part dependent on their sense of safety, stability, agency, and being valued by the context in which their belonging is

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[2] In this dissertation, the capitalisation of Identity is done to refer to the concept in its entirety, as an umbrella term that encapsulates all of an individual's various and intersecting identities.

[3] Belonging conceptualised within the primordial framework, is "an exclusionary concept based on notions of shared culture and ascribed [national] identity" (Pawlak & Gozdziak, 2020:78). Thus, this framework assumes that an individual's birth is solely what locates and constitutes, or at least justifies, their sense of belonging.

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located/attached (Fenster, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Wright, 2015). However, safety is an economic and gendered privilege (Kern, 2006). Individuals with the economic resources are able to buy 'safe' places and/or are able to literally fortify their homes with private security firms, electric fences, and Trellidors. Feminine bodies are placed under constant threat of GBV simply because they are feminine; womxn who have no prior experience of rape "may think of it as always inherently possible because of [their] her gender" and sexuality which position them as the sexual object exclusively *for* masculinities' sexual gratification (Dosekun, 2007:90; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Campbell, 2005). Thus, the state of SA's 'safety' questions whether it is even possible to construct a *feminine* sense of belonging in/to the country and its people.

In this literature review, both analytical dimensions of belonging will be discussed, separately, and contextualised to SA. The 'Politics of belonging' will be discussed first, in an effort to display the centrality of Identity and power to the (re)production of belonging(s). This discussion will be brief and will focus on the collective construction and legitimisation of belonging(s). The following discussion will contextualise the 'Politics of belonging' to SA with a focus on racial and feminine identities. Race will be explained in terms of nationality as well as SA's past and current class system, with specific reference to the 'race-place' relationship. And femininity will be discussed with regards to how it has been conceptualised by the (cis)heterosexual white patriarchy, which shall henceforth be referred to as the Patriarchy, in ways that deny feminine belonging(s) to their own body. Secondly, the 'Sense of belonging' will be discussed more deeply as this is the focus of the research endeavour and will be contextualised to SA from the onset. This discussion will primarily explain how this sense is constructed by five components set out by Antonsich (2010). The concluding discussion will address the gendered relationship between safety and home.

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2.1. Politics of Belonging

In this analytical dimension, belonging is a political interaction between individuals and society, through which socio-political/spatial lines of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and not-belonging, are (re)produced (Yuval-Davis, 2006 &2011; Antonsich, 2010). Here belonging is primarily concerned with "specific political projects" which involve the particular ways that belonging(s) is constructed by power/hegemony, and how these constructions work to connect an individual to particular 'identity collectives' (Yuval-Davis, 2006:197). Identity and power are central to this interaction, as both are simultaneously implicated in the boundary (re)production of belonging(s). Therefore, this dimension of belonging is political precisely because it is so intimately connected to Identity (politics).

2.1.1. Identities

While troublesome to define (Buckingham, 2008), it can be argued that Identity, with its 'future orientation', is fundamentally about an individual's potential to *be* in a particular manner that is meaning(filled) (Hall, 1996). It is an individual's potential to embody the socially constructed meanings of what it is to *be* a particular identity; the ways of acting, speaking, and thinking that are socially determined/legitimated as *belonging* to a particular (identity) collective (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011).

Importantly, Identity is not the result of some innate predisposition to embody a particular *being*, rather it is a social construct structured by those with the power to (re)produce meaning/knowledge (Hall, 1996; Alcoff & Mohanty, 2006). The powerful few atop the social hierarchy have purposely conceptualised 'facts' about the human body, particularly anatomical sex and race, so that they convey specific meanings about the supposed *natural* 'potential(s)' of individuals (Tamale, 2014). The pervasive context of meaning that "reflects the 'truths' of the powerful", which transforms 'facts' into meaningful identities and subsequently shapes the social structure of society, is the Patriarchy (Tamale, 2014:155). The structuring of this pervasive context of meaning has (re)produced powerful dichotomies of dominant and submissive, masculine and feminine, straight and deviant, White and 'Other' (Connell, 2005). All of which have placed and work to keep feminine, particularly

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black, bodies in a position of subjectivity/submission, and have, essentially, undermined 'feminine' belonging(s) to *their* body and place.

2.1.2. Construction of (public/political) belonging

Yuval-Davis (2006:199) argues that there are "three major analytical levels on which [public/political] belonging is constructed": 'social locations', 'identifications and emotional attachments', and 'ethical and political values'.

Social locations not only articulate how "people belong to a particular sex, race, class, or nation" (Yuval-Davis, 2011:12) by virtue of their birth, but also looks at how these belongings have "particular implications vis-á-vis the grids of power relations" (Yuval-Davis, 2006:199) due to the "contextual meanings" that they convey (Yuval-Davis, 2011:13). Thus, this analytical level not only illuminates the political nature of belonging to an identity and consequently its socially constructed meanings but furthers this illumination by locating identities within the contextual 'grids of power relations'. Positionality explains the social hierarchal positioning of particular identities within the particular power relations of the socio-historical/political/cultural/spatial context that they live (Alcoff & Mohanty, 2006). Therefore, through this concept individuals do not only belong to the collectivities of their various intersecting identities but also to a position within the social hierarchy which determines their amount of societal power/influence.

Lived experiences articulate positionality and form the basis of the second analytical level of construction: identifications and emotional attachments (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011). It is not enough for one to simply just embody an identity, one must *identify* with it; they must 'long to belong' to the "cognitive stories", the Identity narratives, of what it means to *belong to* particular (identity) collectivities (Yuval-Davis, 2006:202). This '(be)longing' pushes individuals to embody/enact "[specific] repetitive practices" of the socially (re)produced 'stories of membership', which consequently "[links] individual and collective behaviour" (Yuval-Davis, 2011:16). Therefore, in this performative aspect of (public/political) belonging(s) the centrality of Identity, as a "combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong" (Yuval-Davis, 2011:15), constructs belonging as "a set of practices and processes rather than as a status that one might hold" (Wright, 2015:400). It is

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through this procedural character of belonging which "affect is materialised ", that one's 'longing to belong' is actualised (Wright, 2015:401). Thus, the construction of (public/political) belonging "cannot and should not be seen as merely" identifications with, and subsequent performances of, "cognitive stories", rather this (be)longing involves an affective dimension that "[reflects] emotional investments and desires for attachment" (Yuval-Davis, 2006:202). Therefore, individuals have a desire to belong, to be 'attached', to a place and a people as these are sites where they supposedly will feel valued, safe, agentic, and stable; where they will feel 'at home' (Fenster, 2005; Kern, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010: Wright, 2015). And so, individuals invest their time, energy, and emotional capacity to feel this sense of attachment, this *sense of belonging*. However, this 'affective investment' critically works both ways. As much as an individual invests to belong, to be socially determined as 'legitimate carriers' of identities, they also invest in evaluating the belonging of others. Thus, belonging "is also concerned with the ways these [social locations] are assessed and valued by the self and others" (Yuval-Davis, 2011:18).

These investments in the 'boundary (re)production' of identity collectives, and ultimately belonging, form the third level in the construction of belonging: ethical and political values (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This level is concerned with the "ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and other's belongings" (Yuval-Davis, 2006:199). Individuals embody Identity narratives in a manner which conveys that they are 'legitimate carriers' of a particular identity, but when this performance is not in accordance with the 'ethical and political value systems' of the identity's collective, it cannot be judged as 'legitimate' nor as belonging. Furthermore, this 'judgement' also occurs between collectivities and society, which is perhaps best exemplified by the social movements of identity politics (Alcoff & Mohanty, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2011). The rallying calls of these movements often articulate instances where the societal position and the socially created meanings and/or performances are at odds with how the collective wishes to be perceived. Therefore, when these socially constructed 'ways of belonging' are at odds with the group's ethical and political values, belonging tends to become a highly contested and political space (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Thus, an individual's and/or collective's sense of belonging is often dependent on the political institution,

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on the socio-geographical and political lines of inclusion and exclusion (Antonsich, 2010).

2.1.3. South African (public/political) belonging(s)

Yuval-Davis' (2011) inclusion of class and nation as sites of belonging highlights the socio-spatial aspect of belonging, revealing that "these boundaries are often spatial and relate to a specific locality/territory and not just to constructions of social collectivities" (Antonsich, 2010 as cited in Yuval-Davis, 2011:10). Nationality can be seen as the central 'contextualising' identity as all identities are configured according to the historical and current socio-political/cultural rules and expectations of the country in which they are 'lived-out'. However, nationality is not only an identity which contextualises other identities, but also one that has historically been and seems to currently be 'contextualised' by race.

2.1.3.1 Race and place

Known as the 'race-place' relationship, this racialised understanding of nationality highlights the "[continued] interconnectedness of place to appearance" which posits that an individual's race is indicative of the nation/place where they are from and to which they appropriately belong (Hewett, 2019:362). This is a result of how race has been historically defined and conceptualised in terms of geographical locations (Nobles, 2002 as cited in Hewett, 2019). Thus, through this perception of nationality, one's 'national belonging', the legitimacy of one's belonging is dependent on their racial identity.

This relationship is perhaps most clearly communicated through the question, 'Where are you *really* from?'. The answer that this question aims to uncover has more to do with an individual's 'ancestral belonging' than their actual birthplace; it asks an individual about their ancestral 'routes' in an attempt to reconcile their genetics and current geographic location/belonging. In the case of SA, this question has been aimed at white South Africans who because of their white skin supposedly cannot be from, and thus belong to, Africa (Wiele, 2021). It is a faulty assumption which does not account for history, in terms of colonialism, and even just general migration but is one which nonetheless concerns the legitimacy of who can "call a

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place 'home' and who is defined as a 'foreigner'", defined as 'not-belonging' (Hewett, 2019:362). Thus, it is a question that has the power to disrupt one's belonging with their race. However, in segregated societies, like apartheid SA, the 'race-place' relationship goes deeper than the legitimacy of one's national belonging.

South African society is still healing from a decades long regime that was, arguably, a total embodiment of the Patriarchy. Belonging during apartheid was structured by a racist hegemony which (re)produced specific 'race-potential(s)' for individuals. Legislation like the 'Group Areas Act of 1950' and 'Bantu Homelands Citizens Act of 1970' functioned as a way for the racist apartheid government to dictate where one could 'correctly' socio-spatially belong within SA (South African History Online). Hence, in this context, the 'race-place' relationship was employed to physically structure the geographic landscape of a country. This has resulted in a pervasive racialised class system that continues to heavily structure an individual's access to various resources, including both economic and social/cultural, even after almost three decades of democracy. Thus, in the South African context class continues, unintentionally, to be racialised.

In terms of belonging, the importance of class lies in the "assets" that determine "an individual's place in social fields" (Bourdieu, 1986; Abenyega, 2017:9). These 'assets' enable individuals to make choices "about *how* and where to live" [emphasis added] (Kern, 2006:371). Economic capital allows one to 'buy' a belonging, whilst cultural and/or social capital enables one to assimilate into public spaces in ways that do not question their belonging (Bourdieu, 1986; Kern, 2006; Abenyega, 2017). Hence, cultural and social capital essentially are chapters in the "cognitive stories" of the middle-class (Yuval-Davis, 2006:202), which inform and thus "[pave] the way for one to belong" (Abenyega, 2017:9). Therefore, class structures socio-political/cultural/spatial lines of inclusion and exclusion which determine where individuals ought to belong *within* their society (Bourdieu, 1986; Kern, 2006; Abenyega, 2017).

2.1.3.2. Feminine South Africans

The 'contextual meanings' of Patriarchal nations, like SA, have conceptualised the feminine body as a body which does not belong to the inhabitant; a message that is

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unequivocally conveyed through GBV, particularly in cases of rape (Gqola, 2015). Gender identity is the way that "social practice is ordered [...] in relation to a reproductive arena" (Connell, 2005:71). Social life has historically been ordered around the respective reproductive function of males and females, creating gendered social roles which have leaked out of the 'home' and into society, the 'homeland' (Connell, 2005; Young, 2005). These roles are essentially identities in practice, and because they have been constructed complementarily by the gendered division of labour and the gender binary, so too are the hegemonic identities that they (re)produce, namely 'masculinity' and 'femininity' (Hill Collins, 2000; Connell, 2005). Through this binary conceptualisation, femininity is constructed as the 'natural' 'Other' of masculinity (Connell, 2005). Thus, if hegemonic masculinity is conceptualised to be strong, rational, sexually active (the sexual subject), and, above all, dominant, then as it's "inherently opposed" 'Other' (Hill Collins, 2000:70), femininity ought to be weak, emotional, sexually passive (the sexual object), and, above all, submissive (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Campbell, 2005; Connell, 2005). The gendered dominance of masculinity has structured the 'submissive' feminine body as 'correctly' belonging to the 'rational' control and 'natural' responsibility of men. Consequently, this has 'justified' male use of GBV as a way to 'discipline' feminine bodies (Campbell, 2005; Moffett, 2006; Gqola, 2015). Apparently, it is a man's 'responsibility' to discipline *his* womxn, to ensure that she abides by the socially sanctioned laws of the Patriarchy and is exemplary of the 'cult of femininity' (Gqola, 2015); it is his societal right/role to *preform* violence and/or threats of violence to 'discipline' the feminine bodies around him (Campbell, 2005; Moffett, 2006).

The extent of sexual agency that each gender is socially expected to embody, their *sexuality*, is "a socio-cultural invention [which] is closely linked to power and to the processes of subjugation" (Tamale, 2014:155). Within the Patriarchal dichotomy of dominant and submissive the effects of hegemonic masculinity become blatantly clear, especially in the construction and control of feminine and 'deviant' sexualities. The conceptualisation of femininity has situated feminine sexuality as the 'sexual object' *for* masculinity (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Sanger, 2008). Thus, the feminine body's sexual capacity *belongs to* masculine sexual desires/urgers, as it is

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an ‘objectified body’ that “exists for the use and pleasure of [masculine] others” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997:175). Furthermore, this control is not limited to just the heterosexual female body. Crimes like ‘curative’/‘corrective’ rape are used to ‘restore’ sexually ‘deviant’ womxn to their ‘natural’ object/submissive status (Gqola, 2015). As such, rape within this Patriarchal context conveys a very clear message for feminine bodies: restrain your sexuality, yourselves entirely, to be in accordance with, or rather to be available for hegemonic masculinity, or ‘strong, straight, masculine’ men will be *compelled* to do it for you with sexual violence (Campbell, 2005; Moffett, 2006). Therefore, under the Patriarchy rape is not a crime but rather “operates as a disciplinary punishment [which reinstalls] specific dynamics of gender power” (Campbell, 2005:121). Thus, rape positions rapists not as criminals, but instead as ‘agents’ who are “performing [the] necessary work of social stabilisation” (Moffett, 2006:132).

Therefore, this gendered ‘belonging of bodies’ clearly demonstrates how masculinity has, through the pervasive Patriarchy, entitled itself to feminine bodies by positioning this body as one that ‘naturally’ *belongs to* masculinity’s control (Connell, 2005; Gqola, 2015). Thus, from bodies and sexual capacities that ‘naturally’ belong to masculine others to ‘appropriate’ gendered roles/identities that (re)produce ‘justifications’ for their continued subjugation (Campbell, 2005; Moffett, 2006), womxn in SA exist with a perpetual sense of impending (gendered) violence (Gqola, 2015). Consequently, these feminine beings have potentially been (re)produced with a pervasive, *fearfilled*, sense of ‘not-belonging’.

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2.2. Sense of Belonging

Where the 'Politics of belonging' is fundamentally concerned with the political nature of Identity and its consequential belonging(s), 'Sense of belonging' is concerned with the affective dimension; the *feeling* of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010). While under researched, the emotionality of belonging has usually been explained as having a 'sense of home' (Fenster, 2005; Kern, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2015). However, 'home' has been conceptualised in a Patriarchal manner due to its negation of feminine narratives of being 'at home' (Young, 2005). Thus, by conceptualising one's 'sense of belonging' as having a (patriarchal) sense of home, previous/past theorists have perhaps obscured the feminine reality of this affective dimension.

2.2.1. Construction of (private/affective) belonging

Antonsich (2010:647) outlines five factors that "contribute to generate" a feeling of belonging.

First, "auto-biographical factors" which concern an individual's "past history" that connects them to a particular place (Antonsich, 2010:647). This personal history includes "personal experiences, relations, and memories" that happened in and are linked to a particular place (Dixon & Durrheim, 2004:459). Essentially, this factor is concerned with 'place-identity'. When given enough time a place can play an active role in the construction of the self, and the resulting affective component is revealed in one's preference for *their* place (Dixon & Durrheim, 2004). Furthermore, this identity highlights the "intentional activity of attributing" meaning to places (Dixon & Durrheim, 2004:457). Calling a place 'home' or 'safe' are ways of attributing meaning to a particular place. Thus, this factor articulates how "the place where a person was born and has grown up often remains a central place" in their lives (Antonsich, 2010:647).

Second, "relational factors" refer to the "personal and social ties" that are developed within a particular place and connects an individual to the people of *their* place (Antonsich, 2010:647). The influence of these ties varies depending on the amount of emotion that they elicit, with some being "emotionally dense", those between close

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friends and family, while others are 'emotionally weak', those made through "occasional interactions with strangers" in our shared public spaces (Antonsich, 2010:647). However, these 'emotionally weak' ties ought not to be set aside as they can play a vital role in how an individual experiences a belonging to *their* people; the people of *their* place which, in terms of nationality, forms the "we, [of] the people" (Kruger, 2016). Being able to feel as though one is part of the 'we' enables one to comfortably assert their 'national belonging' in ways that allow them to interact with (political) institutions in a meaningful manner (Fenster, 2005; Antonsich, 2010). However, even if an individual may have a 'rightful' claim to a place as *theirs* by virtue of their birth, as the primordial framework has explained (Pawlak & Gozdziak, 2020), if this place does not provide them the "opportunity to feel valued, listened to, and [able] to express their own identity" without the threat of violence, they "may still experience a strong sense of not-belonging" (Wright, 2015:395). This appears to be the case for South African womxn, who are essentially denied the identity of 'we, the people' because their voices are muted (Gqola, 2015; Jacobs, 2016) and existence is under constant threat of (sexual) violence by the men of their country (Dosekun, 2007; Gordon, 2015; Gqola, 2015; Ngabaza et al, 2018; Tonisi, 2019). Gqola (2015) speaks of the 'female fear factory' when she explains what life is like for feminine bodies who live in perpetual and normalised fear of their country*men*. In this 'factory', violence or just the threat of violence, is not only normalised but is used as a message "to transmit fear and to control" (Gqola, 2015:78); a message that actively and continuously informs South African womxn on the gendered belonging of 'their' bodies.

Thirdly, there are "cultural factors" which are unique to a particular context (Antonsich, 2010:648). These factors act as the 'unwritten rules/knowings' of a place and being able to enact/understand these rules proves one's belonging (May, 2011). Here belonging is a "relational concept that necessarily focuses on social interaction and intersubjectivity, and the emotional content of these" (May, 2011:369). These 'rules' are expressed in various "tacit codes, signs, and gestures" that are negotiated and "understood by those who share the same semiotic universe" (Cohen, 1982 as cited in Antonsich, 2010:648).

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These first three factors work together to produce a kind of 'symbolic city' (Hall, 2015). This is a city that is created through an individual's interaction with a place and people which builds contextually bound relationships and memories, and ultimately transforms this place and people into *theirs* (Hall, 2015; Lehner et al, 2021). Being able to know a place and its people contributes to one's sense of familiarity, it allows one to confidently walk the streets and interact with the people of their shared 'semiotic universe' without the fear of being caught out as 'not-belonging' (Antonsich, 2010; May, 2011). Being able to know that a robot is a traffic light (Wiele, 2021); that the 'Strip' is relatively safe in the daylight but will necessitate an entourage of 'guy friends' on a night out, or that womxn drivers should "yield at a red robot and drive on when [they] feel unsafe at night, […] or to avoid travelling alone" entirely (Gqola, 2015:73) all may appear as useless knowledge, until it is contextualised to SA, to the 'female fear factory'. Womxn are subjected to a constant stream of narratives that communicate to them that they are fundamentally not safe because of 'their' bodies, and due to this it is their responsibility to learn how to be 'safe' (Gqola, 2015:73). They are taught the "lesson of fearing freedom" (Gqola, 2015:86) through the gendered 'safety narratives' that actually achieve nothing for womxn but allow men to exercise varying degrees of control over 'their' bodies by keeping them "in check and often results in [womxn] curtailing their movement in a physical and psychological manner" (Gqola, 2015:79). These 'safety narratives' come with 'tips' on how to be 'safe' from police warnings (Gqola, 2015:73) to everyday strategies that instruct womxn not to "look lost or alone", or to "dress conservatively in order to downplay their sexuality" (Stanko, 1990 as cited in Kern, 2006:368), and 'self-defense' avoidance strategies that (re)produce 'risk maps' of places where womxn simply cannot go (Dosekun, 2007). These 'teachings' in gendered safety convey a dangerous truth, "because they communicate quite unequivocally that South African public spaces do not belong to the [womxn] who live in this country" (Gqola, 2015:73&74). Thus, the 'teachings' of this symbolic city tell a, at times deadly, feminine narrative of 'not-belonging'.

Fourth, "economic factors" such as economic resources and the socio-economic/political stability of a place, enable one to develop a sense of belonging as they "contribute to create a safe and stable material condition for the individual and

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[their] family" (Antonsich, 2010:648). Economic resources enable one to buy a belonging, like citizenship or a membership, but can also enable an individual to buy a sense of safety, and, supposedly, by extension a sense of belonging (Kern, 2006). However, when the 'stability' of a place is not certain an individual may experience a sense of not being able to belong, a sense of 'limbo-belonging' (Wiele, 2021). The apparent inability for young English speaking White South Africans to foresee a safe and stable future in their country has led some of these individuals to imagine possible 'escape plans' (Wiele, 2021). The effects of which on these individuals' sense of belonging was articulated by a research participant during my Honours research project. Quinn[4] made use of the biblical parable of 'The two builders' to explain her 'limbo' sense of belonging by drawing parallels between the 'builder' who built their house on sand and the choice to 'build' a home in SA (Wiele, 2021:26). In her explanation, Quinn not only highlighted the intimate relationship between safety and a sense of belonging, but also engaged with the notion of 'hope', stating that, "you should 'belong', have your home, somewhere you know it's going to be safe for a long time" (Wiele, 2021:26). "[A] sense of hope for the future" precedes the safety-belonging relationship (Hage, 1997:103 as cited in Yuval-Davis, 2011:10) all of which appear to be requirements for 'home', however if a country has 'sandy' foundations, when its socio-economic/political stability and safety are not guaranteed, one's sense of belonging is bound to be unstable.

Lastly, there are "legal factors" that are "an essential component in producing security, which is regarded by many as a vital dimension of belonging" (Antonsich, 2010:648). Rights that come with being a citizen, or having a particular nationality, enable an individual to claim a belonging through their interactions with the political institutions (Fenster, 2005; Antonsich, 2010). As a citizen, an individual has the 'right to the city', a notion developed by Lefebvre in 1991, which is a "radical rethinking of the purpose, definition and content of belonging to a political community" (Fenster, 2005:218). There are two rights, which can be split along the analytical dimensions of belonging, that Lefebvre outlines. In the 'politics of belonging' the 'right to participate' concerns the right of every citizen "to take a

[4] Her research pseudonym.

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central role in decision-making surrounding the production of urban space at any scale" (Fenster, 2005:219). Thus, in order to belong an individual must have the right to have their voice listened to in how their place is structured (Fenster, 2005). While the second, the 'right to appropriate' involves the "right to live in, play in, work in, represent, characterise and occupy" a place (Fenster, 2005:219). Here, belonging is linked to the lived experiences of being in a particular place and the "everyday [ritualised] use of [that] space" (Fenster, 2005:223). However, when these rights are examined through a gendered lens, when they are contextualised to the 'female fear factory', a troubling structure of society emerges; a structure which is clearly not *for* womxn.

2.2.2. Home

The feminist critique of 'home' has illuminated the patriarchal foundations of this concept through its gendered examination of how 'home' has come to be. Historically, men have built 'homes', and by extension society itself, and have 'required' womxn to nurture the empty place into a house of meaning, a *home* (Young, 2005). Through 'womanly duties', of cooking, cleaning, and child rearing, a house becomes a home, or rather a reproduction of man's "original maternal home" (Young, 2005:129). Thus, home is not only the 'birthplace' of the gendered division of labour but is simultaneously the primary socialising factor of Patriarchal identities.

The anchoring of Identity to 'home' is explained through the "materialization of identity in the home", where, firstly, one's physical 'belongings' are "arranged in space as an extension of […] bodily habits" which support personal routines (Young, 2005:139). In order for a place to feel like home it must be constructed as an extension of the self that enables one to go about their everyday lives without feeling that they are 'out of place'. However, when one is unable to 'see' themselves in how a place is structured their routines do not 'belong'. On a societal level, the 'homeland' of SA, the actual structuring of social institutions conveys a dark truth, that these places are not *for* womxn (Gqola, 2015:74). Places have historically been built without womxn in mind, they have too many dark corners, 'revealing staircases' (Quinn, 2002), and "imagined sites of danger" (Dosekun, 2007:95) for womxn to go about their routines freely, that is without a pervasive fear that they

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may be ‘next’ (Raborife; Gqola, 2015). Moreover, when feminine calls for social change to rectify these spaces have been made, they have been spoken over and made invisible by the voices of men, thus (re)producing the very structure that womxn wish to subvert and change (Gqola, 2015; Jacobs, 2019). The Patriarchy has delegitimised feminine voices as “speaking from an emotional perspective”, as if this perspective has no ‘rational’ or real importance for social change (Jacobs, 2019:194). Therefore, when society itself is not co-created with womxn, when Lefebvre’s right to appropriate is clouded in fear and right to participate is apparently only accessed through the voices of men, one must question how it is possible for womxn to have a sense of belonging in/to places which are not an extension of themselves and consequently do not provide support for their everyday routines.

Secondly, “many of the things in the home, as well as the space itself, carry sedimented personal meaning as retainers of personal narrative” (Young, 2005:139). The pictures that cover my walls, the plethora of old notebooks, and the stuffed Loch ‘Nessie’ all tell happy stories about friends, families, and me. However, not everything in my home tells a happy story: the alarm panel, the deadbolt on my front door already fortified by a Trellidor, and the pepper-spray that hangs on the key hook, all tell a harrowing tale of what life is like in SA. Thus, when the items in a home relay ‘personal narratives’ of fear what does this reveal about one’s sense of belonging?

Therefore, through the ‘materialization of identity’ in South African ‘homes’ one is able to gleam an insight into the feminine sense of belonging, or rather ‘not-belonging’, in both the public (‘homeland’) and private (home) dimensions of the country.

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2.3. Conclusion: Belonging as South African womxn

To belong means to be a part of something, to be that singular part of an entire 'we' (Kruger, 2016). Foundationally, it is an individual embodiment of a collectively (re)produced way of being which (re)creates and connects one to a particular group (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011). These individual yet collective embodiments are identities in action in terms of how they function in society as socially (re)created and expected ways being, and a powerful positioning of individuals within society (Hall, 1996; Alcoff & Mohanty, 2006; Tamale, 2014). Thus, with these socially determined embodiments an individual is connected to both a collective and the positionality of this collective (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011). This resulting connection supposedly provides an individual with feelings of being valued, capable of agency, and safety: feelings that apparently make one feel as though they are 'home' (Fenster, 2005; Kern, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010: Wright, 2015). Therefore, belonging is simultaneously a public interaction which involves the socially (re)constructed hegemonic ways of being that belong in/to particular collectivities, a kind of 'be(long)ing'[5], as well as a personal endeavour to, possibly, 'go home'. However, when these hegemonic 'be(long)ings' appear to exemplify a life of subjugation and fear, is it possible for belonging to inspire such positive, theoretically assumed, feelings of 'home'?

For South African womxn their belonging(s) appears to be attached to two sites of complication/oppression: femininity and SA. Femininity as (re)produced through the Patriarchy has (re)created a complementary (submissive) being which exists for and belongs to the masculine 'other' (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Campbell, 2005; Connell, 2005; Sanger, 2008). Thus, belonging to this identity, the 'feminine be(long)ing', seemingly entails a state of 'not-belonging'; where one's actions, words, and desires are not (re)produced as belonging to oneself, but rather are for an entitled masculine other. Furthermore, SA appears unable to separate itself from the scorn of GBV (Dosekun, 2007; Gordon, 2015; Gqola, 2015; Ngabaza et al, 2018; Tonisi, 2019). In this context, womxn are systematically hunted, silenced, and used

[5] For the purpose of the dissertation 'be(long)ing' will be used to refer to the individual identity embodiment and/or enactment of the collective to which this identity belongs.

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by their country*men* because of their 'natural' feminine be(long)ing(s). Essentially, the socio-cultural/political landscape of SA has seemingly perpetuated a state in which GBV is 'justified' as 'natural', thus supposedly appropriate and acceptable, masculine behaviour.

Consequently, these two sites of complication/oppression appear to limit the rights and freedom(s) of South African womxn. In terms of belonging, it is Lefebvre's (1991) 'rights to the city' which is of particular importance (Fenster, 2005). The apparent systemic silencing of feminine voices for the supposed 'irrationality' of their 'innate' emotionality has blocked South African womxn from accessing their 'right to participate' within the socio-political spaces of SA (Gqola, 2015; Jacobs, 2019). Therefore, in this (home)land where womxn are apparently incapable of speaking truth, and thus are blocked/muted, feminine beings are (re)produced as 'not-belonging', specifically, in/to positions of power/politics. In the context of the 'female fear factory', these feminine beings' 'right to appropriate' is clouded by fear (Gqola, 2015 & 2021). The contextual knowledges of their 'semiotic universe' (Antonsich, 2010; May, 2011; Hall, 2015) are formed by gendered "[lessons] of fearing freedom" that teach/socialise feminine South Africans to constantly expect and subsequently always fear GBV (Gqola, 2015:86). These 'lessons' are actualised in the *physical* belongings that promote safety which are found in (feminine) South African homes, such as tasers, pepper-sprays, burglar bars, alarms etc. Therefore, the daily life of this feminine be(long)ing appears to communicate a fear-filled and fundamentally *unsafe* existence which perhaps cannot construct a sense of belonging in/to its home(land), at least not in terms of how belonging has been previously theorised.

The construction of a feminine sense of belonging in/to SA is seemingly disrupted by its Constitutionally 'free' and 'equal' socio-political/geographic landscape. This landscape appears to (re)produce a fear-filled and unsafe feminine being whose agency is blocked/muted for its devalued gendered position. Thus, belonging in/to this 'home(land)' is likely a problematic and even treacherous affective experience for feminine South Africans, which is in and of itself problematic with regards to the broader literature on belonging. Hence, this belonging(s) and its construction is a site that requires further investigation.

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In the next chapter, I work to thoroughly discuss the actual research endeavour upon which this dissertation is empirically based. This chapter will cover three central aspects of the research process, (1) how the study itself was designed, (2) how it was ethically and reflexively conducted, and (3) how its results were reflexively analysed.

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3 Research methodology

This research endeavour is concerned with investigating the seemingly problematic relationship between South African womxn and their belonging(s): how it is constructed, experienced, and maintained/interrupted. Thus, a central aim of this study is to ascertain factors which are conducive and/or disruptive to the feminine construction of belonging within the context of SA's pervasive culture of (gendered) violence.

This chapter will firstly present theoretically based explanations for how its research study was designed, specifically with regards to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, research paradigm, and methodology. After this predominantly theoretical opening section, the remainder of the chapter will discuss how the research study was practically conducted. Thus, this chapter will also discuss where, with whom, and how this study was conducted and subsequently analysed. These discussions will thoroughly explain each step of this research endeavour and highlight any (ethical) challenges, limitations, and/or concerns which arose during this process.

Critically, throughout this chapter 'reflexivity' will feature as a guiding principle with which this research endeavour was structured, conducted, and analytically (re)produced. Reflexivity is discussed in this manner as it mirrors how the concept itself was employed throughout this dissertation.

3.1. Research design

3.1.1. Theoretical framework

Belonging sits at the core of this study's theoretical framework. However, due to the limited literature available on this concept, a weak theory approach was required (Wright, 2015; Lehner et al, 2021).

A theoretical framework is derived from existing theories where the literature has "already been tested and validated by others and is considered a generally acceptable theory in the scholarly literature" (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:16); these theories underscore the researcher's "thinking with regards to how [to] understand and plan to

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research [the] topic, as well as the concepts and definitions from that theory that are relevant to [said] topic" (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:13). The use of belonging as a theoretical framework supports an investigation into the relationship between individuals and their collectivities, and how this relationship is experienced (Carrillo Rowe, 2005).

However, due to the current under-theorisation of belonging (Miller, 2003; Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2015), a 'weak theory approach' is needed (Wright, 2015; Lehner et al, 2021). This approach "supports partial understandings and multiplicity" of theories of belonging, making it particularly apt for belonging's theorisation due to the relatively scarce literature on, and the multiple dimensions of, the notion (Wright, 2015:392). Applying this approach has "several implications for [theorising] belonging" (Wright, 2015:392). Firstly, it places affect and "emotion at the centre of" the research endeavour (Lehner et al, 2021:4), thus requiring the researcher to "attend deeply to the ways belonging is constituted by and through emotional attachment" (Wright, 2015:392). Therefore, this approach enables the exploration into the "emotionality of belonging", something that is "often mentioned but hardly ever researched explicitly" (Lehner et al, 2021:4). Secondly, belonging "must be approached through its procedural character" which comes about through repeated practices that 'belong to' particular collectivities of a socio-political context (Lehner et al, 2021:4). Thus, the importance of procedural "performances of belonging" is emphasised (Wright, 2015:392) and consequently so are the socially constructed ways of engagement with one's 'material environment' which construct a sense of belonging (Dixon & Durrheim, 2004). Lastly, a "relational perspective" is required in order to adequately attend to the previous implications (Wright, 2015:392) and to address belonging's fundamental 'connecting' ability (Yuval-Davis, 2011:15).

Therefore, this research endeavour is both required and encouraged by the weak theory approach to focus on the emotions, performances, and relational aspects of belonging. However, it is not in the scope of this study to investigate belonging in general, rather it is to investigate the 'feminine' construction of belonging within SA. Thus, this focus on the 'feminine' requires a feminist conceptual framework.

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3.1.2. Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework differs from the theoretical framework as it provides the research with “a logical structure of connected concepts” that works to depict “how ideas in a study relate to one another within the theoretical framework” and outlines the appropriate manner in which these ‘related ideas’ are to be investigated (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:17). Therefore, a feminist conceptual framework would then situate this study within the ‘logic structure’ of feminist theory, thus structuring the relationship of belonging’s concepts, the ‘how’ of the research process, and the research paradigm.

While there is much debate as to exactly what is ‘feminist theory’, it can be argued that feminists are generally concerned with how individuals and society are co-constructed through gendered power relations, which are socially (re)produced and contextually bound, in ways that oppress feminine bodies (Mama, 2011). The centrality of power within the feminist critique of ‘traditional’ research requires a ‘research conduct’ that highlights and attempts to mitigate the power differential between the researcher and their participants (Mama, 2011). This power differential plays a central role in how data is obtained, especially in more ‘personal’ collection methods such as interviews. While it is almost impossible to completely remove this power differential from the research process, it is possible to mitigate its influence through the process of reflexivity. With this process, I as the researcher must continuously revisit and revaluate the study with an awareness of my own power to (re)construct and (re)produce meaning (Mama, 2011). This ‘reflexive process’ also functions as a constant reminder of my own Identity (a white, middle-class, feminine, academic), and its embedded powers’ influence on the study.

Feminist critiques have further argued that the emotional and physical wellbeing of participants must take precedence over a study’s pursuit of knowledge production, regardless of how noble the endeavour may appear. Thus, requiring researchers to perceive and treat their participants first and foremost as people. To address this critique, the choice was made to structure the individual interviews and focus group discussion like an informal conversation between people rather than a clinical process of data collection.

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Thus, this feminist 'logical structure' not only structures the theories of belonging around gendered power relations but also provides an outline of the appropriate conduct for researching . Furthermore, this framework is also "a way to identify and construct for the reader" the researcher's 'philosophical assumptions' about (their) reality (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:17).

These assumptions inform the research paradigm, and specifically relate to the researcher's ontology, "the nature of reality", epistemology, "ways of knowing", and axiology, "ethics and value systems" (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012:51). While there is much debate as to what feminism is, specifically in terms of ontology, there appears to be less contestation about its epistemology and axiology (Mama, 2011). As previously discussed, the process of reflexivity illuminates the social construction of knowledge, and thus necessitates that this research be done through the epistemological lens of social constructivism with an 'emancipatory' axiology in mind.

3.1.3. Research paradigm

The socio-cultural/historical construction of reality and individuals is central to the social constructivist epistemology, and the research conducted within this epistemology aims to "explore the conditions of [social constructions'] use and to trace their implications for human experience and social practices" (Willig, 2001:7). Combined with feminism, this epistemology highlights the power that is involved in (re)producing societal constructions (Mama, 2011). The centrality of power within social constructivism links to the feminist critique of research, which illuminates how feminine and feminised bodies in particular have been '(re)produced' into positions of subjectivity.

This critique structures a kind of 'feminist axiology', by requiring the researcher to hold "a general ethic of accountability to a community of women" who have "moral and political interests in common" (Mama, 2011:14). This axiology focuses on trying to expose the inequalities within social constructions with the ultimate goal of transforming their meanings so to achieve a more just society (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012).

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3.1.4. Methodology

Together this study's theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and paradigm necessitates that the study take on a qualitative methodology, for three reasons:

1. Weak theory's push for research to have an 'explorative component', which aims to investigate the phenomena that have previously been overlooked (Wright, 2015), is supported and encouraged by the qualitative methodology (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).
2. The central research objective to investigate the meaning within lived experiences of belonging requires a methodology that embraces the subjective nature of *being* and highlights the importance of meaning and lived experience (Willig, 2001; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).
3. The importance that qualitative methodology accords to meaning supports feminism's insistence on reflexivity. And the interactive model of this methodology allows for researchers to revisit components of their study continuously and reflexively in an effort to illuminate their interplay and to make changes where needed (Maxwell, 2009).

As this study is fundamentally concerned with uncovering the meaning(s) of belonging that are locked within the lived experiences of young, middle-class, South African womxn, a narrative approach was needed. This approach views the participants' narratives, their own stories/retellings of their lives, as the primary source of data in an effort to produce an analysis of the phenomenon(a) as it is *experienced* (Kawulich & Holland, 2012).

3.2. Study setting

This study was conducted within the South African context and with twenty young, middle-class women who were born and had spent the majority of their lives living in SA.

The first round of data collection, the individual interviews, were primarily conducted in-personal at an informal place of the participants choosing. Most often this was a coffee shop. Five interviews (Toni, Ella, Matilde, Joni, and Charlotte)

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were conducted via electronic chat platforms, as these participants either lived outside of Pretoria or internationally. The focus group discussion was also conducted virtually as I had accepted an opportunity to study aboard at the beginning of 2023 and thus was not in SA for the second round of data collection.

3.3. Research participants

Twenty middle-class South African women, between the ages of twenty and thirty, were recruited for this study. These individuals were selectively sampled according to:

1. South African nationality
2. Self-identify as feminine
3. Middle-class upbringing/background
4. And ages between the ages of twenty and thirty

These sampling parameters were chosen in order to narrow the study's scope and to focus the investigation on the lived 'South African' experiences of young, middle-class, feminine bodies.

Two parameters, class and age, were of particular importance. The choice of a 'middle-class upbringing/background' was applied in light of the economic privilege which enables one to afford safety (Kern, 2006). In SA, and perhaps the world, safety is a commodity which is sold through real estate, security companies, and personal safety precautions like tasers, pepper-sprays, and self-defence classes. Thus, applying this parameter enabled an investigation into this economic aspect.

The application of a 'young age' rage was done for two reasons. Firstly, this age group would be more likely to visit nightclubs, and thus would have more recent experiences of being out at times and in places which are not for feminine bodies. Therefore, this age range enabled the study to examine the feminine experiences of 'entitled masculine behaviour', namely non-consensual touching and persistent (violent) advances. Secondly, it was also likely that these would be individuals in the process of becoming independent which in itself is a disruption to one's sense of belonging. Being in one's 'twenty's' is arguable a time where one leaves behind the security, comfort, and ultimately the 'belonging' of their childhood (homes) in search

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of new spaces to 'put down roots' for adult belonging(s). Thus, this is a disruptive time where one's future, and essentially belonging, is of particular importance.

Hope for the future and where that future may be provides a window into an individual's sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011). It reveals the possible stability of one's belonging, and thus all the participants were asked whether they saw a future for themselves in SA. All but four participants stated that they did not. At the time of this study two participants (Matilde and Charlotte), had not lived in SA for over a year. However, both participants clearly stated that they had not (yet) made the decision to immigrate. Twelve participants had travelled and/or lived internationally and these experiences appeared to be very influential in their decisions to stay/leave.

With the exception of Mary, all the participants had grown up and matriculated in SA. Their childhood stories all spoke of experiences where they were taught to rightfully fear 'their' South African socio-geographic landscape. Julia was the only participant who had not studied at a South African university/college, with most having studied or were currently studying Science (seven), Education (four), Medicine/Veterinary (three), or Design (three). Thus, almost all the participants were highly educated.

The participants differed in terms of race (twelve white, seven black, and one Indian), and it was through this identity category which the participants' narratives of belonging and safety appeared to differ most. However, their femininity seemed to be the opposite. As feminine beings the participants all shared experiences of gendered victimhood, the effects of which were also similarly expressed.

The above demographic data of the participants is represented in the table below:

Table 1.1: Demographics of the participants

Pseudonym	Age (As of 2023)	Race	Study/Occupational field	International Travel
Angela	24	Black	Audiology (Medicine)	Yes
Charlotte	24	White	Education	Yes
Clara	27	Black	Science	No
Eleanor	24	White	Veterinary (Medicine)	Yes
Elizabeth	24	White	Science	Yes

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Ella	23	Black	Business	No
Florynce	28	Black	Science	No
Gabriella	24	White	Science	Yes
Hedy	24	White	Science	Yes
Indira	21	Indian	Nursing (Medicine)	No
Jane	22	White	Design	No
Joni	29	White	Design	No
Julia	24	White	-	No
Katherine	30	Black	Science	No
Matilde	24	White	Psychology	Yes
Mary	22	White	Design	Yes
Naomi	24	White	Education	Yes
Rosalind	24	White	Science	Yes
Roxane	26	Black	Education	Yes
Toni	24	Black	Education	Yes

3.4. Sampling

The first round of sampling took place on my social media platforms (Instagram and WhatsApp). A description of the study, its objectives, and intended participants was advertised with the instruction for anyone interested and/or with questions to message me directly. Individuals who contacted me with the intention to participate were sent the letter of informed consent (see appendix 9.2) and asked to read the form before confirming their participation. Seven participants were recruited through this method. Even though I did not have a personal relationship with these participants, it must be acknowledged that we knew of each other before the start of this study, and this could have affected their participation and subsequent experience of this study.

Once these seven participants had been recruited, they were asked to ‘spread the word’ so to recruit possible participants. Through this method of ‘snowball sampling’ the other thirteen participants were recruited.

All participants were required to read and comprehend the informed consent form before pledging their participation. They were frequently reminded to ask questions and/or voice any concerns that the informed consent form may have raised. After this, a date and time for their individual interview was discussed and set.

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For the focus group discussion, the participants were sampled from the existing pool as the intention was to further investigate the narratives of belonging and safety provided during the individual interviews. After their interview was conducted the participants were asked if they would like to take part in a focus group discussion at a later date. Eleven participants stated that they would like to take part. However, when the time came to set a date and time for the focus group, five participants rescinded their previous decision. Out of the six remaining participants, three unfortunately could not attend the first, and unanticipated only, focus group discussion, and thus this discussion was conducted once and with three participants.

3.5. Data collection

Twenty semi-structured individual interviews (approximately 60 minutes) and a focus group discussion (approximately 50 minutes) were conducted. The choice of these data collection methods was made to best attend to this study's narrative approach.

With this approach, the primary source of research data are narratives, and as these are the 'stories of our lives' they are perhaps best able to capture how phenomena are subjectively experienced and perceived (Kawulich & Holland, 2012). The focus on narratives is particularly apt for this study for two reasons; firstly, centralising the narratives of marginalised individuals, specifically that of womxn, in research follows the feminist tradition of conducting emancipatory research (Mama, 2011). Secondly, as belonging is in part an emotional experience and a subjective state, in order to gain a 'true' understanding of this notion narratives are invaluable. Narratives purposefully push the researcher to take a step back in their interpretation of the phenomenon(a) to allow the participants to provide and explain their actual experiences and understandings. Thus, working to also address the power differential in the researcher-participant dynamic.

To collect this invaluable 'narrative data', in-depth individual interviews and a focus group were conducted. Interviews are particularly useful as they are "suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world" through participants' own descriptions and explanations of their lived experiences (Kvale, 2011:56). In-depth interviews are "issue-orientated" in that their exploration aims to

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"gain focused information on the issue from the [participants]" (Hesse-Biber, 2007:118). Thus, allowing this collection method to gather data about the phenomenon(a) as it was experienced by the participant in their world. These interviews were conducted first, in an attempt to establish a rapport with each individual participant and a foundation of trust. This was vital as the interviews often involved 'tough conversations' where the participants spoke of emotionally charged moments where they did not feel like they belonged and of their experiences of crime.

The participants were asked a series of pre-determined questions (see appendix 9.1.1) which could be grouped according to their intended subject matter. The first 'question group' aimed to ascertain data concerning the participants' sense of belonging, in terms of what this sense felt like, how had it been constructed and/or disrupted, and its relation to their notion of 'home'. The second focused on the participants' sense of safety and sparked discussions regarding their experiences of unsafety, crime, and SA's criminal justice system. These questions at times lead to heavy and even potentially problematic discussions where issues of race, GBV, and South African politics took centre stage. Therefore, these 'touchy' subject matters further necessitated an informal environment where the participants could feel as though they were free to speak. Thus, most of the interviews were conducted in informal spaces of the participants choosing, such as coffee shops, parks, and even their own dinner tables. Five interviews were conducted via an online chat platform. Ella, Joni, and Toni all lived outside of Pretoria and chose to conduct their interviews virtually. Charlotte (Australia) and Matilde (Denmark) did not reside in SA at the time of this study, and thus the only option was to conduct virtual interviews.

The individual interviews were all recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically. Following this, common themes were identified and subsequently converted into discussion points for the upcoming focus group discussion.

The focus group discussion took place after all the individual interviews had been conducted, transcribed, and analysed. This second phase of data collection was conducted via an online chat platform with three participants (Elizabeth, Julia, and Matilde). Focus groups were chosen as a second phase of data collection for three

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reasons. Firstly, this study's central concern is that of belonging which is fundamentally a 'group experience', and thus is perhaps best investigated within a group context where previously hidden data could be uncovered (Kay et al, 2015). In creating a group context, participants are able to interact collectively and therefore this space enables them to not only responded to me, the researcher and my questions, but also to each other (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Secondly, given the possible distressing nature of some of the discussion points, the potential comfort and support that a focus group could foster was very appealing (Kay et al, 2015; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). This appeared to be the case when the participants discussed the complicated effect that their white racial identity had had on their South African sense of belonging. Together these participants, all of whom happened to be white, appeared to support each other through this difficult discussion and perhaps it was this support which enabled them to discuss such personal and painful experiences. Lastly, due to time constraints a focus group was an effective way to follow-up with the participants as these discussions acted like another interview which was able to 're-engage' with the participants simultaneously and in a much shorter time period (Hesse-Biber, 2007). In this case, the focus group also functioned as a way to test the validity of the common themes identified in the individual interviews. Thus, during this discussion the participants were presented with these common themes and were asked to discuss them further. However, other than confirming the legitimacy of these themes' apparent commonality, this discussion did not reveal any new information with regards to relationship between belonging and safety. Accordingly, this was taken to be an indication of data saturation. And as it appeared that there likely would not be new data to collect, the second focus group with the two remaining participants (Eleanor and Hedy) who had chosen to take part was cancelled. The focus group discussion was recorded, transcribed verbatim, and put through a 'dialogic/performance' analysis so to ascertain an overarching master narrative of feminine South African belonging (Riessman, 2008).

In an effort to foster an informal/relaxed environment, throughout the data collection process the participants were encouraged to speak conversationally, and thus were 'allowed' to swear, laugh, and go off topic. While this did help create a less clinical space for research it was not without its faults.

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3.5.1. Challenges

Several challenged arose from the data collection process. Firstly, the informal structure appeared to allow the discussions to drift off topic and as a result the interviews often went over time.

Secondly, when conducted virtually both data collection processes were complicated by internet connectivity issues. This primarily caused delays in the participants' responses and resulted in longer run times. However, for the focus group, this 'stop-start' issue possibly disrupted the construction of the group's cohesion and thus could have disrupted the whole group dynamic.

As a result of the snowball method the anonymity of the focus group participants could not be assured as two participants (Elizabeth and Julia) had been recruited by the same participant (Hedy). Thus, there is a possibility that these two participants could interact again in the future, and while they were required to sign a confidentiality agreement (see appendix 9.2.2.1) I as the researcher cannot guarantee that this agreement will be upheld.

Lastly, a recording issue was experienced during Mary's interview which resulted in an unreliable audio file. While Mary's interview has been transcribed, there are sizable gaps in the transcript. Thus, a choice was made not to include Mary's interview as it would be irresponsible and essentially unethical to (re)produce a narrative that was not entirely and directly constructed by the individual from which it came.

3.6. Data analysis

The data analysis was done in three stages.

Firstly, after the individual interviews were completed, they were transcribed verbatim and then put through a thematic analysis so that common themes could be identified from the participants' individual narratives (Kawulich & Holland, 2012). Commonalities which emerged highlighted the importance that the feeling of comfort and sense of acceptance played in the participants' construction of their sense of belonging. In terms of 'safety', a common fear of 'spiking' while at South

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African nightclubs ran throughout the participants' narratives. These apparent commonalities and a few, less common, others were converted into discussion points for the next round of data collection, the focus group.

The focus group discussed the aforementioned commonalities however the discussion unintentionally related more to aspects of race than it did to aspects of gender. This was possibly due to the fact that all of the focus group participants and myself were white. Our shared racial identity could have provided a 'safe space' for discussions involving race as the participants may have felt like their experiences and perceptions would be shared, and thus accepted. Nonetheless, this discussion was transcribed verbatim and then put through a 'dialogic/performance' analysis (Riessman, 2008).

With this analysis, the focus group was examined with regards to "how talk among [the participants] [was] interactively (dialogically) produced and performed as narrative" in order to identify a possible 'group narrative' (Riessman, 2008:151). This 'group narrative' is one of four voices that this analysis identifies: the voice of the individual participant, the group voice, ventriloquized narratives of outside individuals, and the researcher's voice (Riessman, 2008). Importantly, the inclusion of the researcher's voice aligns with the feminist conceptual framework as "intersubjectivity and reflexivity come to the fore" through this analysis' focus on the explicit dialogue between myself, the researcher, and the participants (Riessman, 2008:196). Thus, this analysis supported the critical process of reflexivity in this endeavour by enabling a kind of reflexive interrogation of my 'researcher influence' "on the production and interpretation of narrative data" (Riessman, 2008:199).

The 'group voice' was created by the participants' 'individual voices' which communicated their personal narratives. These voices became the 'group's' when they worked *collectively* to structure a narrative. Each participant provided fragments of an overarching 'master narrative' which they then expanded upon and/or corrected together (Riessman, 2008:177). Thus, through this focus group a 'master narrative' of belonging amongst *white* South African feminine bodies was constructed. However, this 'master narrative' is not presented as this study's 'master narrative of belonging' as it excludes the narratives of the participants of colour.

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Instead, this 'master narrative' had to be identified through the participants' individual interviews due to the lack of participants available for the focus group discussion. Thus, the individual interview transcripts were reanalysed using 'interpretative phenomenological analysis' (IPA) with the goal of ascertaining a possible 'master narrative' of the feminine South African sense of belonging. This analysis was chosen for its focus on using lived experiences to make sense of a particular phenomenon, in this case 'belonging' (Griffin & May, 2012). Thus, through this analysis the participants' lived experiences of being young, middle-class, South African women within the context of 'their' country's culture of (gendered) violence were used so to make sense of the phenomenon belonging. In order to accomplish this, each of the participants' interview transcripts were firstly coloured coded according to statements made regarding (a) belonging, (b) safety, and (c) being a woman in SA. These categories were chosen so to focus the analysis of the transcripts onto the intended core subject matters of this study and were importantly treated as dynamic sets of data which could and would blend into each other. For instance, when coding for 'safety' many of the participants' narratives would overlap with their experiences of 'being women in SA'. Thus, a subcategory of 'gendered safety' was produced and 'being women in SA' was subsequently focused to the participants' socio-political experiences. Once coded, these individual narratives were examined, with a reflexive awareness of how they may interact with the other categories, so to identify common experiences and perceptions. After being identified, these commonalities were examined collectively so to (re)produce an overarching narrative. Essentially, the participants' individual experiences were treated as 'puzzle pieces' which when pieced together would (re)produce an overall image of the phenomenon(a). The result was a collection of 'images' which were then analysed with the research questions in mind so to explain how the participants' lived experiences (a) described what belonging felt like, (b) constructed and/or disrupted the construction of their sense of belonging, and (c) of 'home' relate to their narratives of belonging.

This analysis contributed to the development of this study's analytical chapters ('The burdened belonging of feminine South Africans', and 'Lessons in (un)safety'), and ultimately exposed the foundational aspect of (un)safety in the feminine belonging(s)

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of young, middle-class, South African womxn. Importantly, these chapters were *(re)produced* with a guiding principle of reflexivity in mind, and so a critical implication concerning the analyses that this study puts forth must be acknowledge. While the participants' narratives are presented mostly in their own words using quotations, they still have been influenced by me as the researcher in two key instances. Firstly, I chose parts of the participants' narratives which would be presented and discussed, and in doing so have independently valorised these statements. Secondly, these statements were analysed, interpretated, and transformed into arguments through 'me', my personal lived experiences and worldviews as a white, middle-class, South African woman. Thus, through my personal interests, perceptions, and identities the participants' narratives have been *reproduced*. Therefore, the analyses in this dissertation are not only subjective for their 'soft' form of data, narratives, but also because of the arguably unavoidable personal influence of the researcher.

My own influence on this study will be discussed further in the next chapter, specifically in terms of its ethical concerns. This chapter will discuss the ethical foundations of this dissertation with the aim of explaining how the research participants were treated justly and how their confidential data was and will be protected.

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4 Ethical considerations

While research endeavours vary in terms of their frameworks, paradigms, and methodologies, it is generally accepted that all research, particularly social research, adhere to three 'core' ethical considerations, namely: beneficence, respect, and justice (Fisher & Anushko, 2008).

Beneficence requires researchers to produce research that is beneficial for both academia and individuals, directly and indirectly, involved in the study (Fisher & Anushko, 2008). Part of this consideration is the requirement for the researcher not to intentionally cause any harm with their study. However, it is impossible for researchers to anticipate and remove all aspects of their study that may harm their participants, particularly in studies interested in investigating potentially traumatic lived experiences. Thus, this consideration rather requires that the researcher take steps to prevent any harm and to put mechanisms in place which can adequately address any harm that is experienced (Ruane, 2016). In order to do this, all participants were required to read and sign informed consent forms, one for the individual interview and another, if they chose to take part, for the focus group discussion. These forms explained what their *voluntary* participation entailed, highlighted the potentially distressing nature of the discussions, and provided them with the contact details of public counseling organizations, such as Lifeline, which they could contact if they experienced any distress. None of the participants reported that they had experienced any kind of distress as a result of their participation. Furthermore, the public context of focus groups may cause participants to feel as though their participation is not entirely voluntary because of possible embarrassment that their withdrawal could illicit (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Thus, a 'briefing break' was implanted at the focus group's 'halfway mark', during which the participants were each individually messaged about what the next discussion would cover and were then offered the opportunity to withdrawal discreetly (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). None of the participants chose to withdrawal.

Respect relates to the researcher's responsibility to respect the privacy of their research participants during and after the study (Fisher & Anushko, 2008). To adhere

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to this consideration, the participants were given research pseudonyms and when conducted virtually the participants had the option to keep their cameras off. As the privacy of the participants could not be guaranteed in focus groups because of its group context (Sim & Waterfield, 2019), the participants were informed of this via the focus group's informed consent form (see appendix 9.2.2) and were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement (see appendix 9.2.2.1). With this confidentiality agreement the participants were asked to keep their discussion confided to the members of the group so that the information that they provided could be protected and kept confidential (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Furthermore, the participants were informed, via the informed consent forms (see appendix 9.2.1), that their private information would be securely stored (online) with the Department of Sociology at the University of Pretoria in accordance with the requirements of the Faculty of Humanities Research and Ethics Committee. Importantly, the feminist conceptual framework raises a serious ethical concern for research endeavors, such as this, that ask its participants to retell potentially traumatic experiences for the purpose of doing research (Gordon, 2015). To address this concern, reflexivity was continuously employed so to be mindful of the researcher-participant power dynamic, especially when the participants shared past traumatic experiences. Rather than assuming that the participants would share these experiences because they were asked and/or their interview had naturally progressed to this stage, I asked the participants for their permission; if they would be 'Okay', to go into these experiences. In asking for their permission, the participants were provided with an 'out' which reaffirmed the critically voluntary nature of their participation. Furthermore, as this power differential continues regardless of the participants' actual presence, reflexivity was not only a guiding principle during the data collection process but also throughout the research endeavor. Thus, the analysis and subsequent proposed outcomes of this study have undoubtedly been influenced by my own experiences and Identity. Therefore, it must be acknowledged again that the narratives presented in this study have been *reconstructed* and as a result are perhaps vulnerable to oversights and even misinterpretations.

Justice requires that a researcher conducts their research in a manner which does not solely place the study's burdens on the participants while the possible benefits are

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reaped elsewhere (Fisher & Anushko, 2008). Following the transformative/emancipatory' axiology required by the feminist conceptual framework, it is a central aim of this study to produce research that offers insights into how South African society can be transformed to a place where womxn feel safe and like they belong in all spaces available to men.

With the above three ethical considerations a fourth must be outlined due to the context of the study. The South African context required that this study adhered to the regulations of the Protection of Private Information Act (POPIA). Therefore, it was a conscious effort on my part to only collect information from the participants that was necessary to address the study's objectives. Furthermore, all identifying information that was provided by the participants will be securely stored with the University of Pretoria for 15 years after this study's completion.

The following chapter will present an analysis of the participants' narratives concerning their sense of belonging and how this sense was experienced, constructed, and/or disrupted in the South African context. At the centre of this chapter lies a conceptualisation of belonging which is burdened by aspects of one's feminine South African be(long)ings, namely race, femininity and safety. Ultimately, this chapter aims to highlight how belonging in/to SA appears to be burdensome for feminine bodies, and how a sense of *unsafety* rather than safety is seemingly integral to the (re)construction of this belonging(s).

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5 Burdened belonging of feminine South Africans

5.1. Introduction

The current theorisation of belonging is perhaps blind to the lives of those who belonging in/to the margins of 'their' society. Those who exist and subsequently (re)construct their belonging outside of Patriarchal and Eurocentric narratives, but still have nonetheless had their sense of belonging (re)produced for them. As a result, the complex realties of their 'other' belonging(s) are overshadowed by an overarching Patriarchal sense of being 'at home'; where belonging supposedly evokes and/or is evoked by feelings of being valued, safety, agency, and stability (Fenster, 2005; Kern, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010: Wright, 2015). However, these 'feelings of belonging' appear to be incompatible for the womxn who live and thus (re)construct their sense of belonging in/to oppressive, unsafe, and unstable socio-geographic landscapes, such as SA.

The narratives of feminine South African belonging(s) provided by this study's participants supported this hypothesised pitfall in the current (Patriarchal) theorisation of belonging. With the exception of 'safety', the participants did not prioritise and to a large extent did not even mention the theoretically assumed (Patriarchal) feelings of belonging. Instead, their narratives all spoke to feelings of *comfort*. When asked to describe what 'belonging' felt like, most participants explicitly stated that it was a feeling of "being comfortable in your environment" (Hedy) and "with the people [there]" (Katherine). The participants further explained that this sense of 'comfort-belonging' was nurtured in/by their 'safe spaces', sites where they were able to be themselves without fear. Expressed as an ability to 'just be', or rather to 'just be(long)', these sites of belonging were underscored by three affective components: 'Acceptance', 'Understanding', and 'Familiarity/Similarity'. These three affective components were essentially the constructive elements in the participants' sense of belonging. However, more often than not the participants' narratives of belonging would speak of instances where this sense was disrupted, primarily by their country*men*.

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Throughout their interviews the participants shared lived experiences of belonging in/to SA and often expressed how these experiences made them feel rejected, misunderstood/devalued, and ultimately unsafe. When these disruptive experiences were analysed with the supposed affective components in mind, they revealed how elements of the participants' feminine South African beings, namely race, gender, and sense of (un)safety, had *burdened* each constructive affective component. Race appeared to have burdened the participants' sense of acceptance. This is not a novel experience particularly for people of colour. However, in this study it was mostly white participants who spoke of instances where their race was disruptive to their belonging(s) in/to SA. In their attempts to claim a (South) African nationality, a 'national be(long)ing', these participants' were rejected for their 'out of place' whiteness as a result of (a) 'international ignorance' concerning the relationship between race and place/nationality; and (b) 'internal tensions' left behind after centuries of racial conflict and segregation. These lingering racial tensions were further revealed in the frequent racialisation of white participants' 'risk maps', which subsequently exposed a potential unconscious perpetuation of apartheid's socio-geographical (re)structuring of SA. Race was not the only 'disruptive identity' to burden the construction of their comfort-belonging. The participants' gender identity, their femininity, heavily intruded on their ability to have their feminine be(long)ing be understood, particularly in South African nightclubs and by their country*men*. With this burden the rights and freedom(s) of these women were limited precisely because of how the Patriarchy had 'misunderstood', or rather '*(mis)interpreted*', their femininity as belonging to and being for masculinity. The effects of this '(mis)interpretation by reinterpretation' through the male gaze was twofold. Firstly, it twisted the participants' feminine beings as supposedly 'asking for it', with 'it' being the desires and urges of the 'sexual subject' (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Connell, 2005; Campbell, 2005; Sanger, 2008). Secondly, the participants' feminine voices were devalued and subsequently silenced for their supposedly innate emotionality which made them incapable of speaking truth to and/or with power. Therefore, through this Patriarchal '(mis)understanding' the participants were (re)produced as mute feminine objects *for* masculinity's entitled urges. Consequently, (re)producing a burdened femininity that is 'responsible' for not

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encouraging these entitled behaviours, primarily by limiting themselves in their freedom of expression, movement, choice, and speech (Campbell, 2005). Knowing how to 'limit' oneself was a result of the participants' familiarity in/to SA and was what enabled them to find comfort in knowing *where* and *how* they could 'just be(long)' safely. Growing up and subsequently being socialised to SA's socio-geographic landscape involved the development of the participants' 'symbolic city' (Hall, 2015). However, as this landscape is a dangerous one, this socialised familiarity was fundamentally a familiarity with *unsafety*; a familiarity that was burdened by the unwritten safety rules of this violent 'semiotic universe' (Antonsich, 2010; May, 2011) which were most clearly revealed in the participants' various, extensive, and habitual safety precautions. These routine precautions enabled the participants to (re)create 'safe spaces' where they could 'just be(long)' despite the (gendered) violence that surrounded them. Interestingly, this 'burden' appeared to be more constructive than disruptive. When some participants travelled to actual 'safe spaces', like Australia and Denmark, not only were their precautions made redundant, but their unique 'South African familiarity' with unsafety was revealed as an integral part of their 'place identity' (Dixon & Durrheim, 2004), their 'South Africanness'. Thus, contrary to what has been theorised, it was unsafety rather than safety which appeared to partially construct the participants' belonging(s) in/to SA.

This analysis chapter will firstly address the first research question, 'Do young, middle-class, South African womxn have a belonging in/to their country?', by providing an overview of how the participants had described their unique sense of belonging in/to SA. The focus of this chapter however will be to address and unpack the second research question: How is the South African feminine belonging constructed/disrupted? To fully unpack this question each constructive component will be thoroughly discussed together with its 'disruptive burden'. 'Acceptance' will be analysed through the 'race-place' relationship and primarily focus on the experiences of white participants' 'out of place' whiteness. This discussion will also explore the racialised nature of white participants' 'risk maps' with the intention of exposing apartheid's possible continued influence on the social-geographic (re)structuring of SA post 1994. 'Understanding' will be analysed through a gendered lens, highlighting how masculinity's '(mis)interpretation' of femininity has

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made belonging in/to SA burdensome for womxn. The participants' burdened experiences of being in South African nightclubs will be the focus of this discussion, where their extensive and seemingly necessary 'nightclub precautions' will be investigated to showcase how the participants have had to limit themselves in order to 'just be(long)'. Furthermore, this gendered burden will be analysed using Lefebvre's (1991) 'rights to the city' to show how this Patriarchal '(mis)understanding' has seemingly disrupted the construction of the participants' sense of comfort-belonging by (a) clouding their 'right to appropriate' with the fear of 'trigging' entitled masculine behaviors; and (b) blocking their 'right to participate' with a kind of Patriarchal 'mute switch' that is systemically attached to their feminine voices. The final discussion will use the participants' safety precautions as points of analysis so to explain how their familiarity with SA's violent 'semiotic universe' has been burdened by habitual efforts to 'just be(long)' safely. This discussion will also analyse the participants' experiences outside of SA in an effort to explain how the unfamiliar safety of these international contexts exposed the extent to which feeling *unsafe* appeared to form part of, rather than disrupt, the construction of their belonging(s) in/to SA

Thus, the focus analytic discussions presented below will unpack the participants' 'narrative of belonging' and will predominately focus on the three affective constructive components of belonging and their burdens. Ultimately this chapter aims to explain how belonging in/to SA is *burdensome* and fundamentally *unsafe* for young, middle-class, feminine South Africans.

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5.2 Comfort-belonging: *Your* people and place

At the start of their interviews, the participants were asked to describe what belonging felt like and/or what they felt when they belonged. Charlotte's (white) description, presented below, encapsulated what most of her fellow participants described:

> "Int: So, this feeling of belonging. How would you describe that?
>
> Charlotte: […] it's a feeling of comfort, […] you feel comfortable around people and in your environment. You just feel like you can be yourself"

Interestingly, the majority of the participants' descriptions focused on how it was individuals who had made them feel as though they belonged. The participants frequently referred to feelings of acceptance, understanding, and, to a lesser extent, familiarity/similarity that these individuals inspired and which consequently nurtured their sense of belonging. These feelings are potentially what transformed ordinary people into those who the participants viewed as *theirs*; people who simultaneously belonged to the participants and who they belonged with. Ultimately, having 'their people' created 'safe spaces' for the participants to belong. These "safe and secure" environments which 'their people' were seemingly able to (re)create made the participants feel "comfortable to voice [their] opinion [and] free to be [themselves]" (Rosalind, white). Thus, in these 'sites of belonging' the participants were able to feel "comfortable with being who [they] are", because they did not fear that their *being*, would be rejected, misunderstood, nor made unfamiliar (Eleanor, white).

One's ability to comfortably be oneself was central in the majority of the participants' descriptions of belonging and was often articulated as an ability to 'just be(long)'. This reinforces the already close relationship between identity and belonging, in which an individual's meaning-filled 'be(long)ing', their individual identity performances, is what represents, justifies, and legitimates their belonging to a larger group, 'their people' (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011). The legitimacy of this representative being is twofold, it must be *accepted* and *understood* by both broader society and fellow group members as belonging to and in (Hall, 1996; Yuval-Davis,

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2006 & 2011). Naomi and Jane's descriptions respectively addressed this dual legitimisation.

Naomi (white) described belonging as a being which was "allowed to exist somewhere" without feeling like it "[owes] anything to anyone", like an explanation, to prove or to "earn [their] place" in/with 'their people'. Naomi's description centred on this ability to 'just be(long)' without scrutiny, specifically coming from broader society. However, like her fellow participants, throughout her interview this ability appeared to be complicated and essentially *burdened* by her racial and gendered identities. Jane (white) on the other hand, described belonging as a sense that involved feelings of "love and acceptance" which would make one "feel accepted by a group". Jane referred to "community groups", like the Scouts, as 'sites of belonging' because these were people with whom she shared a 'common knowing', and thus understood. This understanding was a result of the "way that [they] were taught, and how [they] had to interact" which was "not really taught […] anywhere else" (Jane). Therefore, these unique teachings and interactions of the Scouts provided Jane with an understanding of the acceptable way for how to *be* with(in) this group; an understanding of the acceptable way that she must enact her Scout identity. These two descriptions highlight how it is individual's acceptable and understood performative (identity) being which indicates, justifies, and legitimises their belonging(s). Thus, this is perhaps best explained as a 'being which belongs', a kind of 'be(long)ing'.

Familiarity was another aspect which the participants exposed as active in making them feel like they belonged, as Ella (black) explained best:

> "[Everywhere] else is just uncomfortable because there's people you don't know, there's strangers […] it's just not comfortable"

Moreover, it was not only the familiarity of these people which enable the participants to feel comfortable, and thus like they belonged, but also their similarity. Another look at Jane's description highlights how her 'Scout education' and subsequent 'Scout be(long)ing', was something that she shared with others in this particular community group; knowing how to be and having similar experiences fostered a sense of belonging amongst her and her fellow Scouts. Therefore, it was

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their similarity with one another which contributed to their sense of belonging. This was particularly the case for Elizabeth (white), who described her sense of belonging as:

> "I feel like I belong with people that are similar to me […] when I'm surrounded by people that are like my same mindset […] I feel like I belong because then I feel like I'm comfortable and ya, not out of place […] they have similar interest as me, even similar work ethics, similar views […] similar ways of having fun"

Thus, theses similar individual ways of being were what made some participants feel as though they belonged, while for others it was their "shared values [and] beliefs" (Angela, black) or "where [they were] from" and their subsequent "upbringing" which did (Indira, Indian). In fact, having a 'South African upbringing' appeared to be a critical factor for many, particularly white, participants in their sense of belonging *to* SA.

The previous descriptions, provided by Naomi, Jane, Ella, and Elizabeth, seemingly described what it felt like for them to belong in SA rather than belonging to the country itself. The participants' descriptions of this 'belonging to' was often articulated through their perception of SA as their home(land) (Charlotte, white):

> "South Africa will always be my home and I don't think I will ever get rid of that feeling. […] I think it will take a good few years before I feel like [Australia is] home. But nothing will ever replace South Africa, where I was born"

This perception of SA as 'home' was most clearly expressed by participants who had travelled internationally. These participants appeared to experience a longing which in part made them realise their sense of belonging to SA. This longing for *their* place and people appeared to be a result of the participants' 'South African upbringing' which had made them so intimately familiar with SA that it seemingly had become *theirs*. This intimate familiarity was shared by all the participants and appeared to heavily contribute to the construction of their sense of belonging to SA. However, the country itself appeared to be a complicated place for the participants to call

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'home'. The racialised and gendered violence characteristic of SA's past and present have seemingly made belonging in/to this unsafe 'home(land)' burdensome for feminine South Africans.

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5.3. Acceptance and race: Fitting in

Belonging entails a feeling of being "accepted by a group" (Jane, white). This feeling of acceptance seemingly makes one feel "comfortable with being who [they] are" as these particular enactments and/or embodiments of be(long)ings would be safe from rejection (Eleanor, white). Thus, this acceptance enables one to 'just be(long)' without fear. However, because "there is such a divide in [SA]", a result of our (violent) history of race, an individual "[cannot] easily go anywhere and be accepted" (Jane, white). Therefore, there are 'barriers' and ultimately burdens involved in the construction of SA's belonging(s) (Jane, white):

> "Int: […] Do you feel a sense of 'non-acceptance' or an inability to… connect?
>
> Jane: I think a bit of both. It is hard to connect with everyone just because there… I want to say there's like a barrier between lots of people […]
>
> Int: A language barrier, a cultural barrier, a racial barrier?
>
> Jane: Ya, I think a bit of everything"

When one does not belong, they may feel like they are 'out of place', like they are not in *their* place among *their* people (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011). This feeling may be a result of numerous factors with varying degrees of influence on an individual's feeling of 'comfort-belonging'. However, in the South African context, this sense ought to be looked at through a racial lens in order to focus the investigation into/onto South Africans and *their* place.

The history of belonging in SA is racist and bloody. Racial segregation, the systemic socio-geographic belonging of individuals according to their race, is synonymous with South African history; a country which has been historically structured by colonialism, imperialism, and apartheid. And while racial segregation is SA's past, as perhaps most clearly declared with the abolishment of the apartheid regime almost three decades ago, the racial systemic violence inflected on the country and all her

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people over centuries appears to have a continuous effect on the belonging(s) of 'born free' South Africans.

The prevalence of the race-place relationship in public and political discourse both internationally and nationally has led many to view white South Africans as 'not-belonging' in/to 'their' country; as being 'out of place' in their (home)land. This relationship postulates that race is indicative of one's place particularly in terms of nationality and the notion of 'homeland' (Hewett, 2019). Thus, with this thinking white individuals cannot possibly be from *Africa* and is articulated perhaps most clearly through the question: 'Where are you *really* from?'. Elizabeth (white) had experienced this multiple times while representing SA at international dancing competitions:

> "[A] lot of people overseas assume like, that you have to be black to be a South African. So, sometimes they get confused and I'm like, "Nah, I'm from South Africa"

From my previous research study this interaction was commonplace for white South Africans who had travelled internationally and often made them feel frustrated (Wiele, 2021). However, this 'international ignorance' did not make them question their own sense of 'national be(long)ing' or exchange this be(long)ing for their, 'appropriate', 'ancestral be(long)ing'[6] (Wiele, 2021). In fact, in some cases it encouraged them to be more steadfast in their South African identity. However, when participants in this study, particularly during the focus group discussion, were asked about times when this rejection came from their fellow South Africans, the participants rather spoke of a fight which could not be won and one that perhaps should not even be fought (Julia, white):

> "[Some] fights you just leave alone, there's no point in even trying to get involved because you're not going to win and you're not going to help. You're just probably going to make it worse"

[6] Following the rationale of the 'race-place' relationship, this is the place to which an individual with an 'out of place' race actually belongs because of their ancestral roots, and is the expected answer to the question: Where are you *really* from?

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In this study, the seemingly 'out of place' be(long)ing of white South Africans was, unintentionally, investigated further. It was not intended for the focus group discussion to centre on the seemingly problematised be(long)ing of white South Africans, but it did. And this was possibly because all the participants who chose to take part in the focus group were white. Their discussions focused on experiences where their belonging in/to SA was either subtly or explicitly rejected because of their race. Interestingly, when these rejections came from the participants' fellow, particularly black, South Africans it appeared to have affected them more deeply. Rejections from 'outside' were articulated with a mixture of annoyance and humour, however when coming from 'inside', the participants rather spoke more seriously and as though their very be(long)ing had been attacked.

Subtle rejections from their fellow South Africans were experienced primarily as differential treatment and 'those looks' which instilled "the feeling" that the participants "[did not] belong here [and] should just go back home", back to their ancestral home(land). Elizabeth (white) shared a specific experience of this differential treatment:

> "I get really frustrated and [you] really see it when you go to Home Affairs […] you clearly see how you are treated differently just because you are white. […] they are so friendly to the people of the same colour, but then with you they're in a mood and no matter how friendly you are […] they just give you nothing […] it hurts you because you're like trying so hard with them and then it's like they're giving nothing back"

A sense of helplessness seems to underscore Elizabeth's experience. She appears to willingly overextend herself just to receive the same treatment given to her fellow South Africans, only to receive 'nothing' in return. Thus, the frustration and hurt she expressed is understandable. However, this subtle rejection did not seem to carry the same weight as the more direct rejections which were discussed.

Matilde's (white) experiences of being a 'South African TikToker', a social media personality, living in Denmark often involved very public and at times violent rejections of her South African belonging/identity. These rejections appeared to have

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disrupted her sense of belonging in/to SA as they essentially denied her a critical part of her Identity:

> "[A] big part of my personality is the fact that I come from [South Africa], and now being told that 'No you don't belong here', 'You're not from here', 'You're a coloniser', stuff like that. I'm like 'But now you're attacking a part of my identity and a big part of my personality' […] also like they say, "Go home." And I'm like, "But I don't feel at home here in Denmark." […] I feel more at home in South Africa. So, it's […] a part of who I am and now you're saying that I'm not allowed to feel that. So, yea, it just attacks the heart, the home"

As discussed in the literature review, identities are the interplay between individual/private and collective/public. Thus, as much as they are an individual/private being, they are connected through public recognition/legitimisation to a collective that their (identity) performance belongs to (Hall, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Anthias, 2018). Therefore, the rejection of 'white-African' belonging(s) may lead to an identity crisis where one could be forced to downplay a central part of their Identity (Matilde, white):

> "I post a lot of TikToks about South Africa and being South African […] And I have wanted to change my content because of […] the amount of times that I get called a coloniser, get told that I am not welcome in South Africa"

Eleanor (white) spoke of how she had encountered this 'identity crisis' throughout her childhood, particularly during Heritage Days at school where she opted to embrace her 'ancestral belonging' instead because she "felt like [she] didn't belong" in SA due to her race:

> "Ya, 'Where am I really from'. Like, 'Oh actually I need to be Scottish and celebrate that, because I can't celebrate being South African, because of my skin colour'. And that was really tough, like as a kid, like I really struggled with that a lot […] I would always

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> wear like the kilt for Heritage Day […] – I tried really hard to fit into something that I [have] realised isn't really my culture, it's just my genetics"

As a child Eleanor even "wished [she] was black" because she felt that black South Africans "could say that they are South African and be like proud of it [and] not have it questioned", and thus rejected. Having her national identity, and ultimately belonging, questioned would push Eleanor to "find out where [her] genes [came] from and be that person" because she was "technically not South African".

Importantly, a belonging-identity crisis caused by an 'unacceptable' race was not only experienced by white participants. When asked about what belonging felt like Roxane (black) explained that:

> "[For] the longest time I didn't feel like I belonged, because I have been in predominantly white spaces growing up. So, I never felt like I belonged until I got to varsity and I realised, 'Oh my goodness, I actually do belong in a space"

Roxane described this new-found be(long)ing as a "culture shock" which helped her realise that she had "an identity crisis". Before attending university, Roxanne was often, particularly at school, "told to diminish [her] blackness" so that she could "[assimilate] into whiteness". This assimilation was essentially a rejection of her racial be(long)ing. As a result, this created a "barrier because [she] couldn't speak [her] own language" and continuously forced herself to engage in "code switching" so that she could 'belong' in/to 'white spaces'. However, Roxanne and her fellow participants of colour did not speak of instances where their *national* be(long)ing was disrupted by their race. Instead, like their white counterparts, it was violence which made these participants question whether their country also belonged to them (Toni, black):

> "[There] are times I feel as though I don't belong because I need to fight so hard just to make it home safe every day"

This result may be due to my own whiteness and how it shaped the individual interviews. Thus, being a white researcher could have made the participants of colour

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hesitant to verbalise their racial views possibly due to their social-desirability bias. Nonetheless, violence was central in all the participants' experiences of belonging in/to South Africa, having actively shaped their South African being, their 'South Africaness'. And it was perhaps this familiarity with a normalised state of potential (gratuitous) violence which made some white participants hesitant to defend their South African be(long)ing when it was rejected publicly.

Matilde (white) explained how it was difficult for her to defend her South African be(long)ing because of past and current racial tensions, and if she were to do so it would incite a *battle* which could not be won:

> "[With] all the comments that I get, because I'm white I feel like I can't say anything back […] because that will just be met with a battle that I can't win […] I will never win. And even if there were people [of colour] on my side being like, 'We accept you', if I now go back and say, 'I am South African, how dare you say that to me', they'll take the black side. The likelihood of them taking my side is slim"

Her experience of online hate comments, particularly those which named her a 'coloniser', exposed the possible hear of what makes white claims for an African be(long)ing 'unacceptable': when white individuals claim an African be(long)ing they echo previous colonial claims to Africa. Thus, these claims possibly re-invoke historical racial conflicts which perhaps have not yet been appropriately addressed and settled.

The residual trauma inflicted by the apartheid regime can be seen throughout South African society, both socially and physically. The physical structuring of SA under apartheid entailed the designation of 'white' and 'coloured' areas, most clearly through the implantation of the 'Group Areas Act of 1950' and 'Bantu Homelands Citizens Act of 1970' (South African History Online). With these Acts, the apartheid government literally created places where one belonged solely based on their race. Thus, with this racist (re)construction of physical space, 'black areas', where black individuals would be the vast majority, were places where white individuals would not belong, and vice versa. Therefore, this the racist government essentially built the

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'race-place' relationship into the very geography of SA. And while the apartheid regime has been officially abolished, its socio-geographic (re)structuring seemed to unconsciously linger within the white participants' narratives concerning safety, particularly in terms of their 'risk maps'.

5.3.1. Racialised risk

A 'risk map' is mental map which outlines areas where one should and should not go, and thus perhaps are also maps of belonging. During their interviews the participants were asked if there were in places in SA that they viewed as 'no go' for womxn, and their answers exposed an interesting paradox. Throughout the participants expressed an understanding that "everywhere [was] an unsafe place for women" because of the (gendered) violence which surrounds them (Naomi, white). However, when asked if there were specific places that they as women would not go, the participants rather identified places where they would "just have to be careful" in (Ella, black). The most commonly referred to of these places were SA's Central Business Districts (CBDs), townships, and nightclubs.

The participants' fraught experiences of being women in South African nightclubs all spoke of similar fear-filled encounters with entitled masculine behaviours that 'misunderstood' and ultimately reduced them to objects *for* masculinity. However, the participants' rationale for their risk map's inclusion of 'Town', Pretoria's CBD, and townships differed in terms of their race. Black participants who had included 'Town' in their risk maps did so mostly because of past experiences with crime, while some white participants primarily did so because of how they understood race in the South African context; an understanding which once (re)produced South African cities through the 'race-place' relationship and (re)conceptualised them as dangerous places "specifically for a white woman" because of the presence of (racialised) 'other', and thus dangerous, individuals (Julia, white).

Naomi (white) explained how it was her whiteness rather than her gender which made 'Town' a dangerous place, as it would have been indicative of her 'not-belonging':

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> "Int: […] are there places in South Africa where you feel you simply cannot go because you are a woman?
>
> Naomi: Yes. Like the CBD […] but that's the thing women do go to the CBD, I think that's more a thing of, 'If you're the only white woman in the CBD', like it's just not looking good for you in anyway. […] But I also think it's the same if it's any white dude in the CBD, you're also probably not, […] you don't blend in necessarily"

Not being able to 'blend in' led Naomi to perceive her whiteness as a potential target for crime, and thus caused her to avoid 'Town' the best she could. Hedy (white) also avoided 'black spaces', specifically 'Town' and the townships, not because she felt like she would 'stick out' due to her race, but rather because she viewed these places as "dangerous":

> "[A] lot [of] parts of South Africa are, 'No, you shouldn't go there it's dangerous', [where it is] predominantly African people, […] if it's just me, I wouldn't feel safe"

Hedy's connection between danger and 'black spaces' is perhaps best indicative of apartheid's continued, if unintentional, effect on the social structure of SA. This connection was possibly an unconscious perpetuation of the apartheid 'swart gevaar' philosophy which "skilfully [played] on [the] imaginary bogey" man with institutionalised racism to colour this man; in doing so, this (re)created image previously worked to "convince even the die-hard liberals that there [would be] something to fear in the event of the Black man assuming his rightful place at the helm of the South African ship" (Biko, 1978:11). However, the constant appointment of black male presidents since 1994 has continuously proven this fear false. These elections have not only proven this fear to be unfounded, but in doing so have also revealed how it has festered more deeply within South African society than just its political sphere.

As the term suggests, black is dangerous, and thus should be feared and avoided. Therefore, the very image of (gendered) violence would be that of the 'black man'.

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This continued image of the 'black man' was clearly present in Julia's (white) reasoning as to why she did not try to justify her South African be(long)ing when it was publicly rejected:

> "I have been told that I don't belong here, by um a, ah, black male. [...] I wasn't in any weird place, I wasn't in his house, I wasn't in his house, I was just at a shop. [...] A public space [...] it was just a normal day and I turned around and this guy, very aggressive [...] "You don't belong here." [...] [I] was just like, "Okay, sorry." And walked away because I know with someone like that [...] [rather] just leave it alone because they will take it further [and] also I don't know what that guy has in his pockets"

It was not the actual 'black male' which was a perpetuation of the apartheid curated 'black man' in Julia's experience, rather it was her generalised assumption that this man, and others like him, would violently 'take it further'.

Interestingly, this seemingly perpetuated image was not isolated to the white participants. Again, it was Roxane (black) who was the only participant of colour to speak of her experiences through a racial lens. Perhaps this was due to her extended 'not-belonging' in 'white spaces' which may have made her more aware or possibly more comfortable to discuss her opinions in terms of race. Roxane stated that being "raped [and/or] attacked" was her biggest fear "because men do have a sense of entitlement that actually baffles [and] scares [her]", but that it was "black men in particular" which she feared.

The fear of sexual assault, specially rape, was the most common fear expressed by the participants regardless of race. In fact, their experiences as South African *women* were very similar despite their differing race, age, education/occupation, and geographic location. Unfortunately, the core of their 'feminine similarity' were their experiences of being and/or fear of becoming the next victim of SA's pervasive culture of gendered violence.

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5.4. Understanding and gender: (Miss)understanding

For the participants, belonging did not only require an acceptance of their Identity embodiment and their subsequent performances by both broader society and their fellow group members, but also required an *accurate* understanding of these embodied performances. The participants' belonging(s) had to be understood by others as not only belonging in/to a particular group but also as an accurate representation of their groups' ethical and value systems which they had identified with (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011). Thus, in order to belong, one's acceptable be(long)ings must be correctly understood so to accurately convey its actual intentions and values (Toni, black):

> "[To] feel as though you belong, you have to walk into the space and feel […] like you do not have to overextend yourself to be understood; it's a space the moment you step into which your entire being is recognised, appreciated, valued, safeguarded […] you can completely let you guard down and be yourself"

Therefore, to belong meant that the participants' entire being(s) would be correctly understood so to allow them the space to 'just be' without the fear of what may occur if their actions, words, intentions, and/or desires were misunderstood. However, as feminine beings, as individual who belong in/to femininity, this 'understanding' appeared to be more complex and essentially out of their control.

Femininity is the conceptual, and arguably accepted public discursive, 'other' of masculinity. This comprehension of the feminine as the direct opposite of the masculine has continued, being (re)produced by the global Patriarchy, despite strides made in the advancement of womxn's rights and legislative advancements which aim for womxn to be defined and understood, both legally and socially, as part of *human*kind rather than complementary 'feminine beings'. Therefore, femininity continues to be (re)interpreted and (mis)understood through the male gaze; an interpretated understanding which is biased and ultimately incorrect. This flawed (re)interpretation of femininity has perpetuated a violent social system in which the freedoms and rights of feminine beings are limited primarily by fear (Campbell, 2005; Gqola, 2015 & 2021). A pervasive fear which is a result of how this system

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has allowed men to 'misunderstand', or rather '(mis)interpret' the actions, dress, words of femininity as being *for* them, as 'asking for it' (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Campbell, 2005; Connell, 2005; Sanger, 2008). This creates excuses and justifications for the entitled behaviour of masculinity to 'take what they want'. The participants' experiences of being in nightclubs, where they constantly feared being spiked and expected to be touched without consent, perhaps best exemplified this masculine 'misinterpretation by reinterpretation'.

The participants' inclusion of South African nightclubs in their risk maps was gleamed from the extensive caution with which they took when going to these places, because as Ella (black) explained:

> "[There is] not really any other place that I can think of that's, like, as dangerous as going out to the club"

In fact, for all the participants being in a nightclub appeared to immediately reduce their feminine beings to objects *for* masculine urges. Notably, Charlotte, Matilde, and Roxane's experiences in nightclubs overseas specified this dangerous masculinity to *South African* men.

Whilst living in South Korea Roxane (black) had gone out to a nightclub which was specifically for foreigners, and had this to say about South African men compared to other African men:

> "It wasn't entitled, [being hit on by African men], but not South African men. The one South African man that did hit on me, almost got physical. I was like, "They are the same literally everywhere in the world."
> It was actually disgusting. But it was like African men from like Ghana, Kenya – they were very respectful"

Charlotte and Matilde on the other hand had not encountered South African men whilst on a night out in their respective international contexts. Instead, they compared their experiences of being 'hit on' while overseas to their experiences in SA. Their comparisons would reveal how South African men were "a lot more forceful" and 'objectifying' in their advances (Charlotte, white).

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Charlotte explained how in South African clubs it would be common for men to "come and grab" women but in Australia this would be grounds for removal:

> "[In Australia] they are very conscious about women and […] women's rights […]. guys are actually quite scared to approach women […] because they can quite easily get into trouble. But I feel like in South Africa it is still a lot more forceful, you know, come and grab you and, you know, it's not that pleasant […] the clubs are also really strict here [in Australia] and the bouncers […] If you kiss someone in the club they'll kick you out […] If a bouncer sees that a guy is being aggressive or, you know, forceful towards a girl, out he goes. So, I think it's definitely a lot different"

Matilde's (white) experiences were very similar to Charlotte's in how non-South African men appeared to generally treat women less, or at least less explicitly, like objects. In Denmark, Matilde explained how the "Danes have a certain headspace where" it would be viewed "as a bit of an insult if [they] hit on a woman" because of how objectifying this 'hitting on' may be. As a result, Matilde "actually [had not] been hit on in [her] past few months" in Demark, something that was out of the ordinary in SA:

> "[Not] once have I felt objectified here, whereas in SA you feel objectified all the time. And like, I think there is a huge sense of entitlement as well. If you say 'No' in SA they get really angry or they don't know why […]. Whereas here [in Denmark], they are so much more respectful – 'No' is no, it's not 'Convince me'. So, it's very different. And there's many different forms of 'hitting on' in SA, from groping to objectifyingly complementing you"

In these compared experiences of being 'hit on' two masculine '(mis)interpretations' were exposed: one where the feminine body was perceived as being available for touching, and another where the feminine voice was perceived as one that seemingly did not mean what it had vocalised. The former of these '(mis)interpretations' was so commonplace for the participants that they had come to expect and perceive this behaviour as a 'normal' part of going out in SA (Roxane, black):

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> "I don't remember a time I was not touched inappropriately. […] It's even to a point where you get used to it"

The participants' normalisation of this entitled behaviour was in part a result of how frequently they had encountered it, but also seemed to be a kind of 'necessary evil'. They seemingly had to accept this blunt Patriarchal objectification and foreign 'belonging to' of their bodies so that they could 'just be' without feeling the burden of their feminine be(long)ing. This was a burden which also came through in the extensive precautions that the participants would take in an effort to try and avoid being, literally and figuratively, touched by this masculine entitlement.

Across all the interviews the participants mentioned how they had to limit themselves in how they dressed so to "not give people added reason" (Florynce, black) to assert their entitlement over 'their' feminine bodies (Gabrielle, white):

> "Don't wear short-shorts or a skirt, don't wear a dress because they will flip your dress up; if you wear short-shorts they are going to try and grab your ass and they'll think 'you're wanting it'"

Thus, in order for their feminine beings not to be 'misunderstood' by their dress, the participants' freedom to wear what they wanted was limited to clothing which was not tight nor revealing as this would supposedly mean that they were 'asking to be touched'; dresses and skirts were also 'limited' as these could be 'flipped up' and thus 'allow' for hands to slide up more easily.

Another common precaution to avoid this unintended 'asking' was to "always make sure [they went] with people [they trusted]" as these individuals would be "on the lookout for" the participants' wellbeing (Clara, black). Indira (Indian) explained how going with a group of trusted girlfriends would protect her from being taken advantaged of:

> "[If] you are a female, then always be with another friend, like don't be alone especially if you are like drunk or something, because I feel like guys take advantage of that"

Going with female friends to nightclubs was often articulated as a kind of 'teamwork', particularly when going to the bathroom, where this 'team' would

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mutually ensure their safety. For Ella (black), her 'team' of female friends have had to develop an 'extraction plan' to get away from "weird men" who were "very sexual and […] touchy":

> "My friends and I have a safe word. […] if there's like a guy who is like […] irritating one of my friends or something, we just use our safe word and pull each other away"

Interestingly, the company of the participants' male friends in nightclubs did not appear to form part in this 'teamwork', rather their presence alone seemed enough to convey the participants' disinterest (Matilde, white):

> "I've definitely been in situations where I've been alone and I've been approached by men, but if I'm with a man I haven't been approached"

Being perceived as already 'taken' by another male was one way which the participants could avoid being 'touched'. Naomi (white) considered this to be because men apparently "have a lot of respect for other men". This is perhaps a result of their shared understanding of masculinity which does not allow men to 'misinterpret' the situation in a manner which would enable them to 'take what they wanted'.

One last common 'nightclub precaution' identified by the participants exposed perhaps the most devious form of this entitled masculine behaviour: drink spiking. Universally, the participants emphatically spoke of how critical it was for them to protect their drink, by "making sure [their] glass is always covered", so that they would not be spiked (Gabrielle, white). The participants' practices of 'covering' their drinks meant that they, or someone they trusted, was watching their "drinks all the time" (Ella, black), and/or having their drinks actually be covered (Joni, white):

> "I never take my eyes off of my drink. Always. If I like have cider bottles I won't pour it into a glass, I'll keep it in the bottle, I'll have my finger over it; if I go dancing, I'll go dancing with my drink in my hand and I'll put my hand over it"

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Rosalind (white) explained how she actively chose to rather order ‘bottled drinks’ so that she could use the bottle cap to reseal her drink:

> “[Whenever] I go out what I usually do is I keep the bottle cap, I just twist my bottle closed again […] if it’s one of those mixes […] I will try to finish it as quickly as possible […] I wouldn’t want to have an open bottle”

However, when Hedy (white) stated that sometimes one could be spiked from a drink made at the bar because “they [had] put it in the ice” she exposed how hidden this behaviour could be. Therefore, it was perhaps best for womxn to “just buy […] pre-mixed bottles” (Rosalind, white). Critically, this apparently vital precaution to rather order bottled drinks not for the taste but for the safety which they could provide, illuminates how feminine beings have been further limited in their freedom to choose.

All these ‘nightclub precautions’ were employed by the participants with the intention that they, their feminine be(long)ings, would not somehow be ‘misunderstood’ and subsequently ‘cause’ the entitled behaviour of men. Therefore, the participants’ precautions illuminate how their femininity has burdened them with ‘misunderstandings’ which excuse the entitled behaviours of masculinity; it was *their* responsibility not to be ‘(mis)interpretated’ as asking to be used as an object for masculine desires and urges. Thus, as feminine beings it was the participants’ responsibility to limit their freedom of expression, particularly in terms of their clothing, so that they would not trigger their, seemingly inevitable, gendered victimhood.

The second masculine ‘misinterpretation by reinterpretation’ was experienced by the participants when their voices were twisted to convey something else entirely. In Matilde’s (white) comparison of getting ‘hit on’ she critically highlighted how the ‘No’ of feminine South Africans has seemingly either implied more than a simple, and permittable, rejection of an advance or has entirely not been listened to.

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Angela (black) illustrated the treacherous landscape that 'just saying no' could lead to in the South African context of the 'female fear factory' (Gqola, 2015 & 2021):

> "I feel safe because I feel like I put measures in place to make myself, but there are also other times where I don't feel safe, because it's like we don't know. Small things, like a guy could be hitting on you, and you ignoring him could be – if this guy is crazy, he could kill you, he could rape you. He could"

Thus, in order to be(long) safely in nightclubs the participants had to limit their freedom of speech. They had to curate a submissive 'No' which would not be '(mis)interpreted' as a rejection of masculinity's power over and entitlement to 'their' feminine bodies (Naomi, white):

> "[A] man buying you a drink and then being really annoying and not leaving you alone or even just a man annoying you and not leaving you alone, you have to still be kind, you have to still be polite or else it could literally be your life on the line"

Naomi's explanation of how she has had to force her feminine being to be polite, and ultimately submissive, so that it would not incur the wrath of masculinity's entitlement, illuminates how her 'right to appropriate', her right to use and ultimately live in, 'her' space was clouded in fear (Lefebvre, 1991; Fenster , 2005). Thus, it is not only that nightclubs seem to have reduced feminine beings to objects *for* masculinity, but that this reduction has been done in a violent manner which unequivocally instils fear for those who refuse to be reduced.

Furthermore, this fear was also imparted *onto* the participants' feminine beings, as Eleanor's (white) experience of her 'No' being '(mis)interpreted' revealed:

> "[People] think if you're dancing that if they stick their hand like up your skirt, down your shirt, wherever they want it's classified as 'fine'. […] And consensual because, 'We're dancing on the dance floor'. And someone your age at the club, did that then-
>
> Int: 'You're asking for it'?

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> Eleanor: Ya. That pisses me off.
>
> Int: Does it happen often?
>
> Eleanor: Yes. And then often the guys are like, "Ah you scared." And I'm like, "No, […] I'm just angry" […] I think they like the idea like you, that they can scare you"

Eleanor's clear disgust was met with a kind of masculine belittlement which sought to remind her of her 'natural' scared and submissive feminine be(long)ing (Gqola, 2015 & 2021). Her words were '(mis)interpretated' as coming from a place of fear rather than anger because that is how the Patriarchy has (re)produced femininity: a weak, emotional, fearful, and ultimately submissive being whose voice is unable to carry 'rational' truth, and is thus 'out of place' at the pulpits of socio-political/cultural power and influence.

5.4.1. The feminine mute switch

When asked about how they have experienced their feminine voices, the participants explained how despite having a voice, thanks to their relatively privileged context, it was one which had been systemically silenced (Angela, black):

> "We do have a voice, […] but that doesn't always mean that it's listened to […] it goes back to that protesting. You have to bang, and bang, and bang on the same doors […] scream and shout and […] be very vocal […] but they just ignore us. They choose when they want to listen"

Throughout the interviews the participants displayed an acute awareness of their privileged context when compared to the lives of womxn globally. Thus, the central reason as to why the participants felt as though they had a voice was because of their *unique* set of human rights; unique because as the continuity of human rights protests, like those in Iran, prove the rights of man still have not been extended to womankind (Moshtaghian et al, 2022). However, despite having a *constitutional* freedom to a, albeit limited, voice the participants explained how this did not guarantee that they would be *listened to*; as if a 'mute switch' had been systemically attached to their feminine beings (Jane, white):

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> "[We] have more of a voice than we ever have had, and in some instances it is respected. But when it comes to anything, I want to say political or anything that requires power, it's not"

Thus, this 'switch' seemed to be flipped whenever feminine beings and their voices were 'out of place', that is whenever they attempted to speak to and/or with power. Therefore, this 'muting' essentially limited, or even blocked, the participants from exercising their 'right to participate', consequently denying them an ability to fully belong to the 'we' of the South African people (Lefebvre, 1991; Fenster, 2005; Kruger, 2016).

The existence of this 'muting' exposes the strong influence which the Patriarchy continues to have on the socio-political structuring of SA's post 1994 'equal' society. Within this pervasive structure, feminine voices are muted because of how they have been devalued for their supposedly 'irrational' and 'weak' emotionality that apparently makes this a voice which cannot speak 'rational' and 'objective' truth (Roxane, black):

> "It is not seen as a rational voice. I get into a lot of debates with my family and they will tell me that I'm being irrational […] I'm a passionate person. I'm not irrational, […] just because I'm screaming out what I am saying doesn't mean I'm not saying the truth"

Through this experience Roxane illuminated how the Patriarchy's belittlement of emotions as irrational, weak, and subjective has essentially removed the possibility of these emotional narratives to be true. The Patriarchy has degraded emotions to such an extent that they cannot be viewed as a strength, even when a crisis may desperately need an emotional, 'feminine', perspective in order for change to occur (Indira, Indian):

> "I feel like we could have more of a say, and if we did, things wouldn't be this way, like there wouldn't be such a high crime rate for women especially. There's lots of crimes, and assaults and harassment. […] Like I feel like if we had more of a voice, things would be different"

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Indira's desire to have 'more of a voice' further highlights how feminine voices are seeming made 'empty' for their emotionality and how it is these 'muted/limited' voices which are needed for change. SA's pervasive culture of gendered violence is largely experienced by feminine beings, with it being suspected that one in four South African womxn will experience some form of abuse from their intimate partners (Gordon, 2015). Thus, would it not be their feminine voices which are best able to speak of the realities, the *truth*, of this crisis? Therefore, it is perhaps this severe '(mis)interpretation' of feminine voices as 'not-belonging' in/to the 'rational' socio-political sphere which has (re)produced SA as the 'female fear factory' (Gqola, 2015).

In flipping the mute switch on feminine voices, masculine politicians "don't actually see the issue" because they have excluded a critical perspective and understanding of the problem (Elizabeth, white). Consequently, excluding possible answers to how society ought to change. And it was precisely this lack of change which made some participants actually feel this systemic muting. Ella (black), frustratedly explained how feminine South Africans have continuously been pushed to vocalise their seemingly inevitable victimhood in hopes of inspiring societal change despite being aware of their reality, which has continuously proven that their exhausted pleas are simply mute to masculine ears:

> "[When] we speak about rape and gender-based violence it's like: "What are you guys doing? Are you hearing us when we're crying out? What are you guys doing? What's your way of like resolving this whole situation?" [...] Like shouldn't you guys be doing more? That's how I don't feel heard. Because why aren't you guys doing more? Why are we still having these problems?"

Therefore, the continuation of SA's state of GBV was understood by the participants as a dual 'flipping of the mute switch' on feminine voices, where one flip came from their masculine politicians and another from their country*men*. This 'social flip' was perhaps best exemplified by the tone-deaf masculine response of '#NotAllMen' to SA's '#AmINext?' movement.

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The ongoing plight of South African womxn's gendered (un)safety was pushed to the forefront of South African society with the '#AmINext' movement. During which South African womxn asked 'their' society whether it would be 'their' bodies which were to be the 'next' victim; a kind of seemingly hopeless question which had become "a natural thought" given their 'fear-filled' context (Matilde, white). Through this movement the voices of womxn were amplified making it difficult for masculine ears to ignore them. However, despite this amplification they were still not listened to (Angela, black):

> "[It has] been years of people complaining about this; it's been years of people saying women are not safe […] but it was like when guys joined it [they got] defensive […] the original response was not […] 'Let's take responsibility, [be] accountable […] protect women and create societies [where] women are valued. The immediate response was, "Not all men"

The apathetic response of '#NotAllMen' to the '#AmINext?' movement highlighted how little feminine voices were being listened to, as this response did more to shift the blame than address the actual issues being raised. All the participants who spoke about this tone-deaf response did so with a sense of frustration at their voices once again being 'misinterpreted'; these were calls for help, not blame (Angela, black):

> "People are telling you that they're struggling, that we're angry, we're suffering, we're tired. […] We need your help. And you're saying, "But I didn't do anything." No one said you did anything […] Whether you are involved in it or not, we still have a problem, and we need your help in stopping it; and you are just more focused on protecting your sense of dignity or pride and acting as if you are some sort of better man than actually doing something to help protect women, you are also part of the problem because you're complacent"

The '(mis)interpretation' of these feminine pleas lead to their muting as some men appeared to be so "worried about [their] own little reputation" that they chose not to listen, while others seemed to stick to their own (Angela, black):

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> "But when we call men out you want to defend them, you want to protect them because they are your 'boys', because of 'bro code"

These men who chose to remain silent to protect their 'bros' were the main source of the participants' frustration. For the participants, this group of 'passive men' that "just standby" even when they "know that their friends are doing very shady things" were perceived "just as guilty" as their predatory 'bros' (Naomi, white). Therefore, the guilty offence of these men was their passiveness, their compliance in the face of oppression, which had enabled the entitled masculine behaviour of their friends, family, collages, and acquaintances (Gabriella, white):

> "I don't agree with that hashtag that all men are trash because not all men are trash […] but I do agree with it because men can also put an effort in to stop it. I mean you can talk to your friends about it, you can talk to colleagues, acquaintances"

In not talking about 'it' these 'passive enablers' have perpetuated 'safe spaces' for Patriarchal thinking to roam free, and in doing so they have created 'echo chambers' for GBV (Toni, black):

> "Those super, super, heinous crimes, they don't start at the act […] it always starts with perceptions, stereotypes, and jokes. As you move up the hierarchy the behaviours get more extreme […] it starts with inciting language"

Toni's insightful understanding of 'inciting language' revealed that in order for actual change to occur in the South African 'female fear factory' (Gqola, 2015 & 2021), there must be a change in how masculinity speaks and thinks of, and ultimately '(mis)interprets', feminine beings. This is arguably also the case for more a 'positive' manifestation of masculinity in South African men; a kind of masculinity which aims to protect 'their' womxn.

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5.5. Familiarity and safety: Belonging (un)safely

Being born and raised in SA were critical factors for many, particularly white, participants in the construction and legitimisation of their sense of belonging. Growing up and subsequently being socialised to the South African context was what made them feel *familiar* with this space and *similar* to its people. Throughout their lives the participants had repeatedly interacted with this (violent) socio-geographic landscape and in doing so learnt how to comfortably and safely “get around alone” (Katherine, black) as they knew “where [they could] go and […] where [they would] feel safe” (Gabrielle, white). With this familiarity, the participants used their contextually bound knowledge of SA’s violent ‘semiotic universe’ to develop various safety precautions that could (re)construct ‘safe spaces’ in which they could ‘just be(long)’ (Antonsich, 2010). Thus, they developed a uniquely South African ability to *safely* ‘just be’ despite the (gendered) violence which characterised ‘their’ socio-geographic landscape.

When asked, the overwhelming majority of participants stated that they did not feel safe in SA except for when they were in their ‘safe spaces’. This led to the creation of their ‘risk maps’ which mapped out the places where they should not go and possibly did not belong on the basis of safety. While the places which the participants felt as though they could go were ones in which they felt safe. These ‘safe spaces’ included physical places, such as the participants’ homes, universities, and workplaces, which had been meticulously fortified with high walls, electric fences, security companies, biometric scanners, and other safety features. Thus, these ‘safe spaces’ were ones which had been made. The most common of these spaces were the participants fortified homes. In fact, sometimes it was *only* their homes where they felt safe (Ella, black):

> “Int: […] do you feel safe in South Africa?
>
> Ella: No, no. That’s a one-word answer: No.
>
> Int: […] Are there places where you do feel safe in South Africa?
>
> Ella: Yeah, home. That’s the only place”

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This was perhaps a result of how fortified their homes were, essentially making these 'shelters' from the violent outside South African reality (Hedy, white):

> "[We have] the gate [...] the electric fence [...] the dogs [...] a big wooden front door – a lock [...] burglar bars [...] alarm system [...] security companies"

Critically, the fortification of a South African home largely depends on one's economic position, as Angela (black) indicated:

> "[The] more you have some sort of financial backing the more you can kind of guarantee a level of safety [...] if I am able to live in a gated community, I'm a lot safer than if I'm living in an area where anyone can just come in at any time; or if I am able to live in an area with an electric fence, it's a lot safer"

In acknowledging a kind of "financial security" Angela exposed how safety was a commodity sold through real-estate. The participants who had moved houses explained that safety was the "number one thing" which they looked for (Ella, black). This made finding a home "stressful" for Rosalind (white) and her fiancé:

> "You have to choose an area that is good for your future. [...] We're looking at Centurion, the problem is [...] where the safety thing comes in. You don't know the area, you don't know how safe it is. The only time you'll actually know is if you stay there or ask people that stay there [...] that's concerning for me. That we need to find a place where we will still feel safe"

Rosalind further explained that their future home "[needed] to be in a complex" so that it would "have security twenty-four seven" because in SA she knew that they could not "have anything less". Thus, the participants' narratives of moving highlighted the critical role that safety played in their choice.

In emphasizing the significance of a 'safe location' when trying to find their new home, the participants once again subtly showcased their 'risk maps'. As previously stated, 'Town' and the townships were most commonly cited by the participants as 'no go' places. These were places which the participants would try their best to avoid

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and when they *had to* go, they took 'extra caution' to make themselves safe. And while the participants' rationale for perceiving 'Town' and the townships as 'no go places' differed in terms of race, it appeared to also differ in terms of the participants' familiarity with these places.

Participants who had avoided 'Town' and townships and viewed these as 'unsafe places' where crime was an inevitability for them, had mostly only ever driven through these places and thus had not really experienced them. For Elizabeth and Eleanor, it was their experiences of actually going into these 'unsafe spaces', for the purpose of conducting university work, which proved to them that these places were not as dangerous as they had assumed.

Elizabeth (white) explained that she was apprehensive about giving a presentation in Mamelodi, a South African township located in Pretoria, and felt "very scared driving there" but was ultimately "pleasantly surprised by the people" she encountered:

> "I didn't have a bad experience there, the people were actually very nice, all of them, but initially you go there and you're scared. […] I was definitely scared going there, but then I like, I was almost like pleasantly surprised by the people. […] I didn't think they would be that, I don't know.
>
> Int: Nice?
>
> Elizabeth: Nice, normal"

In actually going to this unfamiliar/unsafe place, Elizabeth learnt that her fear was unfounded. A fear which is perhaps another unconscious perpetuation of 'swart gevaar' when one considers that almost all inhabitants of South African townships are people of colour. Interestingly, this unconscious perpetuation possibly reveals another dimension to the apartheid 'swart gevaar', in which black individuals are not only 'dangerous' but also entirely othered, that is (re)produced as outside the 'norm'. As such, Elizabeth was seemingly shocked when the people of Mamelodi were found to be 'normal', and thus perhaps similar, to her.

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Similar to Elizabeth's experience, Eleanor's (white) work as a veterinarian in "rural communities" proved her apprehensions of going into this supposedly 'unsafe environment' false:

> "I was in a small little town […] very rural […] and you would think you would feel unsafe in an environment like that. […] You're driving on dirt roads at night. […] There's no infrastructure. […] And then the community just made me feel safe and valued"

Again, it was the people who had transformed a seemingly dangerous place into one where the participants could feel safe, and thus possibly like they belong. Interestingly, while it was Elizabeth and Eleanor's newfound familiarity with these 'black spaces' which proved their assumptions wrong, Toni and Jane's familiarity rather taught them how to be(long) in a manner which would keep them safe in these spaces.

Toni (black) explained that because she had the "time to learn" that 'Town' was "not as intimidating" as what people may assume, she felt "comfortable" there. For her this was a place which she had "visited often" because it was where she "would go to do [her] hair, [and] catch transport before [she] had a car". Thus, this period of time allowed her to "figure out the niche communities and just how to navigate the landscape" safely. Ultimately, Toni's familiarity led her to perceive 'Town' as "a harmless place", but only "during the day".

Jane was one of the few white participants who stated that they "[liked] driving into 'Town'". Her fondness of architecture meant that she "[loved] looking at the old buildings", which she sometimes "just [wanted] to photograph" but she knew that this was not something she could 'just do':

> "I can't drive there by myself, especially if I'm going there with my camera. Ya, I will either, one hundred percent, be robbed or mugged […] if I need to do that, I would go with a person and […] hide [my] camera"

Therefore, being familiar with this landscape enabled Toni and Jane to know how, and when, they could belong in what is perceived to be an 'unsafe space'. Their use

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of contextually bound knowledge to 'just be(long)' safely appeared to also extend to their bodies. Through their familiarity with SA's potentially violent semiotic universe, Toni and Jane, like their fellow participants, were able to 'fortify' *themselves* into 'safe spaces' through the use of various, extensive, and habitual safety precautions.

This familiarity imbued ability to 'just be(long)' safely within SA's culture of (gendered) violence was displayed amongst all the participants through their daily enaction of various safety precautions. These daily safety precautions often involved an armouring of their bodies with pepper-spray, tasers, and self-defence strategies (Matilde, white):

> "[If] I don't have pepper-spray, I'll put a key in between my fingers if I'm walking from A to B […] I'll also try to take precautions regarding my hair actually […] because I heard that if you have a ponytail it's easy for someone to grab you by. […] I will put my hair into a bun […] I always walk with a purpose, so that I look intimidating"

With this armouring also came a set of hyper-vigilant behavioural practices which appeared to create another side to the phrase 'arrive alive' (Rosalind, black):

> "I always drive with my windows closed, my car's always locked. Whenever I walk somewhere, I don't carry my phone in my hand, I put it in a bag. Always check that my car is locked, triple times because of the remote jamming […] Always be aware of your surroundings, so you don't walk with earphones in your ears, so you can hear if anything is going on. I think it's being aware of your surroundings; being aware if someone is following you, being aware if a car is behind you, being aware of who is around you – what are they doing, are they looking at you, what are their intentions"

Another one of the more common safety precautions involved the participants use of *familiar* men as 'bodyguards', especially when in the 'unsafe' areas of their 'risk maps'. The masculine presence of these men seemingly provided the participants

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with a sense of safety which enabled them to feel comfortable, and thus like they belonged. These men with whom the participants had relationships with were essentially 'safe spaces' because of the perceived protection that they could provide against other, *unfamiliar*, men.

Indira (Indian) and Eleanor (white) explained how their (step)fathers made their homes feel safer. Indira explained how there was a 'shift' in her sense of safety after her stepfather moved in:

> "I wouldn't say I felt unsafe because we were always only females before […] it definitely made a difference, like it felt a bit more safe having a male in the house […] it did play a role in making me feel more safe and more comfortable"

And Eleanor explained how her mother often felt "quite unsafe" as her father was not "home very often". Thus, for these two participants the presence of a (step)father in their homes helped foster a sense of safety. However, their stories of 'fatherly protection' in the home ought not to gloss over the reality of far too many womxn and children who have been taught to fear, primarily through violence, the presence of this 'protector'.

Nonetheless, for Katherine (black) and Gabrielle (white), it was the presence of their boyfriends which helped them regain a sense of safety in their homes directly after they had experienced a home invasion. Both these participants experienced trouble sleeping after the incident, but were aided by the presence of their boyfriends (Gabrielle):

> "[He] came and stayed at our house for a solid two weeks. Slept in my room with me […]
>
> Int: And you slept better knowing that he was there?
>
> Gabrielle: I mean relatively, but at the same time, 'What would he do if something were to happen'. So, it helped that he was there because I felt more safe with him there, but at the same time I know if something were to happen it's going to happen anyway"

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Despite feeling safer, Gabrielle knew that her boyfriend would be unable to stop another attack from happing; he might be able to protect her but he, like everyone else, is in fact powerless to prevent SA's culture of violence. Gabrielle's sense of safety and home has been irreparably damaged by this home invasion and will be discussed further in the following chapter.

The participants' interviews were littered with frustrated understandings that as women they could not go to some places alone, let alone anywhere at night. Thus, showcasing their understanding of how their freedom of movement had been limited to certain places and times of day because of SA's culture of (gendered) violence. The majority of participants named 'Town' as a place that would necessitate "a man for you to feel safe" (Katherine, black). As Matilde (white) highlighted whilst discussing her 'no go' places:

> "Sunnyside, or Town, no, no. Unless, I'm with my dad or a man, unfortunately. Also, dark alleyways are obviously a 'no go'
> […]
>
> Int: Are these 'no go' zones for women or 'no go' zones in general?
>
> Matilde: […] I think it's not safe for both, because you never know who they are going to hit, but it's even more unsafe for women because, it's kind of more guaranteed you might get hit if you're alone"

Matilde further explained how having a man with her gave her "peace of mind" because pervious situations had shown her that being a woman alone somehow had invited unfamiliar men into her space. Thus, simply having a man with her apparently was enough to deter the predator behaviour of other men. Naomi explained this as a result of a kind of respect that men share but do not extend to womxn:

> "I think men have a lot of respect for other men. […] like if you go somewhere and say to a guy, "No, leave me alone."
> They'll be like, "Oh, why must we leave you alone?"
> But if you're like, "No, I have a boyfriend."

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> They'll be like, "Okay, sick."
> […]
> It's like they respect this imaginary man that they don't even know exists more than the woman that's standing in front of them"

Thus, it appears that just a suspected relationship with another man was enough to protect womxn from other (unfamiliar) men. In fact, it was the participants' relationships to men which actually afford them this 'protector identity', as it was *only* Joni (white) who provided a situation where an unfamiliar man offered her protection.

Joni had been involved in a 'smash and grab'[7] and was left, understandably, shaken, and the only person that offered her help was a taxi driver:

> "I was kind of sitting alone with a taxi driver, that was the only person that was willing to help me. […] I was in such panic I took off after he smashed because the robot turned green and people were starting to hoot, but then in the middle of that road I just like stopped trying to figure out what just happened […] then people started to hoot me out of the way, then there was a taxi driver who just pulled up next to me, and he could see like how frantic I was. He did see what happened, and he said, "Just come to this garage here." And he drove with me all the way just to make sure I would be safe […] he offered his phone […] because I didn't have mine anymore – to call my mom and the police"

The taxi driver remained with her for the entire time that she waited for mother and the police to arrive. He told her "about his baby and his work" and not once did she "feel [in] danger" . However, this kind unfamiliar man was an outlier amongst the participants' narratives concerning men and safety. Thus, it stands that it was actually the participants' personal connections, their *familiarity* with these 'protectors', which had protected them and not some kind of 'benevolent'

[7] A crime where an assailant 'smashes' through a car's window so to 'grab' any valuables which may have been visible and prompted the attack.

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manifestation of masculinity. In fact, a closer examination of this protection exposes the misogyny which is obscured by its positive connotation. The apparent cornerstones of masculinity are providing and protecting, and thus within the Patriarchy, masculinity requires something to protect. Consequently, the complementary feminine being is (re)made to be that something; to be weak, vulnerable, submissive, and perhaps most critically 'wanted'. Therefore, these are beings/bodies which have been systemically (re)produced for masculinity to embody this 'natural' protector identity. Thus, it is not in the interest of masculinity to create a society *for* feminine bodies, where their belonging(s) would be autonomous and safe.

Despite their clear anger at the apparent requirement of a familiar male bodyguard, the participants viewed this precaution and all others as just another part of their normal lives as South African women. They had grown up and learnt how "to live [with] this constant fear around" them (Indira, Indian), and in doing so had developed habitual safety precautions (Eleanor, white):

> "I realised going to Iceland […] it's fine if you […] leave your bag on the chair if you go to the bathroom […] And it's weird because I wouldn't do that […] And not to walk with your phone […] whereas there [in Iceland] you can do that […]. I realised that that's all because of growing up here it's instinctual […] that stuff is just habit I'm not doing it because I'm scared all the time. It's just how it is. Whereas for other people […] like out of the country, it is a scary thing because they didn't grow up having to think about that"

In discussing how her safety precautions had follow her to Iceland, only to be made redundant by this new unfamiliar yet safe context, Eleanor touched on a very common experience that the participants shared whilst traveling internationally.

5.5.1. Unfamiliar safety

Participants who travelled internationally had interestingly gone to some of the world's safest countries, namely, Australia, Denmark, Dubai, Iceland, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia. During these travels the participants' "South African belonging

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increased" seemingly because of a *longing* that they experienced for their, familiar, place and people (Hedy, white).

During her time in South Korea Roxane (black) realised that she was "for a fact […] South African" and would not "want to live anywhere else"; that SA and her people would always be her 'home' regardless of where her travels would take her:

> "I am South African through and through.
>
> Int: Wouldn't want to be anywhere else, this is it.
>
> Roxane: No […] I want to go overseas for like maybe a few years, but I still see myself coming back home because the weather is the best, the food is the best, the people are the best"

In referring to SA as her 'home', Roxane revealed her place-identity and in doing so illuminated how SA was not just a place where she was born and brought up but rather a fundamental part of who she is. This referring to SA as 'home' was very common amongst the participants when discussing their travels, specifically when talking about their return (Toni, black):

> "I can't quite describe what it's like to come home after a long time away from the country […] it's this instant feeling of just you know, 'This is your home and this is where you belong, and there's nowhere else you'd rather be"

Thus, it was during this period of being away where the participants appeared to long for their place, people, and ultimately their home. It would also be during this 'longing', or rather '(be)longing', where the participants appeared to realise their South African be(long)ing more clearly (Matilde, white):

> "I think the first time I travelled that's when I started feeling my connection to South Africa a bit more. Being out of it and seeing different aspects […] seeing that I really felt […] South Africa is still my home"

Eleanor's (white) childhood struggles of trying to reconcile her race and her South *African* be(long)ing were seemingly put to rest after a trip to Iceland:

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> "I was like, "I'm technically not South African. […] Like, 'Oh actually I need to be Scottish and celebrate that, because I can't celebrate being South African, because of my skin colour'. And that was really tough, like as a kid, like I really struggled with that a lot […] And then it was literally very recently where I went to another country and suddenly I was like, 'Oh shit, I'm South African"

For Matilde and Eleanor, it was the differences between their home(land) and these unfamiliar European lands which made them notice their connection to SA, and ultimately reveal their 'place-identity' more clearly. Elizabeth (white) would in fact notice how this connection to her home(land) made her different:

> "I don't think I would have felt such a sense of belonging, besides the fact of like being different, like I know that I'm different compared to the other people that are like there overseas"

During her many international trips, where she represented SA in dancing competitions, Elizabeth noticed how she and her fellow South Africans were fundamentally different compared to other nationalities. In fact. this 'South African difference' is what had made studying in Australia difficult for Charlotte (white):

> "[South Africans] are friendly. And they're inviting. I feel like we're all just […] so open and […] beautiful people who just want to share our lives […] that's why it's been difficult here. It's been difficult here, because it's different people"

Other than being "so friendly" and 'open', the participants would also come to realise that South Africans were also more conscious of their safety compared to other nationalities (Elizabeth). Angela (black) and Charlotte (white) would actually be explicitly informed of this apparent unique 'South African safety consciousness' by other nationalities.

Angela's continued enaction of her various safety precautions whilst in Swaziland[8] had resulted in remarks from her cousin which teased Angela for her unnecessary

[8] Currently and more appropriately referred to as 'Eswatini' or the 'Kingdom of Eswatini'.

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precautions by referring to the fact that she was not in SA, and thus was safe in this unfamiliar context:

> "It's not something that I consciously think about […] but in Swaziland, my cousins always joke when I visit, "This is not South Africa, it's safe here." Because it's small things, like when we're in a car […] every robot I lock the door, like again and again, because I need to make sure it's locked. […] And [my cousin was] like, "It's safe here. It's not South Africa." She was joking, but that's the truth. […] When we're in Swaziland there are bags in the car and sometimes they even leave the car unlocked, and they don't even think about it. […] And I'm like, "But you have to lock the car, it's not safe." And they're like, "No, this is not South Africa. Those things don't happen here." They're like, "Ya, there is a bit of crime, but people are not like South Africans." […] And it hurts to hear that, but it's true. […] Like they always call me paranoid, and I'm like, "This is not paranoid, this is South Africa, this is being cautious." They're like, "Well, here that's called being paranoid." […] if someone keeps walking past a car and the doors are unlocked and the windows down, I'll keep looking, they're like, "*Angela, relax." Like they are always saying, "This is not South Africa"

Her cousins' most frequent remark that she was no longer in SA appeared to serve as a kind of rationale as to why Angela no longer needed to deploy her safety precautions and could 'relax' and not be 'paranoid' about her safety. However, the apparent unconscious nature of Angela's, and in fact all the participants', safety precautions and general sense of unsafety suggests that these are elements which are "ingrained" in the South African be(long)ing (Matilde, white).

Matilde often spoke of this unique way of being (South African) which made her 'stick out' in Denmark. In her discussions, Matilde would explain how she still felt "too South African" to walk home at night and take part in other activities which would not be possible in SA:

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> "I still have the S.A mindset of 'You do not do that' – don't walk down dark alleyways […] my cousin challenged me to sleep outside […] on the grass on the street. Like, "Let's just sleep outside and I'll show you it's safe."
> And I started crying because that's, that's pushing the line for me a little. That's crossing that big boundary there. […] No, it really is. And my family is luckily very accommodating with that. They know that I don't like walking at night […] they never expect me to walk with them at night, in the dark, because I'm not easy with that […] I can't do that […] I'm still South African"

Thus, despite the obvious safety of this unfamiliar context, communicated to her by the general lack of safety precautions, Matilde was still apprehensive about walking at night. This simple act was often perceived by the participants as something they were not "free enough" as women to do in SA (Florynce, black). Therefore, when they were able to walk at night this was an unsettling experience, and for Elizabeth (white) also where she would realise her 'South African safety consciousness':

> "[It] was like an eery looking place there that we walked by. But like all the Slovenian girls they just walked, that's why I realised like, 'Oh this is like normal', […] I would still look around my shoulders, like constantly aware because like I think that's what we're taught here"

In being exposed to this 'new normal' of walking at night in Slovenia, Elizabeth was able to notice how growing up in SA, subsequently becoming familiar with this particular (violent) socio-geographic landscape, and developing this place-identity had socialised her to be constantly aware of her safety.

Charlotte (white) was actually out right told how her 'safety consciousness' was an apparent indicator of her South African nationality. When expressing how it was "so weird" for her that Australians would go to bed without having locked all their doors, Charlotte was told that this 'weirdness' was an indication of her 'South Africanness':

> "I don't know how they [go to bed without locking their doors]. It's so weird. When people tell me this, I'm like 'Oh my goodness', and

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> then they just say, "Ag *Charlotte, you're just South African. That's how you can tell you're South African."

The 'weirdness' which Charlotte felt appeared to be prompted by the unfamiliar safety of the Australia context, and this was a feeling which Hedy (white) had felt too when she had visited Dubai:

> "Dubai, it's one of the safest places in the world. So, it was really weird for me because you could literally, leave your phone on the table and no one would take it […] at first it was very weird for me because I got there and […] they don't lock their door at night, they leave their garage door open […] when I was like in like an Uber or taxi I was still a bit on edge, you know, because coming from where I'm coming from it's a bit difficult to just [let it go]"

Thus, as it was "weird to not feel […] unsafe" in SA the participants had essentially grown up to be familiar with feeling unsafe (Ella, black). Their habitual safety precautions and underlying sense of unsafety was in fact "a [deeply] ingrained comfort zone" which would take "a while to step out of", regardless of how safe these unfamiliar contexts were (Matilde, white).

Therefore, the participants' international experiences had not only solidified their South African/place identity but had also exposed a troubling side to this 'South Africanness'. From the new redundancy of their 'instinctual' safety precautions to a revealed 'ingrained' familiarity with unsafety, these travels appeared to expose how foundational (un)safety was to the participants' South African belonging(s).

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5.6. Conclusion: Disrupted belonging(s)

The participants' narratives of belonging originally illustrated a sense of comfort which came from being amongst *their* people and within *their* place, and that was the result of feeling accepted, understood, and familiar/similar. However, as their interviews progressed and their narratives became more complex, the complications and burdens of their belonging(s) were exposed.

Each of the constructive affective components, 'Acceptance', 'Understanding', and 'Familiarity/Similarity', were burdened by an element of the participants' feminine South African beings. Acceptance was burdened by race. This affective component likely aided in the construction of the participants' sense of belonging as it provided support and protection for their embodied and performative be(long)ings, and ultimately is required for legitimisation of belonging. However, for white participants, the acceptance of their South African belonging(s) was burdened by their race. At an international level, an ignorant continuation of the 'race-place' relationship was to blame. This essentialist relationship appeared to disrupt the belonging of white South Africans by questioning the origins of their 'appropriate' belongings. While, at a national level it was SA's violent racially segregated history. This history of colonialism, imperialism, and of course apartheid etched a 'race-place' relationship into the very geography of SA by literally creating white and 'other' places. The racist injustices and lingering pain of this history appeared to problematise the claims of white participants for a national belonging in/to their home(land). These claims were met with both subtle and explicit unacceptance from their countrymen, which triggered an identity-belonging crisis in many of these white participants and incited questionable 'battles of belonging'. Thus, the disruptive burden of race for white participants' belonging in/to SA brings into question the appropriateness of their white claims for an African identity and the ethics involved in such claims which seemingly echo colonial sentiments.

Understanding was burdened by femininity. The participants' ability to 'just be(long)' as feminine individuals was consistently 'misunderstood' through the Patriarchy as existing for and belonging to masculinity. A '(mis)understanding' of femininity which has seemingly permitted unwanted touching and advances because

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of a supposed 'asking', underhanded schemes of spiking to 'just take' what masculinity is apparently entitled to, and a systemic muting for the 'valuelessness' of emotions in power/politics and truth. These apparent excusable 'misunderstandings' were a result of how femininity has been '(mis)interpreted' by the male gaze's reinterpretation of 'their' beings and bodies. In an effort to somehow prevent this masculine '(mis)interpretation by reinterpretation' and the entitled (violent) behaviours which it may cause, the participants were pushed, primarily by fear, to limit themselves with regards to their freedom(s). Their freedom of expression was limited by conservative dressing practices . Their freedom of choice was limited by their 'club safety precautions'. And their freedom of speech was limited by submissive and 'safe' rejections, and by powerful 'rational' masculine voices more capable of speaking truth to and/or with power. Thus, the participants' belonging in/to SA was burdened with a Patriarchal '(mis)understanding' of their femininity which limited their agency through fear and devalued them for their unique position as women. Therefore, the participants' duel belonging in/to SA and femininity appears to prevent three of the theoretically assumed feelings of belonging: value, agency, and safety.

Lastly, yet perhaps most poignantly, familiarity was burdened by (un)safety. Becoming familiar and being socialised in/to SA appeared to entail a life (re)constructed by (un)safety. The participants' daily lives as South Africans involved various habitual safety precautions which worked to fortify their beings/bodies and homes so to create 'safe spaces' for them to 'just be(long)'. The precautions were not just a part of their normal South African lives, but also formed an integral part of their Identity, namely their 'place identity', which was most clearly revealed to the participants when they travelled internationally. During these travels the participants contextual familiarity with SA, their 'South Africanness', was made unfamiliar, and thus rendered as 'not-belonging' by a new and unfamiliar context. In feeling this sudden 'non-belonging' the participants would feel a sense of *longing* for their place and people, which was most clearly articulated through their desires to go back to their home(land). However, it was also through this 'non-belonging' which the participants realised perhaps the darkest truth about their South African belonging(s): it is a state of being which has been (re)produced/socialised to

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be overtly conscious, perhaps even paranoid, about its own safety. Therefore, it is a belonging which is fundamentally constructed by a sense of (un)safety.

Thus, while theoretically the sense of belonging has been conceptualised to forester and/or require feelings of being valued, capable of agency, and safety the participants' feminine narratives of belonging in/to SA appear to problematise this. Instead, feelings of limited agency, valuelessness, and unsafety appeared to be constants in their feminine South African lives and thus in the construction of their sense of comfort-belonging. While the participants' feelings of limited agency in their ability to exercise their freedom(s) and systemic valuelessness of their 'untrue' emotional/feminine voices appeared to disrupt the participants sense of belonging, particularly with regards to Lefebvre's 'rights to the city', their familiarity with unsafety seemingly did not. The participants' apparently unique South African preoccupation with safety, clearly displayed through their various safety precautions, and apparent consequent familiarity with unsafety was a fundamental part of their lives. Therefore, rather than being disruptive, unsafety seemingly formed part of the participants' belonging(s) in/to SA.

With the participants' life 'lessons in (un)safety', the following chapter will thoroughly explain how this sense of unsafety appeared to be foundational to the (re)construction of the participants' feminine South African belonging(s). These 'lessons' will highlight how growing up and subsequently being socialised in/to a particular socio-geographic landscape fundamentally structures oneself and their belonging(s).

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6 Lessons in (un)safety

6.1. Introduction

Safety within the South African context seems to be a complicated phenomenon, and this may appear as obvious when one considers the country's consistent appearance in 'top ten' global rankings concerning (gendered) violence[9]. Thus, it was not surprising when the overwhelming majority of participants answered 'No' when asked if they felt safe in SA, their supposed (home)land. The few participants whose answers did not fit this outright denial, such as Angela's answer presented below, instead further illuminated the extent to which their South African upbringing/socialisation had enabled them to know *how* to be safe (Angela, black):

> "Int: So, do you feel safe in South Africa?
>
> Angela: I think I feel safe because I grew up here, so it feels […] like sometimes we tell ourselves, 'You don't put yourself in danger', so it feels like we take responsibility for our safety. It's like I feel safe because […] I put measures in place to make myself safe, but there are also other times where I don't feel safe, because it's like we don't know. […] I feel as safe as a South African can feel"

Angela's answer critically highlighted three core elements which were present throughout all the participants' narratives concerning safety. First, 'safety' was explained by the participants as an *ability* which they had gain through their South African childhoods and subsequent socialisation in/to this culture of (gendered) violence. Essentially, their familiarity with SA's violent socio-geographic landscape. This socialised ability/familiarity taught the participants how they could try to 'make themselves safe' within SA's dangerous context. The participants most clearly

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[9] The Crime Index ranked South Africa's crime rate as the third highest globally (World Population Review, 2023).
The Global Peace Index raked South Africa as the 20th worst country with regards to safety and security (Institute of Economics and Peace, 2023).
According to 'Statista', the top five most dangerous cities in Africa were all South African cities, namely Pretoria, Durban, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town, thus making South Africa the most dangerous African country (Galal, 2023).

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demonstrated this ability through their various safety precautions which they described as 'normal' daily practices that were actualised through enduring behavioural patterns and materialised in the actual construction of their homes. Engaging in this ability enabled the participants to achieve a *sense* of safety by making themselves, their bodies/beings, and their environment(s) as safe as possible given the apparent pervasiveness of South African crime. Second, as safety was a result of the participants' own ability it was thus understood as a *personal responsibility* to make oneself safe. In their discussions on safety, the participants consistently revealed how they have had to take responsibility for the (re)construction of their sense of safety or risk the dire consequences. While none of the participants explicitly stated a reason as to why they had been made to be responsible, a possible answer could be gleamed through their perceptions and encounters with the South African Police Service (SAPS) and their apparent feminine vulnerability (Dosekun, 2007; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Campbell, 2005; Connell, 2005). When discussing the SAPS, and by extension the entire criminal justice system, the participants' exhibited a total lack of faith in 'their' country's ability to make them safe, and thus exposed how they have seemingly been forced to shoulder this burden. As previously discussed, the participants experienced multiple instances where their femininity appeared to make them the target of and responsible for entitled masculine behaviours. The third element of the participants' 'safety narratives' revealed that this gendered safety burden did not only comprise of a seemingly misplaced gendered responsibility but also a looming sense of *uncertainty*. Even with extensive safety precautions it seemed as though the participants could never be certain of their safety because of the seemingly unpredictable nature of SA's pervasive culture of (gendered) violence. Consequently, the participants' possible victimhood was rather experienced as an inevitability. Therefore, this unpredictability essentially made it impossible for the participants to be certain of their actual safety despite their ability to foster a sense of safety through the implementation of their various safety precautions. Thus, through this third element a distinction between actual safety and the sense of safety ought to be made, with the latter referring to a kind of desired state of belonging; an ability to 'just be',

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that is to *live* without the constant fear of becoming the ‘next’ victim of SA’s culture of (gendered) violence.

These three elements together describe the possible feminine South African narrative of safety as an uncertain personal ability to make oneself ‘safe’ which is learnt through a socialisation in/to a particular socio-geographic landscape. An analysis of this socialisation revealed several ‘lessons in safety’ which the participants had been subjected to throughout their lives as South African women. Three central ‘teachers’ were identified: parental figures, South African news stories concerning GBV, and the participants’ own lived experiences of crime. These ‘lessons in safety’ had diligently instructed the participants, with gruesome warning like examples, on the ways in which they could try, and ultimately fail, to be safe. However, as these lessons were taught in and through the ‘female fear factory’, they were in fact gendered lessons in *unsafety* (Gqola, 2015 & 2021); the use of fear as the primary medium of instruction perverted these lessons into a form of fearmongering that terrified these women into limiting their freedom(s) so not to incur the, seemingly unpredictable thus inevitable, wrath of entitled masculine behaviour. Thus, these gendered ‘lessons’ unequivocally communicate to feminine beings that they are “always-vulnerable” bodies which simultaneously require and make redundant an extensive list of constant and diligent safety precautions (Campbell, 2005:121; Brooks, 2011; Gqola, 2015 & 2021). Therefore, these ‘lessons in (un)safety’ appeared to convey one central teaching, that safety cannot be a requirement for and/or by-product of a feminine belonging in/to South Africa, rather it is a burden which must be (re)negotiated so not to feel its constant weight.

The participants’ notion of ‘home’ as their ‘safe space’ where they could ‘just be’ away from the (gendered) violence of ‘their’ country appeared to also be (re)negotiated so to accommodate this burden of (un)safety. Through the participants’ experiences of home invasions and break-ins their sense of ‘home’ and ultimately belonging was disrupted by the intrusion of crime into their ‘safe/personal space’. The intruders’ presence seemed to remove the participants’ sense of familiarity and safety from their homes, thus rendering these places sites of ‘not-belonging’. However, these disruptions to their sense of ‘home’ appeared to only be temporary. After some time, during which the participants seemingly had to

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(re)negotiate and (re)construct this space in order for it to be safer and become familiar, their houses would once again become homes. Thus, revealing how it seemingly is possible for one to (re)create a sense of home despite the extreme (gendered) violence which appears to characterise this context.

In this analysis chapter, the participants' socialised/taught sense of (un)safety will be the main focus in an effort to showcase how central this sense was in the participants' everyday lives as South African women, and thus illuminate its apparent centrality within the (re)construction of their belonging(s). In other words, this chapter will thoroughly investigate the participants' 'lessons in (un)safety' so to explain how this sense of (un)safety had seemingly become an integral part of their feminine South African be(long)ings. The participants' 'lessons' will be discussed in the order of their deepening influence on the participants' sense of unsafety in terms of the 'lifecycle' of their safety precautions perceived effectiveness. Thus, the analysis of each 'lesson' will reveal how the participants' effective yet untested safety precautions were firstly instilled by their parents/guardians, only to have their effectiveness be questioned by the violence of 'cautionary tales' and then ultimately proven ineffective by their own personal experiences of violence. Firstly, the participants' childhoods of 'South African Parenting', which involved both direct instruction and indirect socialisation, will be analysed to show how their sense of unsafety was in part 'instilled' and subsequently normalised their 'inherited' safety precautions. In this analysis, the increasingly gendered nature of these lessons will become apparent and expose a supposed 'transferal of ownership' of the participants' bodies which occurred as they matured and became 'dangerous' bodies *for* masculinity. Secondly, the gendered lessons of publicised 'Cautionary Tales' concerning the real-life horror stories of the participants' fellow South African womxn will be analysed to highlight two core yet seemingly contradictory 'lessons' that the participants have learnt from this constant stream of violent 'cautionary tales'. The first of these lessons, the 'lesson in necessity' for their learnt/inherited safety precautions, will be examined for its use of gruesome (gendered) violence as a 'education tool' to teach/warn the participants of what very well could befall them if they failed in their ability to keep themselves safe. Through this examination, the participants warped thinking of crime in terms of 'it could have been worse' will be

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exposed and further examined for its ability to diminish the criminality of 'lesser' forms of sexual assault. The second and seemingly contradictory 'lesson in inevitability' will be discussed within the context of the 'cautionary tales' shared through the '#AmINext' movement. This discussion will focus on the effects of this apparent inevitability and the participants' apparent response to (re)negotiate their feminine be(long)ing so to enable themselves to live without feeling the burden of their (un)safety. Lastly, the participants' 'lessons in futility' taught to them by their experiences of crime will be discussed. The participants' experiences of sexual assaults and 'home crimes' will be the focus of this discussion as these crimes seemed to have had a direct effect on the participants' sense of comfort-belonging as they appeared to disrupt the familiarity and safety of these spaces. In this discussion the participants' interactions with the SAPS will be examined so to expose how this futile criminal justice system has resulted in a total lack of faith in its ability to make the participants feel safe.

The conclusion of this chapter will aim to answer the third research question: How do feminine narratives of belonging relate to their notion of home? An overview of the participants' various 'lessons in (un)safety' will highlight how they have been taught/socialised to perceive safety as this uncertain personal ability. In so doing, this overview will aim to firstly show how growing up with this perception of safety the participants seemingly have (re)negotiated and (re)constructed their feminine South African sense of belonging so to accommodate their unsafe gendered reality. And secondly, this apparent narrative of a (re)negotiated unsafe feminine sense of belonging will be used to explain how it is seemingly possible to (re)create a sense of home, this apparently ultimate 'safe space', within a socio-geographic landscape as violent as SA.

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6.2. South African parenting: Lessons in (un)safety

Through the participants' narratives of 'life as South African women', it was revealed that their sense of safety was a complicated feeling which required much, if unconscious, effort to (re)produce. To combat the pervasive and gratuitous violence seemingly characteristic of their everyday lives, the participants made use of various safety precautions to 'make themselves safe'. In taking precautions, such as carrying pepper spray, being hyper-vigilant, and avoiding some areas, the participants appeared to feel safe within 'their' dangerous socio-geographic landscape. Thus, safety was a sense which the participants had to constantly (re)create through the implementation of their various and extensive safety precautions. Importantly, the participants' perception of 'their' context as dangerous, particularly for their feminine bodies, was an awareness which they "grew up and realised" (Indira, Indian). Their realisation would partially be the result of their parents' 'lessons in (un)safety' which taught them, either directly through instruction or indirectly through repeated behavioural patterns, that SA is a dangerous place for them (Hedy, white):

> "[Growing] up, it was always like: South Africa, not safe. […] you just like grow up with that notion. […] That's something your parents always just put in you"

These 'direct lessons' concerned the literal instructions, or rather warnings, which the participants were given as children from their parents in an effort to keep them safe (Jane, white):

> "[We] were always taught – I mean when you're little, like you always sing these little songs to remind you of the emergency numbers […] and then that whole 'stranger danger' thing, like you are always taught it. And […] whenever [my family] would go to shops […] you're always taught [and] reminded […] that if we don't hold our parents' hands on the escalators or […] stay close to them, that we're going to be kidnapped. […] I think they kind of like scare you into like wanting to be like closer for your safety"

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Jane's childhood experience of a seemingly ordinary day shopping with her family was clearly filled with her parents' precautions to keep their family safe. This apparent 'parental precaution', or rather *responsibility*, to keep their children safe in and/or *from* SA would ultimately make some participants responsible for their own safety even when they were children (Angela, black):

> "My parents would travel a lot […]. And there'd be times when I'd be walking home or taking the bus home by myself, and I had to. I can't even be mad at my parents, they had to work, they didn't have the opportunity to fetch me from school […] But I had to make sure from school that I would get home by myself. I had my own keys from grade two. So, when I got home, I'd lock the door, make sure all the windows were closed, and only when they came back then I would open the windows"

Angela was instructed to lock herself up from the outside world until her parents returned home, and essentially repeated this 'locking up' later at night before going to bed. Thus, once again teaching their daughter how to be safe just more subtly through their actions. The same actions which Angela would later replicate in her daily 'adult' life. Therefore, enclosing the loop of this socialisation in (un)safety:

> "[Every] night I have to make sure that all the doors are locked, that all the windows are closed"

This process of 'locking up' one's home at night formed part of the participants' *normal* bedtime routine, which was often enacted without much thought while simultaneously requiring a level of necessity that was literally life or death (Naomi, white):

> "[Sometimes] at night I can't sleep. I have to go make sure my windows are closed because I'm so scared someone is going to climb through the windows and murder me. […] it becomes so routine almost that you're just like, 'This is just what I have to do not to get murdered in my sleep, it's fine"

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Thus, this nightly routine of locking doors, shutting security gates, arming the alarm, and double checking that the windows and everything else was 'locked up' was perceived as a 'normal' part of dangerous South African 'night life'. The extensiveness of this 'locking up' process appears to portray South Africans as prisoners in their own homes at night, especially when one accounts for the fact that all the participants knew that as women in SA they were not "free enough to walk around at night" as it was "just dangerous" for them to do so (Florynce, black). Therefore, underscoring this 'locking up' seems to be an understanding that at night the participants' right to appropriate (Lefebvre, 1991; Fenster, 2005) and freedom of movement were limited due to their feminine beings (Campbell, 2005).

The participants clearly carried their childhood lessons with them into their adult lives, as this is the procedural nature of socialisation. However, it was also the case that these lessons 'grew' with them by adapting to the new dangers which they would likely encounter. When the participants become South African motorists the notion of 'arriving alive' took on a whole new light that illuminated a collection of 'safe driving precautions' which they would have to adopt (Toni, black):

> "I brought a car this year and the very first thing my dad said to me was: "When you go home every day, make sure you use different routes because there might be someone watching you. […] Mapping out how you live your day-to-day life, they might know where you live […]
> it's just interesting as a woman you are constantly thinking about all the ways in which you have to protect yourself"

What ought to have been a celebratory moment for Toni and her family was instead reined in by her father so that he could teach his daughter about the deadly realities of feminine South African drivers. Thus, instilling a set of 'safe driving precautions' which went beyond actual driving. Therefore, the participants' notion of driving 'safely' held a double meaning. Whereby they were also required to keep their handbags in the boot, ensured that no valuables were visible from the outside, constantly keep and check that their doors were locked, and above all else to be hyper-vigilant (Rosalind, white):

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> "I always drive with my windows closed, my car's always locked. […] Always check that my car is locked, triple times because of the remote jamming that they have. Always aware of your surroundings, […] aware if a car is behind you, being aware of who is around you – what are they doing, are they looking at you, what are their intentions"

Their hyper-vigilance would intensify whenever at traffic lights, as many participants explained that this was here where they had to "look around [themselves] every two seconds" (Jane, white). This was also where two participants had experienced a 'smash and gab'. This crime and other very violent ones were what the participants' hyper-vigilance attempted to safeguard them against (Gabrielle, white):

> "[While] I'm like reversing I check that I'm not gonna be attacked by a human […] or while I'm driving actually as well; I mean anytime you're driving you're cautious, looking left and right making sure no one's going to mug you or hijack you"

Nonetheless, being hyper-vigilant was a central 'safe driving precaution' for the participants, and in fact it appeared to be more than a central precaution in their everyday lives. Being hyper-vigilant in one's daily life was expressed by the participants more as a general way of life rather than a conscious safety precaution (Ella, black):

> "[You] have to be very, very, very, aware as well. It's an unconscious thing even. […] you just do it. You're so used to it"

As previously discussed, constantly being vigilant of one's surroundings was perceived by the participants as more of an unconscious habit, a 'by-product' of growing up in SA, than a distressing outcome of their socialisation. In fact, this awareness of one's unsafety appeared to form a central part of the participants' South African belonging(s). Thus, it may appear disconcerting to non-South Africans that the participants had been consistently "warned about [SA's lack of safety] since [they] were young" (Rosalind, white), which consequently imbued them with an extensive set of 'normal' safety precautions. It is perhaps precisely this which has

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enabled the participants to construct their unique South African be(long)ing, and at times it was these precautions which enabled the participants to feel safe (Eleanor, white):

> "I like the idea of having an alarm as just an extra. Extra sense of safety like I have it where I live now, alone. And it gives you a little bit of comfort when you hear the like 'beep' when you turn it on"

However, despite being a normalised 'habit' this hyper-vigilance revealed a troubling truth about the lives of South African womxn. That due to their feminine be(long)ing, they cannot seemingly ever 'just be' (Naomi, white):

> "[As] you get older it becomes this entire thing where your parents are like, "But you can't do this and you can't do that. You need to be careful about this, you need to be careful about that. If you go there watch your drink."
> And it almost becomes this whole thing of like, can't I just exist? Like can't I just be here"

Naomi consistently spoke of her safety in terms of gender, and this was no different when discussing her parents' 'lesson in (un)safety'. In the example above, she not only exposed the maturing nature of these 'lessons' but also, and perhaps more critically, the Patriarchal undertones of her parents' teachings which made *her* responsible for preventing the entitled behaviours of masculinity.

As the participants got older and their bodies appeared to mature into 'desirable feminine objects' their parental 'lessons in (un)safety' also appeared to become increasing gendered. This was most explicitly experienced by Roxane (black) who was instructed by her father "to stay away from boys" after she received her first period, as this biological milestone was a moment that made her a "woman" and thus, perhaps consequently, 'available' for men. Florynce (black) shared a similar experience where her maturing body made her 'unsafe':

> "It's changed throughout my life. […] from grade six to seven it started changing, because now I started fearing for myself, because the boobs were developing and people were looking at me in a certain

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> way. […] I know it started then because that was when I started spending a lot of time at home, because I was like, 'I don't want to give people the wrong impression' […] doing the same things that I would like to be doing or the same things that I have been doing all my life; like going up a [pull-up bar]. Wearing a skirt and going up there as a kid was nothing hectic, but when my boobs started growing it was like, 'Oh no'. […] I need to start paying more attention to what I do – and I started wearing pants more than I did skirts because I didn't want to give the wrong impression. Just imagine a kid not thinking like a kid, but like an adult"

The maturation of the participants' bodies signalled to their parents and to themselves that their bodies were 'femininizing' and thus becoming increasingly vulnerable and unsafe; as if their bodies were becoming something more, or perhaps less, than just theirs (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Campbell, 2005; Connell, 2005). Therefore, the apparent increased masculine interest in the participants' feminine bodies suggests a subliminal 'transferal of ownership' of bodies that occurs through the Patriarchy. Whereby feminine bodies which once belonged to the inhabitant would be (re)produced as submissive 'wanted/asking' body-like objects *for* masculinity, and consequently require extensive and gender specific safety precautions. Thus, this apparent gendering in the participants' parental 'lessons' communicates an element of responsibility which is unfairly pushed onto the feminine being.

As previously discussed, the feminine body necessitates limits to be places over one's rights and freedoms so to not 'encourage' the supposedly natural urges of masculinity's sexual prowess (Campbell, 2005; Brooks, 2011; Gqola, 2015 & 2021). These 'limits'/safety precautions are essentially "self-disciplining" practices seemingly characteristic of 'doing' femininity (Campbell, 2005:120; Brooks, 2011; Gunby et al, 2020). Hence, this 'shift' also marks the instance where the participants' feminine submissiveness, and consequent persistent gendered vulnerability, is (re)produced. Therefore, through puberty not only do feminine bodies undergo a physical change but also a social one which appears to 'transfer' the belonging of 'their' bodies and renders them both responsible as well as 'dangerous'.

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The participants' parental 'lessons in (un)safety' may appear to be forms of parental fearmongering that had burdened (feminine) childhoods with an awareness of the (gendered) violence which they could expect and were responsible for safeguarding against. In effect being 'lessons' which are complicit in the (re)production of submissive femininity. However, in the context of the 'female fear factory' there arguably is no other choice but to bring one's, especially feminine, children up with a dosage of fear in an attempt to make them safe (Gqola, 2015 & 2021). Thus, "as a South African you have to" be taught to rightfully fear and take extensive precautions against your country*men* for the consequences are likely to be dire as this is the narrative which is continuously communicated through publicised 'cautionary tales' of 'just what happens' to feminine bodies entrapped in this 'factory'. (Angela, black).

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6.3. Cautionary tales: Lessons in inevitability

The participants often referred to stories, both public and personal, which relayed horrifying yet true tales of the lives of feminine South Africans in the context of the 'female fear factory' (Gqola, 2015 & 2021). These stories were often articulated as explanations for the participants' seemingly overt cautionary beings as they showcased the extreme GBV which too many feminine South Africans have been subjected to. Thus, these were stories which warned of the violent realities of the South African context and in doing so necessitated a varied and extensive set of safety precautions. However, the constant presence of these 'cautionary tales' appeared to communicate to the participants the inevitability of their gendered victimhood at the hands of SA's culture of (gendered) violence. Consequently, this simultaneously suggested that their necessary safety precautions were in fact futile.

The participants would encounter these 'cautionary tales' more frequently as they got older, perhaps because they had outgrown their parental safety lessons and/or their 'maturation' had denied them the naivete of their protected childhoods (Ella, black):

> "I think it starts early – yeah, I think it got worse over time. Now that we see all of these stories about all of these women like getting raped, getting kidnapped, being killed, ya it's an extreme sport to be a woman in South Africa"

Ella referred to broadcasted 'cautionary tales', which were told via the News media, when asked if she had always felt unsafe in SA. In referring to these publicised 'cautionary tales', Ella exposed the terrifying public lessons in gendered (un)safety which her and her fellow participants had been constantly subjected to throughout their lives. These publicised stories appeared to effect the participants greatly, possibly because their constant presence did not only function as daily reminders of the violence which surrounded them but also of the gratuitous and gendered nature of this violence (Katherine, black):

> "I wonder what would have happened if he had managed to get in. You know… especially with the stories you see on the news or see in

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> the newspapers with people being killed in their homes or raped, whatever, and it just freaks me out"

Katherine's exposure to these 'cautionary tales' had led her to downplay the seriousness of her attempted home invasion. She had learnt from the multitude of extremely violent stories that her experience very well could have been like those of her fellow South Africans; her experience *could have been worse*. So, in a context where "the news [is] always like: rape, rape, rape, rape" (Hedy, white) a constant cautionary lesson is perpetuated, where the feminine student learns to perceive all South African crime with a violent gendered lens through which a kind of 'could have been worse' thinking is (re)produced. Therefore, for feminine South African beings any crime could become worse because of 'their' bodies; feminine bodies which are constantly '(mis)interpreted' as always asking for 'it' (Campbell, 2005; Dosekun, 2007; Sanger, 2008; Gqola, 2015 & 2021). Thus, this 'could have been worse' thinking revealed a kind of continuum along which SA's culture of (gendered) violence was perceived and consequently weighed against the 'worst case scenario'.

The effects of this continuum were perhaps most clearly illuminated by Naomi (white) when she spoke about her experiences of crime:

> "I was [out] and there were so many people I was trying to get past and this guy like put his hands like on my like bum. […] And it sounds so stupid when someone's like, "Oh has anything like bad happened to you?"
> You're like, 'Oh not that bad', but like it is that bad, like just because you can get violently raped and murdered doesn't mean that people like forcing themselves on you isn't bad, because it is"

Even though Naomi expressed distain for her 'could have been worse' thinking, she nonetheless still showcased how it had functioned in her perception of GBV. Thus, while the participants did not "want to think in the worst-case scenario" they had been socialised to by a constant stream of violent 'cautionary tales' which have continuously warned them about exactly how their victimisation 'could have been worse' (Angela, black). Therefore, in being socialised to perceive entitled masculine

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behaviour within a continuum of 'could have been worse' less obvious, or rather conventionally understood, forms of GBV were not given the same condemnation as their 'worse' forms. Consequently, this unnecessary scaling of GBV created 'better', and thus acceptable, forms of entitled masculine behaviour which have been subsequently normalised by their unchecked re-enaction.

However, this constant broadcasting of violent 'cautionary tales' appeared to not only diminished the criminality of 'lesser' forms of GBV in showcasing how they 'could be worse', but also their ability to shock and ultimately inspire fear (Florynce, black):

> "But you know what the sad part is? As much as that was a national story, there were many stories like that from like where I grew up [...] We grew up with it. Unfortunately, but we grew up with them [...] Uyinene's story was tragic, but it wasn't the first one"

Through the sheer amount of seemingly daily 'cautionary tales', even extremely violent stories, like Uyinene's[10], seem to have lost their 'shock value' because they have become normalised by SA's pervasive culture of violence. Thus, these 'normal' stories and possibly even their victims have essentially been reduced to "just [another] statistic" (Hedy, white). However, there had to be more to these stories than just their lesson of likely gratuitous gendered violence, otherwise they would have not stirred South African women to voice such a seemingly doomed question: Am I next?

6.3.1. Stories of being 'next'

Through the '#AmINext?' movement many South African womxn came forward and shared their stories, both at a distance through social media and intimately during vigils held for Uyinene. As Florynce (black) and Angela (black) indicated, Uyinene's

[10] The story of Uyinene is one which gripped SA tightly towards the end of 2019. She was a 1st year university student from the Eastern Cape who went missing on an errand to the Post Office. News of her possible abduction spread like wildfire across social media and sparked many, particularly university student led, campaigns to find her (Friedman, 2019). But her burnt body would be found in a ditch in Khayelitsha (Koen, 2019). An investigation would reveal that she had been raped and bludgeoned to death in the Post office by a member of the South African Postal Service (Etheridge, 2019).

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story was not the first nor the last to tell of SA's extreme gendered violence, but it certainly appeared to be the 'last straw' to break some of the silence surrounding GBV.

Despite their systemic muteness, South African womxn appeared to be more determined than ever to have their stories be listened to. On social media there were Twitter threads and Instagram pages[11] dedicated to amplifying these voices so to ensure that their stories were not reduced to 'just another statistic' (Angela, black):

> "Uyinene's story was like heart breaking, it was sad, but it felt like there was so many stories coming out, and then there was that page that was started […] It was like 'Women of SA'. […] they were sharing, literally ten, twenty stories a day of women getting rapped, of women getting murdered, of women getting mutilated. So, it was becoming a lot more real, […] every day you were seeing another face of a different age, a different race, a different community of women getting hurt, of women getting killed; women's lives getting stripped away from them, their dignity [too]"

In publicising so many stories and their gruesome facts, these social media pages were able to not only expose the absolute violence which feminine bodies have fallen victim to, but also the pervasiveness of this feminine victimhood within SA's culture of violence. Thus, these pages were able to teach the participants another lesson in their (un)safety, that SA's culture of violence does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, and/or socio-economic status. Therefore, *all* South African feminine bodies could be 'next'.

The diversity of this apparently all-encompassing 'next' victim pool deeply troubled Toni (black), as it suggested to her that all her safety precautions were in fact futile:

> "I attended a few vigils. […] I heard so many perspectives, it wasn't just young, black women who were describing how unsafe they felt. […] it just really showed me how as a country this system of violence

[11] 'Women For Change' Instagram page.

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> was already embedded and that it was so random. […] I heard stories from people saying that they got assaulted while they were at home, for some people it was when they were with their boyfriends, some people it was their uncles, some people were just taking a walk, they were at a party, they were at school, they were at church, it was insane. […] I didn't feel empowered. I felt, ah, powerless. […] It was very debilitating for me to see all of these different women at different ages, at different walks of life, studying different degrees, from different backgrounds, and all of them similarly having the same story; that one day they were as they were, someone violated them, and then their life changed […] as more and more people came I think I just felt really hopeless at the fact that there really didn't seem to be a formula. […] when I was younger my mom always used to tell me, you know, 'Don't go there, and do this, and wear this'. And as I was listening to all these different stories, I just realised that, truly and honestly speaking, as a woman in South Africa there was nothing that I could actually do to protect myself from it happening"

In discussing her heavy experience of attending one of many vigils, Toni was critically able to illuminate the possible root of the apparent hopelessness of the '#AmINext?' movement: feminine South Africans' victimhood was unpredictable and thus inevitable. As there appeared to be no 'formula' to predict the entitled behaviours of masculinity, it follows that there cannot be any precautions, regardless of their quantity, which could entirely prevent womxn from falling victim to GBV in SA. And as this randomness is coupled with the widespread pervasiveness of SA's culture of gendered violence, the unpredictable victimhood of South African womxn appears to become inevitable. Therefore, the randomness and its subsequent unpredictability of South African GBV not only suggested to the participants that their extensive safety precautions are in fact futile, but also made their gendered victimhood seem like an inevitability.

The manner in which the participants spoke about GBV and being South African women in general not only hinted towards this sense of inevitable victimhood but also displayed a chilling acceptance of this survival 'lifestyle' (Ella, black):

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> "I have this thing where I say: "If it's my day, it's my day."
> So, I guess in a way 'am I next?', yes it does feel that way. […] I always say that, like, 'If it's my day, it's my day' […] but I'll plan to be safe, that's all I can do. […] I'll do what I can to survive"

In her characterisation of her 'way of life', this enaction of safety precautions despite a seemingly inevitable victimhood, as rather a 'way of survival' Ella exposed a kind of 'life or death' existence. It was precisely through this perceived extreme existence which the participants' 'could have been worse' thinking towards crime was (re)produced. Therefore, due to their context the participants' have had to think about their feminine existence in extreme terms. Firstly, as this is how they have been socialised to, with a constant stream of 'cautionary tales' which both necessitated and made abortive an extensive list of safety precautions (Campbell, 2005; Brooks, 2011). And perhaps secondly, because they had to in order to normalise and consequently accept the violent reality of their unsafe feminine South African belonging(s) without feeling the burden of this seemingly doomed 'survival' (Elizabeth, white):

> "I mean there are things you can do to be careful, but at the end of the day if something is going to happen it's going to happen, and I don't think you should become paranoid […] But you can take precautions […] but I also don't think we should have to live in fear and we should be completely like traumatised by other people's experiences. Like it's good to be careful and you should be careful, and I probably should be a little bit more careful, but I don't think we should stop that from living our lives"

Elizabeth's acceptance of her 'inevitable victimhood' appeared to enable her to live in spite of the apparent 'way of survival' which seemed characteristic of her feminine South African be(long)ing. Toni (black) appeared to also speak of this acceptance when she explained how if she wanted to express herself through her dress, essentially exercising her agency and putting her freedom on display, there were a series of 'negotiations' that she had to have with herself:

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> "[Wear] whatever you like, but you also need to make peace with the fact that if you step out into the world with, you know, a miniskirt on, men are going to catcall you and they are going to try and make you feel unsafe, and it's just something you need to negotiate […] every time I leave the house there are just certain negotiations I need to make to myself – I need to say to myself that, you know, I am wearing what I like, but I have to make peace with the fact that a man probably will say something"

Thus, in accepting the possibility that they might become the 'next' victim of SA's culture of (gendered) violence, these participants were seemingly able to live without constantly feeling the fear, the burden, of their unsafe feminine South African beings. Interestingly, a similar kind of (re)negotiation with regards to their belonging seemed to occur after the participants suggested inevitable victimhood came to fruition.

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6.4. Experiences of crime: Lessons in futility

All the participants had either personally and/or knew people who had been victimised by SA's culture of violence. These victimisations, even those by proxy, were 'lessons in futility'. It proved the actual ineffectiveness of the participants' various safety precautions because despite these 'very best efforts' the participants still failed to prevent their inevitable victimhood, as Indira (Indian) explained:

> "[No] matter how safe you make things or how well reinforced your house is with security measures, or how much you make sure your bag is next you and your phone's in your pocket, put away all the time, no matter how many of these safety precautions you put into place, you are still open to being a victim"

Despite crime's 'lessons in futility' the participants would often increase and intensify their already extensive list of safety precautions after being victimised. However, they would do so with a looming sense that because it happened once it could *definitely* happen again. Therefore, these 'lessons' had proven not only the futility of the participants' safety precautions but had also proven the inevitability of their victimhood. Thus, where 'cautionary tales' had given the participants 'lessons in (un)safety' which *suggested* this futility and inevitability, their experiences of crime would make these suggestions definite.

The most common crime which the participants had experienced was actually sexual assault. However, as perhaps a result of their 'could have been worse' thinking, none of the participants explicitly perceived the non-consensual and inappropriate touching of entitled masculine behaviour as a crime. Thus, when asked whether they had experienced crime the participants' would most often respond with experiences of being robbed. Therefore, the (re)construction and subsequent normalisation of this 'better' form of sexual assault appears to have 'decriminalised' it. Naomi's (white) experience of being robbed perhaps best exemplifies this subliminal 'decriminalisation' of sexual assault:

> "[It is] weird because like I've had my phone stolen once and I literally still get so upset about it, and it's actually just a weird

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> situation because it links to this whole thing of being a woman. I was [out] and there were so many people I was trying to get past and this guy like put his hands like on my like bum […] and he stole my phone, I was so upset. But […] I wasn't really upset about him putting his hands one me, because like that happens when you go to these crowed places all the time. It shouldn't, but it does"

In Naomi's response to being assault, she demonstrates a warped perception of gendered crime in which she appears to 'only' be a victim of theft. As discussed in the previous chapter, being touched without their consent by South African men was so commonplace that the participants had not only come to expect but seemingly had also accepted this entitled masculine behaviour, particularly whenever they stepped into nightclubs. The 'necessary evil' of the participants' apparent acceptance was another way they had (re)negotiated the feminine burden of their South African be(long)ing. Thus, in accepting the inevitability of being touched, the participants seemingly were able to be in nightclubs without constantly fearing this assault. However, this 'accepted expectation' did not mean that the participants had given up in their attempts to try make themselves feel safe. All the participants continued to take extensive safety precautions with them into nightclubs regarding their dress, company, drinks, and speech, even when these precautions had failed in preventing masculinity's entitlement to 'their' feminine bodies/beings. In being touched, they had learnt that they would "be touched inappropriately whether [they] wear longs, or a suit" (Florynce, black), thus proving the futility of their conservative dress precautions; and in being spiked, or knowing friends who had been, the participants were taught a very terrifying lesson in futility.

The participants' experiences of being spiked all described a sudden feeling of being 'out of control' and not "[knowing] what [was] going on" (Gabrielle, white). Essentially, in consuming a spiked drink these participants "got drunk […] really quickly" (Eleanor, white), and consequently this appeared to render them 'available' for entitled "men [to] have sex with [them], because ultimately that's what guys want" (Florynce, black). Jane's (white) experience of being spiked particularly highlighted this 'rendered availability':

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> "[At] one point, I really just felt ill, so I went to the bathroom and I locked the door. And then I just went like completely limp in the bathroom, and I could not get up at a point. […] the whole night's pretty blurry and there are some sections I completely blank on. So, I think if someone was trying to do what they wanted to do they probably would have been able to, as sad as that sounds"

Thus, when the participants had been spiked, they were subjected to a terrifying 'lesson in futility' which would leave them incapable and, worse, unaware of what happened to 'their' bodies. When asked what they feared the most living in SA, the overwhelming majority of the participants stated that their "biggest fear [was] being raped" (Clara, black). However, their underlying fear of sexual assault as a result of being 'rendered available' from spiking spoke to a heart-breaking realisation. That what the participants were actually fearing was perhaps a 'not knowing' regarding what had happened to 'their' bodies. This possible fear of 'not knowing' would essentially introduce a sense of unfamiliarity into the participants' bodies and thus further render 'their' bodies as sites of 'not-belonging'.

Interestingly, this introduced sense of unfamiliarity was expressed by the participants through their experiences of crimes which involved their homes, namely home invasions and break-ins. These crimes would leave the participants feeling "very violated" and "out of place" in their own homes seemingly as a result of them knowing that an unwelcomed and unfamiliar individual had invaded *their* space (Julia, white). The emotional aftermath corrupted the participants' sense of safety which was strongly attached to their notion of home; a space that was once safe and theirs. Consequently, this 'stolen' sense of safety appeared to complicate the participants' ability to 'just be(long)' within their homes as these 'lessons' had seemingly taught them to bring safety precautions *into* their homes.

6.4.1. Stolen safe place(s)'

The participants' homes were heavily protected spaces where there was "electric fencing everywhere" with "beams […] security gates [and] alarms", and many lived in estates or "gated [communities]" that were patrolled by "security [guards]" (Jane, white). It was in the confines of these protected spaces where the participants were

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able to feel safe despite the violence of SA's socio-geographic landscape (Rosalind, white):

> "[You] don't always feel safe [in SA] but when you talk about my home then I feel safe"

Thus, for many of the participants home was their one actual 'safe space' where they could 'just be(long)' without the burdens of their feminine South African belonging(s). Therefore, this was a space where the participants were seemingly safe from the (gendered) violences of SA and perhaps consequently were also "allowed to almost not be under the eye of society" (Naomi, white); meaning they were "free to be [themselves]" because rejections and misunderstandings would be unlikely in this familiar space (Katherine, black). Home was also commonly described as the participants' "personal space" (Charlotte, white). Critically, this sense of home as being personal, as belonging to oneself, is perhaps the intimate sense of belonging which is (theoretically) tied to one's notion of home. Thus, the participants' notion of home appeared involve a sense of space that was both safe and personal. However, when this space was, inevitably, 'touched' by crime the participants' homes seemed to temporarily revert to 'houses', unsafe and unfamiliar/impersonal spaces. Therefore, these crimes which 'attacked' the participants' homes appeared to also 'attack' and consequently unsettle their sense of comfort-belonging.

Several participants had experienced break-ins and attempted home invasions, with Gabrielle (white) being the only participant who had fallen victim to an actual home invasion. Through their experiences of 'home crimes' these participants were given 'lessons' in which the 'safe/personal space' of their homes was violated and essentially stolen by unwelcomed intruders.

Julia (white) and Jane (white) had experienced multiple break-ins which left them feeling "very violated" almost as if the intruder(s) had "touched [them] by being in" their homes (Julia). Jane explained this feeling of being 'touched' in how her things had "this dirty feeling", like they had "been contaminated in a way", because of the intruder(s) who had rummaged through her bedroom, the epitome of her personal space:

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> "[They] broke in from the main gate, they broke the security door and the front door. Smashed the front door. And stole a bunch of things from the lounge and they, um, rummaged through our rooms. […] that was a horrible feeling because that's really your personal place. And I had someone go through my box of underwear […] they had gone through my cupboard with my clothing"

Jane further explained that she felt a sense of emptiness that was akin to "a loss" which went beyond the material loss. An unwelcomed "stranger [had] come in" her home and violated her "stuff and [her] space", her *personal* space, and as a result had stolen more than just her physical belongings. This intruder who "tainted" Jane's safe/personal space had seemingly also stolen her sense of home/belonging. This feeling for Jane never "really [went] away but […] after a few weeks" and adding "more locks and fencing" she realised that she was "fine", meaning that her house started feeling safe, like it was her safe personal space, essentially like it was a 'home', again. However, for the participants who had experienced (attempted) home invasions this 'return' of home/belonging appeared to be more complicated.

Eleanor, Charlotte, and Katherine had all experienced an attempted home invasion. Eleanor's (white) experience was seemingly the most 'relaxed' as she even hesitated in speaking of her experience in the context of a crime due to its lack of severity/violence:

> "Int: […] have you ever experienced crime, or not really?
>
> Eleanor: No […] I haven't like experienced something […] I mean we had a break-in at our house"

In Eleanor's view if one is able to "get out of any situation unharmed […] it's fine", this is likely a result of her multiple 'lessons in (un)safety' which have taught her to think of crime in terms of how it 'could have been worse'. However, not everyone in Eleanor's experience was able 'get out' unharmed:

> "[It] effected my sister greatly. My sister has severe anxiety from it and she's really scared and […] feels really unsafe"

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The intruder(s) had "reached in" through Eleanor's sister's bedroom window and "took [her] laptops" off "her desk" while she was sleep. Thus, they had gone into her safe/personal space and in doing so appeared to have also 'stolen' the safety of this space. Therefore, the central difference in Eleanor and her sister's experience of the same crime seemingly was a result of the intruder(s) proximity to *their* (safe) space.

Charlotte's (white) experience was very similar to Eleanor's sister's. She had also been asleep when "there had been people attempting to break-in" to the "study room [which was] right next to her" bedroom. However, Charlotte explained that she "was extremely lucky [that her] dog woke [her] up" before the intruder(s) could make it all the way in. Nonetheless, this attempt seemingly had also 'stolen' Charlotte's sense of safe/personal space attached to her home:

> "[Home] is your safe space, it's the place where you think you can be yourself and you can relax and not have to be on guard all the time […] I felt like my personal space had been invaded. I felt like I had been violated […] It's scary, because now you know […] for the rest of the time you're living there you're going to have to be worrying about your safety constantly in a place that is yours, the one place that is yours is not like yours anymore"

Charlotte's experience is particularly illuminating for three reasons. First, her description of 'home' as a safe/personal space protected from the (gendered) violences of SA does well to encapsulate her fellow participants' descriptions of 'home'. Second, her experience of crime highlights that these 'lessons' not only prove the futility of safety precautions but also the inevitability of one's victimhood. Third, and perhaps most critical, Charlotte's reaction to this 'lesson', specifically its aspect of 'proven inevitability', reveals how one appears to be fundamentally changed in the way that they are able to 'just be(long)' within their safe/personal space after the safety of their home is 'stolen'.

This apparent change was clearly displayed by Katherine (black) in how her behaviour at home appeared to become increasingly cautious, almost reminiscent of her public (South African) safety consciousness, after an intruder attempted to break-in to her flat. Katherine had also been asleep when she "woke up from the noise" of

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the intruder "fighting with the door". At first, she had not realised what was happening, she "didn't scream [or] yell" instead Katherine calmly asked the intruder what he was doing. This seemingly had caught the intruder off guard and caused him to run away. "It was only after [she had] called the police […] that [she] realised what" had happened. In the aftermath of this experience which proved the futility of her Trellidor and the inevitability of her victimhood, Katherine's demeanour in her own home appeared to be forever changed:

> "[The] thing is now, if I hear a Trellidor move or the door moving I get like scared. I wake up from the slightest sound […] and I wake up now because I'm scared, [the] time I woke up [during the break-in] I was not scared, 'I'm hearing sounds, let me check it out'. Now, you're like, *Gasps, 'It could be someone'. […] And I had to think about, 'Okay if this happens again, what will I-'. And one thought that came into my head was like, 'Okay there is a big ass like knife in the kitchen' […] You start to think about, 'Okay I need to do this, I would do that to protect myself'. But also, what if that doesn't work and what if the person has a gun?"

After this close call, the kind of 'normal' hyper vigilance concerning safety which Katherine had grown up and lived/survived with whenever in SA's public spaces appeared to seep into the safe/personal space of her home. Thus, in having the safety of her home 'stolen' Katherine appeared to behave as if her home was no longer *her* safe space. Therefore, this 'lesson' complicated Katherine's ability to 'just be(long)' and in doing so may have disrupted her sense of comfort-belonging. However, like her fellow participants, Katherine's sense of home was not entirely disrupted. For the "first few weeks" she would wake up at "any sound" she heard but after "a few months, like three or four" Katherine had "[gotten] used to" living with what this 'lesson' had taught her, which consequently appeared to restore her sense of home. Unfortunately for Gabrielle (white), she was the only participant who seemingly was unable to 'return home' after experiencing a home invasion.

Approximately a year before her interview, Gabrielle and her family experienced a home invasion in which an intruder was able to break into their family home "steal

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things and terrorise [them] with a gun". This experience appeared to remove both her sense of safety and personal space from her home and thus reduced this once safe/personal space to just a house:

> "[We] had an armed robbery. At my house. […] that's why I don't feel safe in my house because people were able to break into my house and kind of take away my sense of my spot. [Now] I know that people have gotten into my safe spot and they have been able to steal things and terrorise me with a gun"

This once 'safe place' where Gabrielle could "put everything in the back of [her] mind and just relax", as it was the place she knew she could "go and […] feel safe", was stolen from her. As a result, Gabrielle's sense of home appeared to also be 'stolen' as she explained that her "house [did not] really feel like a home" anymore after the incident. Thus, her home was taken from her and replaced with an unfamiliar house in which anything could happen to her (again) and where 'just be(long)ing' "[did not] feel right":

> "[It has] been a long period of time, but it's been a struggle for me the most. […] when the incident happened I was sitting on the couch watching Tv […] and my dad and I heard this loud bang and then I turned around and I just [saw] this man with a gun behind me […] I still don't really like to just sit on the couch and watch Tv anymore because it doesn't feel right"

Thus, through this experience of crime Gabrielle's 'lesson' in 'proven inevitability' appeared to disrupt her sense of comfort-belonging, as she no longer felt comfortable in and familiar with this space to 'just be' without the fearing SA's culture of violence. Gabrielle now had to also live/survive within what was previously her safe/personal space because this crime had taught and proven to her that "if something were to happen [it was] going to happen anyway".

Break-ins and home invasions held a special significance when it came to the participants' sense of home, an apparent sense of a safe and personal space. These 'home crimes' disrupted this sense of home by bringing the violence of SA home;

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the presence and touch of intruders tainted this once, perhaps ideal, space of belonging, where one could 'just be(long)' without the burdens of their feminine South African be(long)ings. However, this tainted disruption appeared be only temporary. With time the participants, with the exception of Gabrielle, were able to rebuild their sense of home/belonging by once again (re)negotiating the (un)safety of their (gendered) South African reality and their inevitable victimhood.

Katherine (black) explained how she had "to get on with it, go on with [her] life" despite clearly being traumatised by her experience. So, after a few nights of "in-and-out" sleep where she would imagine and prepare for the 'worse', Katherine would eventually feel "the fear [die] down". Therefore, in accepting and mentally preparing for her 'next' inevitable victimhood Katherine appeared to (re)construct the safety of her house, thus indicating a possible 'return to home'. Even though Gabrielle (white) still did not feel safe, and thus not 'at home', in her house her family appeared to have (re)constructed this sense:

> "I'm the one in my whole family that's struggling […] they feel more at home than I do"

Her family was seemingly able to 'return home' by (re)constructing their sense of safety by increasing and intensifying their safety precautions:

> "[After] the robbery happened we put an alarm on our gate, so as soon as the gate opens, the alarm goes off. Then the gate motor […] [now] has a cage over it. Then the front door, just had a single lock, now when they replaced the lock – I got them to put a triple lock in – a bit excessive, but it helps"

Therefore, despite having their homes stripped of its sense of safety these individuals appeared able to reconstruct this sense by better preparing themselves for their 'next' inevitable victimhood. As this perhaps what is required in order for one to feel 'at home' in SA's culture of violence. However, the participants' inevitable victimhood was not only a result of their actual experiences of crime but was also caused by their supposed institutions of 'protection'.

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6.4.2. Experiences of ineffective police

The participants' experiences of crime would also pull them into 'their' country's criminal justice system, and as a result teach them another 'lesson in futility'. Overwhelmingly the participants held very negative views of the SAPS, perceiving its officers as unprofessional, corrupt, and above all else ineffective. Even Jane (white) who at first was sympathetic would ultimately agree with her fellow participants' perception of South African police as corrupt criminals in uniform:

> "We've had a very good friend of ours work in the Police Force [...] we've gotten the in's and out's from them – how understaffed they are and how underpaid; that is also why they aren't so kind to people because they feel like, 'Why must I give you good service I'm not being treated well'. So, I do understand that aspect of it. Um...but then, you know, corruption and all of that. [...] we hear other stories because my dad works in the armoury business [...] he often tells us, you know, "This huge thing happened and it was policemen who did it" – you know, who robbed the armoury [...] or they confiscated all these guns and then they went missing and it was them. [...] And then you think, you know, 'You're not really here to serve or protect, you're just here to steal"

Ella (black) also spoke of the seemingly absent core police mantra of 'serve and protect' within the SAPS, viewing the profession as an act of survival and not choice "because there are no other jobs". Nonetheless, the participants' general lack of faith in the SAPS was explained as being primarily a result of three factors, (1) the overall unprofessional demeanour of officers, (2) corruption, and (3) past experiences of ineffective service.

In their interactions with the SAPS the participants consistently described the officers as unprofessional, referencing their apparent disinterested and rude behaviour. Perhaps the most outrageous behaviour of an officer came from Matilde's (white) experience of being pulled over:

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> "There definitely was an insinuation that I had to pay a bribe, even though I had done something wrong. I was driving without my license. […] this [female officer] said that [it] would be about two thousand rand […] I don't want to bribe […] morally I don't agree with it. So, I said, "Well, give me the fine."
> She was like: "No, is there not something else we can do?" […] And eventually, after this back and forth, she just let me go, after saying, "Give me the Coke."
> […] I got out of a two thousand rand fine for a Coke […] the other officer came up and he looked so high – like his eyes were bloodshot red he was saying how hungry he was […] he kept saying how […] crappy his job is, he actually wanted me to marry his son"

Matilde's understanding that she was expected to pay a bribe was partially due to how bribing officers is such common practice in SA that it is almost routine (Elizabeth, white):

> "I just think corrupt. The fact that every single time you make a mistake you know you're going to be offered a bribe, like there's no question, like at all"

Bribing officers was the most common form of corruption that the participants had encountered. Critically, this seeming general understanding that anyone could buy their way out of just punishment with a bribe or by "buying a police case if they have enough money" (Ella, black) has essentially diminished the SAPS' ability to instil a sense of safety and security within the South African public (Charlotte, white):

> "That's so sad because you feel so unsafe and now you feel like the people who are meant to protect you are trying to get money so it's – how are you meant to deal with that? What do you do? So, it's helpless. It feels helpless"

The helplessness that Charlotte had expressed was particularly clear within Katherine's (black) experience with the SAPS after her attempted home invasion. Katherine had been woken up "from the noise" of the intruder "fighting with the

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door", but at the time she had not yet realised what was actually happening. She went to investigate the noise and that was when she came face-to-face with the intruder. Luckily, "he ran away" upon seeing Katherine. She then called the police and a suspect, found by her building's security guards, was taken into custody. However, little to no justice was seemingly served (Katherine):

> "[I was like], "Okay, what's happening now?" [the police] just gave me their numbers […] Then the next day in the morning, I call [the station] like, "Listen, there was this person who was arrested at this time" [the police answered,] "There is no such thing, we have no record of such thing."
>
> Int: No record?
>
> Katherine: Nothing […] the person who broke in he gave them, I don't know, a hundred Rand, two hundred Rand, and they let him go"

The SAPS insisted that there was "no evidence of a break-in" despite the fact the intruder had "[broken] the door" to Katherine's apartment. She was desperate, asking them to "take fingerprints" or just "[do] something" to help, and ultimately, she was scared. The very institution that is supposed to protect society had fundamentally failed Katherine. They left her feeling "more unsafe" as she knew that "the [intruder] saw [her]" and thus wondered what would happen if they "had another encounter" and he wanted to take 'retribution'. Therefore, through this experience of crime Katherine was taught a troubling 'lesson in futility', that she could not "rely on the police" for justice and certainly not for a sense of safety.

Katherine's experience of secondary victimisation by the SAPS however was not unique. It is not a new phenomenon amongst South Africans, rather it is a known and expected fact, which has prevented many South Africans, like Toni (black), from reporting a crime:

> "I [have] been put in situations where I could've reported the matter I just chose not to, because I realised that um, trying to go through the legal route might bring me more pain than actual justice […] I do

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> know people around me that have been, um, through the legal system and have been disappointed by it"

The extent of the participants' total lack of faith in 'their' country's criminal justice system was clearly articulated through their consistent experiences of ineffective service, which left them feeling 'helpless' and wondering if there was anything or anyone that they could turn to in hopes of preventing their inevitable victimhood. Even on the occasions that the participants did report a crime, primarily when their phones were stolen, they explained that they had only done so for the insurance claim (Hedy, white):

> "[With] the mugging […] I go to the police station to report it but you do it just for the insurance claim […] because you know they're not going to do anything about it […] you know nothing is going to happen"

Indira (Indian) stated that she was not surprised when the SAPS was "just not willing" to help retrieve her stolen phone even though she had evidence concerning where it could be located. While a stolen phone may seem insignificant in the context of SA's culture of extreme violence, Indira articulated how 'insignificant' crimes could potentially cause a knock-on effect:

> "Like most of the time you can't even go to the police station if something happens, […] you'll literally get no help at all. Whether it is something that happened to you personally or whether something of yours was stolen, it's small stuff like that, that causes bigger things to take place, bigger crimes, bigger issues to take place"

Like the unnecessary continuum of GBV, the apparent ineffectiveness of SA's criminal justice system has seemingly allowed for some 'lesser' crimes to go unpunished because South African's know "the police aren't going to do anything" (Hedy, white). This perception of justice as an unlikely outcome was not only a deterrent for the reporting of crimes but also contributed to the participants' general sense of unsafety (Katherine, black):

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> "[If] we had a functioning police force […] and a justice system that works. That punished people for doing wrong all the time […] I would feel much safer. […] And if you see stories on tv or read something and you see that the person is being held accountable for something wrong that they did, we would feel much more better or safer that 'Okay, even if it happens, that person will wilt in jail"

Katherine highlighted a critical point in her discussion of SA's futile criminal justice system. That the issue with safety in SA was not solely due to actual crime but also the apparent lack of consequences. According to the Beccaria's classical deterrence theory, a criminal justice system must exhibit three critical elements in order to be effective and essentially provide systemic protection; the system must be swift with its justice, severe in its punishment, and perhaps above all must be certain (Brown & Esbensen, 1988). Without these elements a criminal justice system does not deter crime, and thus is essentially redundant. The apparent redundancy of SA's criminal justice system was not only clearly articulated by the participants through their total lack of faith in the SAPS, but also in the amount of trust, and money, which they had invested in private security firms and in their own personal ability to 'make themselves safe'. Thus, the 'lesson in futility' of SA's criminal justice system had seemingly taught the participants not to have faith in 'their' country.

The participants' experiences of crime not only proved the futility of their safety precautions but also that of 'their' justice system. Therefore, through all their 'lessons in (un)safety' it was perhaps the 'lessons' in futility and inevitability taught to them by their experiences of crime which most clearly communicated to the participants the (gendered) reality of their feminine belonging(s) in/to SA: that actual safety is an ideal rather than product and/or requirement of belonging. Instead, in order to 'just be', to belong without fear, feminine beings seemingly must (re)negotiate their belonging so to accept and prepare for the violence of 'their' socio-geographical landscape.

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6.5 Conclusion: (Re)negotiated belonging

Through their lives as feminine South African beings, the participants had been subjected to a masterclass in (gendered) unsafety that resulted in their perception of ‘safety’ as an uncertain personal ability to make oneself ‘safe’.

This ‘ability’ was instilled in the participants since childhood, where they had been subjected to fear-filled (gendered) parenting practices which diligently socialised them to be ‘safe’ with various safety precautions and warned of the kind of GBV that they could expect as feminine South Africans. These warnings also had constantly bombarded the participants’ airways with gruesome ‘cautionary tales’ of the GBV which their fellow South Africans had endured. Through these constant and incredibly violent stories the participants had learnt to perceive crime as an unpredictable and thus inevitable experience which could be worse because of their feminine bodies. Thus, it was here where uncertainty crept into their ability to ‘make themselves safe’. This uncertainty would ultimately be proven after the participants’ inevitable victimisation was actualised by a personal encounter with SA’s culture of (gendered) violence, and where their personal responsibility for safety would be (re)affirmed.

Thus, throughout the participants’ lives they have been taught/socialised to *survive* an unsafe environment; how to adapt their everyday lives to make room for an extensive list of safety precautions and to persevere with these precautions despite a constant stream of gruesome ‘cautionary tales’ that suggest and experiences of crime which prove their futility. However, the participants seemingly also found a way out of this ‘survival’. In accepting the inevitability of their (gendered) victimhood, the participants appeared to find a way not to constantly feel the burden of their unsafe feminine belonging(s). They (re)negotiated their belonging in/to SA by prioritising their sense of safety rather than their actual safety, and in doing so were able to accommodate their feminine burdens and unsafe reality. As a result, the participants seemed to (re)construct a sense of belonging, this apparent ability to ‘just be’ safely without constantly feeling the weight of their burdens, that is appropriate for the South African context.

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This narrative of a (re)negotiated sense of belonging which accommodates an apparent preoccupation with (un)safety was mirrored in the participants' notion of 'home'. For the participants, their homes were their ultimate 'safe/personal' space in which they could 'just be(long)' *without* their burdens perhaps because they were essentially isolated from the (gendered) violences of 'their' SA. However, in order to achieve this safety, 'home' had to be constantly (re)constructed with various fortifying safety precautions and (re)negotiated whenever this safety was disrupted by the dangerous outside world. Thus, just as the participants had to (re)negotiate and (re)construct their sense of belonging to 'fit' the unsafe gendered realities of SA's socio-geographic landscape, they also had to do so with their homes whenever these spaces were invaded.

The participants' 'lessons in (un)safety' not only reveal how feeling unsafe and belonging in/to SA are seemingly inseparable for feminine beings, but also speaks to the resilience of these beings. They accept the apparent inevitability of their gendered, and likely gruesome, victimhood but do so in manner which actually sets them free from living with(in) the controlling fear of the 'female fear factory' (Gqola, 2015 & 2021). They accept their unavoidable unsafety so that they can live rather than survive, so that they are able to 'just be(long)'.

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7 Conclusion

7.1. Summary of findings

With the use of nineteen individual interviews and a focus group discussion, this study aimed to investigate if and/or how young, middle-class, South African feminine beings were able to construct a sense of belonging in/to 'their' unsafe homeland. As a result, two central narratives concerning 'belonging' and '(un)safety' were produced.

The first and core narrative, that of the feminine South African sense of belonging, is one that does not follow the prevailing literature on belonging. To a large extent the participants in this study did not describe their sense of belonging with reference to most of the theoretically assumed (Patriarchal) feelings of 'home', namely agency, value, and safety (Fenster, 2005; Kern, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010: Wright, 2015). Instead, these women described a sense of belonging that felt like *comfort* which was (re)constructed by *burdened* feelings of acceptance, understanding, and familiarity/similarity. Their 'other' conceptualisation of belonging was likely the result of the racial and gendered violences that characterises the past and current socio-geographic landscapes in/to which their sense of belonging was constructed.

The historical socio-geographic landscape upon which the current SA is built is one of violent racial segregation. Colonialism, imperialism, and perhaps most critical the apartheid regime coloured belonging in every way possible by (re)structing the South African society and landscape through the 'race-place' relationship. Consequently, this (re)created a context were race and belonging seemingly cannot be separated even after decades of 'freedom'. This was particularly evident in the racialised narratives of white participants. Their claims for a national be(long)ing, essentially a 'white-African' identity, were problematic experiences where they risked being rejected; a risk which is disruptive to the construction of belonging for the burden that their whiteness places on the constructive component 'acceptance'. Acceptance underscores the sense of belonging as it is arguably the first step in its construction. Individuals' belonging(s) ought to be accepted by both out and in group members so

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to be deemed legitimate (Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011). However, the experiences of white participants revealed this 'required acceptance' as a complicated endeavour. The unacceptance of 'outgroup members', non-South Africans, came in the form of the question, 'Where are you *really* from?' which exposed the continued presence of a flawed 'race-place' discourse concerning nationality. This unacceptance irritated but did not appear to disrupt the white participants' sense of belonging in/to SA as much as the subtle and explicit rejections of their 'fellow' ingroup members. Experiences of apparently being rejected for their whiteness by, most often black, South Africans deeply affected these participants' sense of belonging, as it often incited 'battles' which were seemingly fuelled by the residual pain of SA's past racial conflicts. These 'battles of belonging' not only denied white participants of being an accepted member of South African society, but also seemed to limit where they could belong within 'their' (home)land. Fear of encountering these 'battles' and the (racial) violence which they may cause racialised the 'risk maps' of white participants. Their maps, which are also perhaps 'maps of belonging', appeared to be (re)productions of apartheid logic in which 'black areas' were deemed dangerous, 'no go', areas where their whiteness would mark them as 'out of place', as 'not-belonging'. As well as exposing a possible perpetuation of racist apartheid thinking, these battles also expose the possible problematic root of white claims for South African belongings. In voicing a claim to belonging in/to Africa, white individuals are seemingly expressing echoes of past, and perhaps even ancestral, colonisers. Therefore, in acknowledging the lingering trauma of this bloody history these rejections are perhaps justified, and ultimately raise the question of whether whiteness will ever be able to belong in/to Africa.

The current socio-geographic landscape of SA has been characterised by a pervasive culture of *gendered* violence (Dosekun, 2007; Gordon, 2015; Gqola, 2015; Ngabaza et al, 2018; Tonisi, 2019). As such, within this violent context of the 'Republic of Sexual Abuse' (Tonisi, 2019) feelings of agency, value, and safety are seemingly ideals rather than affective facts of a feminine sense of belonging. The agency of South African womxn is a dangerous endeavour because of their country*men* who have used GBV and the fear thereof as a tool for social control (Gqola, 2015 & 2021). These masculine agents of 'social stabilisation' (Moffett, 2006) have expertly

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(re)produced a 'female fear factory' (Gqola, 2015 & 2021) in which feminine beings are terrified to fully exercise their freedoms. For the participants, this was particularly the case whenever they went out to nightclubs. In this space the participants were (re)produced and ultimately *misunderstood* through the male gaze of their country*men* as mute sexual objects belonging to and for masculine sexual capacities. The '(mis)interpretation by reinterpretation' of this gaze weaponised the participants' femininity against them; their bodies, dress, movements, and speech were perverted into 'justifications' for entitled masculine behaviours. Without the participants' knowledge 'their' beings were twisted into objects which were 'asking for it'; asking to be insistently 'hit on'/objectified, touched, and spiked so to seemingly serve their 'natural' feminine inclinations. Critically, the twisting of these 'agents' is a cruel procedure that is backed by centuries of violently reproduced gendered relations. Thus, if these feminine beings were to exercise their agency against this forced submission, by fulling engaging in their freedoms of expression, movement, and choice, they would likely be met with extreme, gendered, violence which works to 'remind' them of their 'natural' societal positioning (Gqola, 2015 & 2021). Therefore, feminine South Africans' agency and freedom(s), particularly to say 'No', are limited by the context of the 'female fear factory' (Gqola, 2015 & 2021). Key to this 'natural' (re)produced subjugation of femininity is the systemic/Patriarchal socio-cultural/political devaluing of all that is deemed feminine. In the case of belonging, it is devaluation of the feminine voice and perspective which is of particular importance. To have a voice which is valued and ultimately listened to is critical in feeling as though one belongs (Fenster, 2005), as though one is part of the 'we of the people' (Kruger, 2016). However, as the participants' experiences of nightclubs and activism, particularly that of the '#AmINext?' movement, revealed, their voices have been systemically muted for their 'innate' emotionality. Through the Patriarchy emotions are devalued as irrational, weak, feminine untruths which have no right to speak with and/or to power. This (re)production of feminine voices continues even when a situation, that of SA's culture of GBV, desperately calls for these unique gendered perspectives to shed light on some of society's most hidden crimes. Consequently, this 'mute switch' has in part perpetuated the subjugation, and essentially 'not-belonging', of feminine

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beings. It has blocked their 'right to participate', and the (gendered) violence used for its attachment has tainted their 'right to appropriate'; two rights which are critical, according to Lefebvre (1991), to the belonging of citizens (Fenster, 2005). This devalued societal position and their limited agency relate to the participants' gendered burden to have their feminine be(long)ings be understood within 'their' country and its country*men*. To be misunderstood with regards to belonging appears to imply that one's be(long)ings are (re)constructed by and for a masculine 'other'. Thus, these are not beings which simply 'just belong', rather they are ones where be(long)ing has been twisted into a treacherous and burdened feminine endeavour to be 'just be(long)' *safely*. However, this burdened way of be(long)ing is normal for feminine beings in SA. It is all that the participants have ever known; it was what they simply grew up and subsequently learnt how to live with. Thus, the pervasive fear of this 'factory' is a *familiar* and seemingly fundamental sense of the feminine South African be(long)ing. This would primarily be revealed to the participants when they travelled outside of SA and experienced actual safe spaces; where their preoccupation with (un)safety would be made strange, and thus noticeable, by the 'weird' safety of this unfamiliar socio-geographic landscape. Ultimately, this unfamiliar sense of safety would unsettle the participants and reveal the extent to which feeling unsafe is seemingly an integral part of being a South African, of belonging in/to this violent (home)land. Therefore, contrary to what has been theorised, it appears that unsafety rather than safety is a basic affective component in the construction of the feminine South African sense of belonging.

Through this study, it was found that rather than rest their sense of belonging on seemingly uncomplicated feelings of being capable to (fully) exercising agency, value, and safety (Fenster, 2005; Kern, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006 & 2011; Antonsich, 2010: Wright, 2015), young, middle-class, South African women have (re)constructed this sense so to accommodate the violent gendered realities of 'their' country. Instead, these feminine beings' sense of belonging is (re)constructed primarily by three affective components, 'acceptance', 'understanding', 'familiarity/similarity', which were (re)conceptualised as existing with burdens resulting from the participants' feminine South African be(long)ings, namely race, gender, and sense of (un)safety. The participants' seemingly novel sense of

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belonging is the result of how and where they grew up and were socialised on how to 'be'. Thus, when the context of one's childhood is marked by a persistent and pervasive culture of (gendered) violence so too is their sense of belonging. Therefore, as feminine South Africans the participants' sense of belonging could not rely on a sense of safety in order for it to be constructed, rather this sense had to be (re)constructed *with* unsafety.

The (re)construction of unsafety as a fundamental aspect of feminine South African belonging(s) is displayed in the participants' narratives of 'safety', which centre on their life 'lessons in (un)safety'. As children the participants' first 'lessons' were taught to them by their parents/guardians. These 'lessons' involved both direct warning like instructions and indirect repeated behavioural practices which the participants were socialised into repeating as adults. From these 'lessons' the participants learnt/inherited their various safety precautions and critically were taught to be fearful of SA's potential (gendered) violence. As the participants' matured out of their childhoods and into feminine bodies/beings their parents' 'lessons' became increasingly gendered. This shift in the participants' 'lessons' appear to communicate a subliminal 'transferal of ownership' of feminine bodies; whereby the participants' 'grown' bodies were transferred through the Patriarchy to become desired sex-objects belonging to masculinity. With this transferral a new 'teacher' would appear in the participants' masterclass in South African gendered (un)safety. The publicised 'cautionary tales' regarding the dangerous realties of South African womxn would teach the participants two core yet seemingly contradictory 'lessons in (un)safety'. The first of these 'lessons' employed the gratuitous nature of SA's culture of gendered violence so to teach the participants of the necessity of their safety precautions. This 'lesson in necessity' would also teach the participants to think of crime in terms of 'could have been worse', and thus worked to diminish the criminality of less violent crimes. The second was a 'lesson' in the apparent inevitability of the participants' gendered victimhood. Stories of the '#AmINext?' movement were central to this teaching as their diverse and substantial victim pool taught the participants that in the context of SA *any* and thus all feminine beings could be the 'next' victim. Therefore, this 'lesson in inevitability' would suggest to the participants that their various and necessary safety precautions were in fact futile.

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This suggested futility would be proven by the participants' experiences of crime. In these 'lessons in futility' crime would not only teach the participants that their safety precautions were futile against SA's determined criminals, but also of the futility of their criminal justice system. All participants held very negative views of the SAPS, perceiving its officers as ineffective, unprofessional, criminals in uniform. This perception led many participants to not report crimes and to rather place their trust and safety in private security firms. Interestingly, the participants' experiences of crime which attacked their fortified 'safe/personal spaces', their homes and bodies/beings, appeared render these spaces as sites of 'not-belonging' where the participants felt 'out of place' as a result of having this, perhaps ideal, space of belonging, be invaded and 'tainted' by the unwelcomed presence and touch of perpetrators. These perpetrators were seemingly able to steal the participants' physical and emotive belongings. By invading their homes/bodies, these perpetrators were able to disrupt the participants' sense of safe and personal space. However, after some time and/or with the addition of more precautions these 'senses of home' would seemingly return. This 'journey of (returning) home' after one has fallen victim to a 'home crime' illuminates a possible new dimension to the affective relationship between belonging and 'home'. Rather than acting as a descriptor of what the sense of belonging supposedly feels like, 'home' is perhaps the ideal of belonging. A sense which has not (yet) been burdened by the violent and gendered realties of the outside world, and thus is a protected belonging which may indeed foster feelings of value, agency, and safety. However, as 'home-belonging' is an ideal and thus susceptible to being disrupted once these realties 'hit home', both one's physical home and emotive sense of 'home-belonging' require constant (re)construction and (re)negotiation within unsafe socio-geographic landscapes.

The participants' narrative of 'safety' does not only reveal 'home' to be a possible ideal form of belonging, but also reveals 'safety' within the South African context to mean an uncertain personal ability to make themselves *feel* safe. Thus, as the participants' sense of belonging was (re)constructed in/to this context, it must accommodate this ingrained sense of '(un)safety' in order to accurately convey the realities of their unsafe be(long)ings. Both these narratives place a heavy emphasis on (re)constructed and (re)negotiated 'safe/personal spaces', specifically that of

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home, which enable one to 'just be(long)', but in a manner that is not blind to the (gendered) violences of its socio-geographic landscape. Therefore, these narratives perhaps prove that it is possible for feminine beings to construct a sense of belonging, and subsequently a sense of home, in/to an unsafe place. However, they do not suggest, let alone prove, that this construction would be a safe and simple endeavour. Thus, through these narratives young, middle-class South African womxn are able to (re)construct a sense of belonging if they are brave and strong enough to shoulder and (re)negotiate its burdens.

7.2. Limitations

While it could be the case that this study was able to accurately capture of the narrative of belonging amongst young, middle-class, South African womxn, it must be acknowledge that this study's sample was small and not totally representative of the diverse population of South African womxn.

The majority of the participants were white and all self-identified as cisgendered. While it was a conscious effort to recruit a participant pool which would have been racially representative of SA, due to time constraints this was not possible. Thus, the results of this study are skewed towards white South African experiences. Furthermore, despite having made the choice to intentionally include the feminine experiences of individuals who may not identify as women, all the participants recruited for this study self-identified as cisgendered women. Thus, the experiences of nonnormative feminine beings have unintentionally been left out.

Unfortunately, the participants' narratives hardly ever touched on the subject of class. This is perhaps due to the restrictiveness of the 'middle-class background/upbringing' sampling parameter. In only sampling, and thus investigating, individuals who had possibly only known what it was like to be in and belong to middle-class society, the participants may have taken their social and economic capitals 'for-granted; and hence, overlooked them when discussing the complexities of their belonging(s) and notion/sense of safety. Therefore, this study was not able to fully explore the influence of class on the construction belonging and notion/sense of safety.

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Moreover, while this study was originally inspired by the seemingly contradictory connection between the sense of belonging and home for feminine beings, due to the rates of GBV and intimate partner violence which seemingly thrive behind the 'safe' walls of the home, this study was not able to adequately explore this potential contradiction. None of the participants provided stories of being victimised by their partners and/or family members within their homes. Thus, according to the participants' narratives 'home' remained the 'safe place' it had been conceptualised as.

Lastly, my own racial identity may have limited this study's ability to obtain complete narratives from the participants of colour. These participants may have felt apprehensive about speaking of their experiences in terms of race due to the "desirability effect" and thus may have chosen to keep these insights hidden (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015:188).

Therefore, with these limitations it must be stated that these finding are suggestive and further investigation is needed in order to accurately capture the complex intricacies of a feminine South African sense of belonging in/to SA.

7.3. Recommendations

Future studies into the affective dimension of belonging are very much needed, not only as this an under researched and undertheorized space but as the seemingly novel results of this study suggest, there is still much to be uncovered and understood.

Future research endeavours into this space ought to seek out the narratives of individuals who have fallen victim to violence within their own home and at the hands of 'familiar' individuals. This focus would enable research into the possible contradictory connection between belonging and 'home' which this study was inspired by.

Furthermore, studies outside of the South African context are needed so to investigate whether this study's findings are actually unique to the belonging(s) of feminine South Africans or are perhaps more gendered than what this study is able to generalise and assume.

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Lastly, any future feminist research endeavours into this space should turn to the experiences of womxn so to continue the work of dismantling the Patriarchy. However, the experiences of men and their belonging(s) in/to the oppressive identity of masculinity ought not to be discarded, especially when one considers the 'protector' gender role within an unsafe context and the extent to which the behaviours of masculinity were implicated in the result of this study.

7.4. Concluding remarks

The focus of this study was to investigate the lives of young, middle-class, South African womxn in the context of an unsafe socio-geographic landscape. With this focus feminine narratives of belonging in/to SA were obtained and analysed so to produce an overarching narrative. This narrative told of a sense of belonging that felt like comfort yet was burdened by elements of the feminine South African be(long)ings. These burdens, namely race, femininity, and (un)safety, each complicated an affective constructive component of belonging, acceptance, understanding, familiarity/similarity correspondingly. Therefore, the construction of a young, middle-class, feminine South African sense of belonging is more complex than what has been theoretically assumed.

Home perhaps is that ultimate 'safe space' which enables one to belong without their burdens. However, this is a space which requires constate (re)negotiation and (re)construction so to be this possible ideal site of belonging. Thus, 'home' is not what belonging feels like, rather it is a space which enables one to drop their guard, lessen their burdens, and 'just be(long)'.

(Word count: 40 326 *Excluding headings and references)

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9 Appendices

9.1. Research instruments

9.1.1. Individual interview guide

1. How would you describe a sense of belonging?

2. How would you describe your life as a woman living in South Africa?

3. Do you see South Africa as a 'safe place'?

3.1. Please explain why or what has lead you to view South Africa in this way.

4. What does 'home' mean to you?

5. Is it possible for you to view South Africa as your home?

9.1.2. Focus group discussion points

1. Where do you feel comfortable?

1.1. Why does this place make you feel comfortable?

2. Who do you feel accepted by?

2.2. How do you know you have been accepted?

3. Is there anything attached to your sense of belonging?

3.1. Does your sense of belonging come with a burden?

4. Why is there so much fear surrounding spiking?

5. Nightclubs are not 'safe places', so then why do many women continue to go?

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9.2. Letter of informed consent[12]

My name is Simone Wiele, and I am currently in my Masters year at the University of Pretoria. It is required that I conduct a research study for my Masters dissertation, and thus I have chosen to investigate the lived experiences of young, middle-class, South African women as they attempt to construct their sense of belonging in/to South Africa.

The aim of this study is to research the relationship between safety and belonging through the lived experiences of young women who have grown up in South Africa. It is my belief that South Africa's pervasive culture of violence has potentially created an environment where our common understanding of home, as the safe place where you rightfully belong, is not possible for people with feminine bodies. However, it may be possible that these bodies do in fact feel as though they belong in/to their country, despite the gendered violence that seeks to control and possess them. Therefore, I believe this study has the potential to uncover an alternative understanding of home that enables one to belong in 'unsafe' places.

The intention to of this study, to understand the safety-belonging relationship through the lived experiences of young, middle-class, South African women, requires that I conduct individual interviews and focus group discussions. Each participant will firstly be individually interviewed about their experiences of feeling safe in South Africa, and how these experiences may have effected their sense of belonging. Once all the individual interviews have been conducted and analysed the participants will then be placed into groups of five where they will be asked to discuss the common themes that emerged during their individual interviews. These discussions will either be conducted in-person or online via video-chat platform, depending on the current COVID-19 regulations.

I am requesting permission to conduct an in-depth individual interview (approximately 60 minutes) that will later be followed by a focus group discussion (approximately 90 minutes), and for these sessions to be (audibly) recorded to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions.

---

[12] This letter of informed consent was placed under the University of Pretoria's letter head.

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All the personal information collected through this study, as well as the recordings and transcriptions, will be made anonymous with the use of pseudonyms. Furthermore, this information will be stored online for 15 years at the Department of Sociology, at the University of Pretoria. As the participant you have the right to request access to the information that you provide during this study. I further request your permission for this information to be reused in subsequent research studies.

While it is not the intention for this study to cause any emotional and/or psychological distress the participants, the nature of the topic may result in discussions about past traumatic experiences. In order to combat the potentially distressing effects of these discussions, participants are asked to please inform me if they experience any form of distress, so that steps can be taken to provide them with information concerning public counselling services, such as Lifeline.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and if at any point during the study you wish to withdraw your participation you are able to do so.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please read and complete the 'Consent form' below. And if you have any questions regarding what your participation will entail, please contact my supervisor Dr. Rachelle Chadwick (their details are provided below) or me at:

Email: u18044060@tuks.co.za

Telephone: 073 9828 416

Dr. Rachelle Chadwick

Email: rachelle.chadwick@up.ac.za

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9.2.1. Consent form for individual interviews

Individual Interview Consent Form

I ______________________________, hereby give my consent to participate in the study (Safety and Belonging: Constructing a sense of belonging amongst young, middle-class, South African feminine bodies within an 'unsafe' place). In signing this form, I acknowledge at that I have read and understood what my participation entails, and further I acknowledge that my participation is entirely voluntary and am aware of the fact that I can withdraw from the study at any point if I so wish to.

☐ I acknowledge that I have not been coerced into participating in this study.

☐ I am aware of the potentially distressing nature of the individual interview questions.

☐ I am aware of the fact that I will face no penalties if I choose to withdraw my participation from this study.

☐ I am aware that the answers I provide during my individual interview may be used as discussion points for the focus groups.

☐ I am aware that the information that I provide will be securely stored for 15 years in accordance with the University of Pretoria's regulations at the Department of Sociology.

☐ I understand that the information that I provide may be used and presented within this research study.

☐ I give my permission for the reuse of the information obtained from this study for the purpose of future research studies.

Signature of Participant: __________________________ Date: __________________

XXXXXX

Consent for recording

I ___________________________ , am willing for this interview to be audio-recorded.

Signature of participant: __________________________ Date: _________________

Signature of Researcher: __________________________ Date: _________________

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9.2.2. Consent form for focus group

Focus Group Consent Form

I ______________________________, hereby give my consent to participate in the focus group discussion of the study (Safety and Belonging: Constructing a sense of belonging amongst young, middle-class, South African feminine bodies within an 'unsafe' place). In signing this form, I acknowledge at that I have read and understood what my participation entails, and further I acknowledge that my participation is entirely voluntary and am aware of the fact that I can withdraw from the study at any point if I so wish to.

☐ I acknowledge that I have not been coerced into participating in this study.

☐ I am aware of the potentially distressing nature of the discussion points.

☐ I am aware of the fact that I will face no penalties if I choose to withdraw my participation from this study.

☐ I am aware of the fact that my confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the group context of this discussion.

☐ I am aware that the information that I provide will be securely stored for 15 years in accordance with the University of Pretoria's regulations at the Department of Sociology.

☐ I understand that the information that I provide may be used and presented within this research study.

☐ I give my permission for the reuse of the information obtained from this study for the purpose of future research studies.

Signature of Participant: __________________________ Date: ________________

XXXXXX

Consent for recording

I _______________________ , am willing for this focus group discussion to be audio-recorded.

Signature of Participant: _________________________ Date: _________________

Signature of Researcher: _________________________ Date: _________________

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9.2.2.1. Confidentiality agreement

Confidentially agreement

In signing this agreement, I ______________________________ , understand that the information provided during the focus group discussion may not be disclosed to any parties outside of the group in which the information came to light.

Signature of Participant: ____________________ Date Signed: _________________

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9.3. Letter of ethical clearance

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

6 October 2022

Dear Miss SS Wiele

Project Title:	Safety and belonging: constructing a sense of belonging amongst young, middle-class, South African feminine bodies in an 'unsafe' place
Researcher:	Miss SS Wiele
Supervisor(s):	Dr RJ Chadwick
Department:	Sociology
Reference number:	18044060 (HUM042/0822)
Degree:	Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 29 September 2022. Please note that before research can commence all other approvals must have been received.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

Prof Karen Harris
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
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