Narrating the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement: explanations, contestations, and forms of meaning-making in the public sphere

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that

Narrating the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement: explanations,

contestations, and forms of meaning-making in the public sphere

is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by means of
complete references

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M. Linden

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Date

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandfather

Reinhold Rudolph Karshagen

who was gentle, humble and treated everyone he met with kindness

21 March 1932 – 21 October 2017

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.

Proverbs 14:31

ABSTRACT

The events of the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement generated a lively debate in the South African public sphere, one which included multiple interest groups and constituencies. The aim of this dissertation is to critically analyse the public debate that arose around the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement. I approach this debate through the frame of the story by focussing on narratives published in mainstream print media, in student media and on the social media sites, Facebook and Twitter. Aside from more conventional news reportage, I also look at interventions by student activists, government, universities, and other public commentators including parents, political analysts, cultural and religious groups and onlookers. As a literary scholar, I look at the ways in which these events were narrated and the values that were encoded in the tellings. The fact that these events could and were interpreted, explained and rationalised in a variety of ways points to the complexity of truth and meaning-making. However, the point is not to search for the 'truth' about what happened but rather to consider the kinds of meanings that were constructed and what these might reveal about the broader social, economic and political landscape in post-apartheid South Africa, including prevailing attitudes, assumptions and myths. Given the prominence of women both in the events themselves and in the ways they were narrated, I will also pay particular attention to the role of gender in the narration of the events and the significance given to women's involvement in the protests. I start my project by considering how protests have come to be represented in media and discuss the relevance of story-telling as a means of sense-making. I analyse first the accounts that focussed specifically on blame-placement as a way to explain the events. I argue that this blame placement reveals the fractured nature of South Africa. From here I move to accounts that specifically discussed the way in which the movement as a whole should be characterised. I draw attention to the tendency to personalise the movement vs. the trend of figuring it as an act of social justice for a society still plagued by inequality and oppression. I then look at the accounts that concentrated on the individuals in the movement and how they should be characterised, specifically looking at the various judgements of role-players' behaviour. In concluding, I discuss the various issues and questions the public debate raised and what this suggests about the state of post-apartheid South Africa. Finally, I make a claim for the importance of story-telling as a way to make sense of the particular historical moment.

KEY TERMS

FeesMustFall, student protest, tertiary education, fee increase, narration, representation, story-telling, mainstream media, newspapers, social media

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

South Africa's most disruptive student protest since the 1976 Soweto Uprising took place in the middle of October 2015. The protests, which fell under the umbrella term "Fees Must Fall", took place country-wide and were directed at the proposed increase in tuition fees for 2016. Tertiary education institutions were forced to close as students marched to voice their anger and frustration with the proposal. A rich variety of explanations, stories and reactions arose around these events. These involved a range of participants and were often published in 'real time' on a variety of public platforms including social and print media. These explanations, arguments and comments were used as an attempt to explain, contest and make sense of the movement, fostering a dynamic debate in the South African public sphere. The fact that these events could and were interpreted in a variety of ways points to the complexity of truth and meaning-making. My goal in this thesis is to elucidate some of the complexity of the debate as it developed in the public sphere and to explore some of the dominant story-strands that emerged. The point is not to search for the 'truth' about what happened but rather to consider the kinds of meanings that were constructed and what these might reveal about the broader social, economic and political landscape. What the analysis also makes possible is an exploration of some of the prevailing attitudes, assumptions and myths that inform South Africa's socio-political space. This will be done by identifying the positions taken by members of the public such as journalists, government commentators, student protesters, university managers, and antagonists and identifying the way in which these same participants framed the events politically, economically and socio-ethically. In considering the various explanations, positions and frames that were offered, I will attempt to draw out the larger patterns and preoccupations of the narration of the events.

I approach this analysis both as a journalist who was involved in reporting the events of the movement and as a student researcher, bringing an intimate yet wide-ranging and analytical perspective to the study. It is important to note that I approach this history as a scholar of literature rather than as a sociologist, political analyst, historian, or media theorist. In this regard, my focus is on the stories that were told about these events and the ways in which the protests were represented and constructed in the public sphere. More specifically, my focus is on how language, idiom and rhetoric provide shape to the various representations and

constructions. Here I am concerned with the way in which meaning is produced through word-choice, sentence construction and style as well as the use of various forms of figurative language such as tropes, images and metaphors. As the narratives developed, it is also worthwhile to consider the particular rhetorical strategies and devices employed by various commentators and to reflect on whether or not there any discernible changes in the way in which the events were understood or explained over time.

Before beginning my analysis of the debate in the public sphere, I will present a brief summary of the historical events. The Fees Must Fall movement was preceded by the Rhodes Must Fall movement which affected a number of South African universities in March 2015. On the 9th of March, students and staff members at the University of Cape Town (UCT) started agitating for the removal of the statue of former Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, Cecil John Rhodes, which was prominently placed at the foot of the famous Jameson Steps. Protesters felt that the statue represented a lack of transformation at the institution in that whites seemed to still be given preference in the university's curriculum and culture, despite approximately 58% of UCT's students being of colour (GroundUP, 2015). The movement spread to Rhodes University (Rhodes) on the 17th of March where students of the Black Student Movement campaigned in solidarity with students at UCT and also demanded that Rhodes be renamed to reflect a more transformed and racially-inclusive ethos. An off-shoot from the Rhodes Must Fall movement took hold at Stellenbosch University (SU) in the following month with the group Open Stellenbosch forming in solidarity with the students at UCT. However, this group soon developed its own mandate, choosing to focus on fighting for the transformation of SU's language policy. The group also released the documentary *Luister* in August, which detailed 32 students' and a lecturer's lived experiences of racism and lack of transformation at SU and called for more radical transformation of SU and its policies.

The UCT Senate managed to resolve the Rhodes Must Fall crisis within a month, voting for the removal of the statue on the 27th of March and finally taking the statue away on the 9th of April. There was also success for the campaigns at Rhodes and SU. In May, Rhodes agreed to rename the university and on the 12th of November, SU recommended a new language policy that would adopt English as the *lingua franca*. The events of the Rhodes Must Fall movement also attracted international attention with solidarity and movement-inspired protests and campaigns launched at Oxford University, the University of Edinburgh, the University of

California, Berkeley, and the University of Cambridge throughout 2015. The Rhodes Must Fall movement and associated events opened up the discussion around the desire for South African education to be "decolonialised" and thereby made more representative of the students who attend the institutions. While the general Fees Must Fall protests of October 2015 initially started as a separate campaign for a 0% increase in tertiary education fees for 2016, it came to embody an extension of the Rhodes Must Fall movement. In other words, it also fought for free education, revised language policies, higher wages for and the insourcing of university support staff such as campus security and cleaners, and an education system with greater black and South African focus.

The Fees Must Fall protests broke out in the week of the 12th to 19th of October 2015 when students at University of Witwatersrand (Wits) started protesting against the proposed 10.5% increase in tuition fees for 2016. The proposed fee increase was a result of unavoidable costs such as a 7% increase in academic staff salaries, utility cost increases that were higher than the inflation rate and increases in foreign-sourced academic material due to the falling Rand value (Quintal 2015). This increase was also higher than the increase of the previous year which had matched the inflation rate (around 6%). Student protests led to the closure of the Wits with some staff and management agreeing to negotiate fee increases with students. On the 19th of October, groups of students at UCT and Rhodes University also joined the fee-related protests. Students barricaded entrances and turned other students away. UCT obtained a court interdict against the protesting students which led to several students being arrested. By the 20th of October, groups of students at the University of Fort Hare, SU, and Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) had also started protesting and had forced their campuses to close. Students at Wits rejected the proposal for a fee increase in line with inflation and demanded a 0% increase instead.

Students from UCT and CPUT marched to Parliament, where the National Assembly was meeting, on the 29th of October. Some students managed to gain access to the buildings and President Jacob Zuma was evacuated. Minister of Higher Education Blade Nzimande attempted to address students but was jeered by the protesters. Riot police dispersed the protesters with stun grenades, tasers, tear gas, and batons and a number of students were arrested. Press and the public criticised the brutality with which the police reacted while others disagreed with the attempts the students made to breach parliament's fences. Students at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) and the University of Pretoria (UP)

then joined the national protest that day by locking down their campuses. They were subsequently joined by University of Johannesburg (UJ) students on the 22nd of October when they marched to the ANC headquarters at Luthuli House in Johannesburg.

Like with the Rhodes Must Fall movement, solidarity protests also took place with the most prominent one hosted outside South Africa House in Trafalgar Square, London, on the 23rd of October. That same morning, student leaders, university vice-chancellors and President Zuma met at the Union Buildings to discuss the way forward. During the meeting, thousands of students from the UP, Wits, and Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) congregated in front of the buildings to hear President Zuma announce the outcome of the meeting. A group of protesters, many wearing ANC Youth League shirts or TUT identification set portable toilets alight and broke down the security fence erected in front of the Union Building gardens. Riot police used stun grenades, rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse the protesters. It was announced that President Zuma was set to address student protesters at 12:00; however, it was only after 15:00 that Zuma announced via television broadcast that there would be a 0% increase in tertiary education fees for 2016. Despite the victory, protesters were upset that the president did not address them personally and at the expected time. The protesters remaining at the Union Buildings after President Zuma's announcement (many of them ignorant about the announcement as they had no access to a television) were dispersed with rubber bullets, tear gas, and stun grenades by riot police.

While the Fees Must Fall campaign was revived in 2016, it was different in character and focus when compared to the 2015 protests. This is why my focus is specifically on the 2015 protests. In addition, with the incipient revival of a national campaign in 2017 unlikely, we are granted a brief period of time to assess what happened, starting by addressing the events of 2015. This study is necessary not only for the insights it may offer into the initial movement itself and the events that occurred but also because it foregrounds the complex ways in which these events were narrated and understood. In this sense, I hope to facilitate the understanding of and a sense of clarity about the recent past. With this insight, understanding and clarity, individuals can form their own informed opinions about the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement and the actions taken by the movement. Reaching a personal opinion is necessary not only for the present but also the future as it indicates that engagement with the perspectives of the movement has taken place. By opening up the perspectives of the movement, the lingering anger and the sense of "unfinished business"

many South Africans experience on a day to day basis will be better understood. Primarily the study will be valuable not just for current research but also for future endeavours in 'nation building'.

The movement exposed the two major and interlinked frustrations of South African students. The first is a financial frustration. In a country with a competitive job market and a high unemployment rate, tertiary education is a near necessity if one is to find a job that pays a living wage. Recent poverty data shows the extent of the situation. Approximately 54% of South Africans lived in poverty around the time of the 2015 protests. In addition, approximately 63% of black South Africans were living in poverty, whereas only 1% of white South Africans were (AfricaCheck, 2016). White South African families also earned six times more than black South African families (StatsSA, 2015). This could be because white South Africans occupy 70% of South Africa's top managerial positions, positions only accessible to those with the correct qualifications or connections (StatsSA, 2015). In light of this, university education at South African universities in 2015 ranged from R12 800 (BSc, Unisa) to R64 500 (MBBCh, UCT) for the first year of study (Africa Check, 2015). These figures exclude other study costs such as textbooks, accommodation, meals, and registration fees.

This creates a catch-22 situation: school leavers need an education to find a well-paying job but need a well-paying job to fund their education. Many parents, high school graduates and university students cannot afford university fees and instead are forced to rely on student loans through banks, governments, and universities to pay for their tuition. The proposed fee increase for 2016 was higher than expected and this made finding funding even more improbable for students. In addition, with the proposed increase, the opportunity to escape from poverty became even less attainable as even fewer South Africans would be able to afford education and those attempting to fund their studies through loans would be plunged even further into debt. Prolonged debt would mean that graduates would still be crippled by their financial situation despite having an education. This desperate, worsening situation was one of the key sources of student anger.

The second underlying frustration is the systematic exclusion of black South Africans from education, public institutions and the economy. Demographically, South Africa's population

is predominantly black. Furthermore, as proven above, the majority of impoverished South Africans are black South Africans, a statistic that is disproportionate to the number of impoverished white South Africans (StatsSA, 2015). Those who are poor are unable to pay tertiary education fees and are therefore unfairly represented in university demographics. This situation of financial and academic exclusion can be understood as part of the legacy of apartheid caused by long-term institutional racism that still privileges white South Africans. As indicated earlier, because tertiary education is needed to obtain a job that pays a living wage, those who cannot afford tertiary education are kept impoverished. Black South Africans in particular remain the poorest of the poor despite South Africa being more than 20 years into democracy. Looking deeper into this frustration, it is evident that institutional racism (where people of colour are continuously but covertly marginalised by an institution's long-standing norms and practices) also manifests itself in the form of under-representation: in this sense, black South African identity, culture, and thought in university curricula, language policies, and student culture tend by be downplayed in favour of the historical norm. The frustration at the ongoing systemic exclusion (where people of colour are repeatedly denied education based on financial circumstances and are repeatedly overlooked in long-standing university norms) eventually reached a head, spurring on the Fees Must Fall movement.

Discussions around the legacy of apartheid, white privilege, and institutionalised racism were rife in the public sphere as secondary discussions to the events of the protests. However, the voicing of these frustrations was not without a backlash, highlighting the inability of South Africans to relate to each other, especially across race and class boundaries. The majority of those who disagreed or responded negatively to the movement were white South Africans. For many, it was the first time they had encountered these terms or thought about them. Some South Africans chose to deny their existence, while others argued that these had been done away with at the end of apartheid. Still others said that they related to the protesters' frustrations but argued that the experience of frustration and suffering applied to all South Africans, regardless of race, class or historical experience. This backlash aimed to undermine accounts that argued that economic and social exclusion was the outcome of being a member of the working class and of colour in South Africa.

In his book *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (2004), Alan Sinfield makes a claim for the importance of stories and the way in which they are told. As Sinfield suggests, it

is through stories that we "develop understandings of the world and how to live in it. The contest between rival stories produces our notions of reality, and hence our beliefs about what we can and cannot do" (2004). Stories are therefore linked to the production and reproduction of culture, both in a material and an ideological sense; importantly, they encode particular social norms and values. In the case of political and social events and the ways in which they are represented in the public sphere, we can identify a number of narrators including religious authorities, political parties, the press, subcultural groupings and educational authorities. These 'storytellers' can be associated either with the dominant culture or with more marginalised social groups and the stories that are told can reinforce the status quo, question it, or offer a combination of both positions. In this sense, narratives or stories have socio-political significance as a means of assessing the values, attitudes and norms that are in play in a particular historical moment. Because of the variety of narratives and role players, friction arises as not all stories are in agreement with each other. The friction that results from the existence of competing stories and story strands contributes to a more complex sense of social reality. As suggested above, it is through the frame of the story that I approach the Fees Must Fall movement, looking in particular at the ways in which these events were narrated and the values and assumptions which were encoded in these stories. The stories that were told about the 2015 protests are important not only for what they reveal about the state of the nation at the time but also for what is suggested about the particular anxieties and preoccupations of individuals and groups living in South Africa in the post-apartheid period.

One particularly interesting aspect of the narratives that arose out of the Fees Must Fall events was the prominence of women as narrators. Women tended to make up a number of the key role players in, and also key narrators of, the events. Women took roles of leadership in the movements; they featured in news articles, and claimed various kinds of public space in order to voice their opinions. Given the prominence of women, both in the events themselves and in the ways they were narrated, questions around the role of gender in the narration of the events surrounding the Fees Must Fall movement and the significance given to women's involvement in these events are raised. These must be linked to how the various narrator-groups perceive the role and value of women in society.

Among the many stories that emerged, two overarching and contrasting story streams can be identified: first the student as heroic warrior against injustice and second the student as unthinking thug. The first is the story that sympathises with the protester. In this rendition of

Fees Must Fall, the student is represented both as part of a community which is suffering from the legacy of apartheid and as an individual who is set on fighting for an education that is accessible and inclusive. In this narrative strand, students, protesters and sympathisers are elevated and encouraged. Associated with this is the comparison between student protesters in 2015 and the student protesters of the 1976 Soweto uprising. The second dominant story strand reproves protesters. In this story, student protesters are criticised and portrayed as entitled and demanding of unreasonable benefits such as free tertiary education. They are also labelled as lazy and partial to violence and disruption rather than being portrayed as interested in education. In these stories, opposing forces and groups who attempted to dispel the protests such as the police and campus security are commended as the heroes. The inevitable friction that ensue between the two overarching stories reveals the discord among individual South Africans as they struggle to relate to each other and to find a place in the new South Africa. What is also evident is the fractured nature of South African society which is divided by race, class, gender and age.

Many of these stories could be found in local print media in articles, columns and the letters section. My study focuses on two main forms of local news reportage, namely student publications and selected national and regional newspapers. As Anton Harber argues, even in the age of self-publication, there is still no replacement for the "journalist's role in selecting, processing, verifying, balancing, presenting and following up. In a world in which there is more and more information, this editorial process is more important than ever" (2008a:4). Student newspapers form an important site of inquiry because they were based at the centre of the university protest action; they were often the first to break news and had the ability to access important in-roads into the protest movement as a result of their personal connection to university management, staff and students. The student publications I have chosen for this study include *Varsity* (UCT), *Vuvuzela* (Wits), *Oppidan Press* (Rhodes) and *Perdeby* (UP) as they were the most active student publications in covering the movement and because student newspapers are in decline and these are the only ones that publish on a regular basis in print. The second important focus area of focus is the way in which these events were reported in various examples of mainstream media. Because the protests were a nationwide event that affected many people, I have chosen publications based on their distribution areas and target audiences so that accounts from a variety of areas and individuals can be analysed. These publications include two national publications, *Daily Sun* (a paper aimed at working-class individuals) and *City Press* (a paper aimed at the younger black South African middle-class)

as well as a selection of regional papers that cover the cities that saw the most protest action, including the *Cape Argus*, *Pretoria News* and *The Star*, from Johannesburg. Together, this combination of newspapers creates a wide spectrum of appeal for a variety of classes, races and ages.

While many of these stories were found in print, some took the form of media statements or reactions and personal comments published on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. In seeking some of the trends in the South African government's handling of these events, I will also analyse selected government press releases available on the South African government website as well as the website for the Department of Higher Education. In attempting to engage with voices filtered out by mainstream reportage, I will analyse posts from the social media sites Twitter and Facebook as these sites have become associated with the spread of breaking news and citizen journalism.

Much like the Arab Spring, social media played a significant role in organising the Fees Must Fall movement and its actions and communicating with individuals who supported the movement. Social media also allowed for heated public debate which continued over the period of the Fees Must Fall protests and allowed individuals who are often marginalised in the public sphere to voice their opinions. In fact, it was these more marginalised groups that first published comments on their disenfranchised state and their perceptions of the proposed fee increases, therefore acting as a catalyst for the Fees Must Fall protests themselves. As the movement gained momentum, student activists as well as other public figures in media, government and education added to the debate surrounding the protests. The rapid pace at which the protests developed meant that student and educational leaders, government spokespeople, and journalists required a tool that could document the events and garner instant responses. This tool was readily available in the form of social media, especially Twitter. Most importantly, much of the news surrounding the protests was broken on social media before it even reached print, if it reached print at all. For this reason, this study devotes particular attention to the various posts about the Fees Must Fall protests that were published on the Twitter and Facebook social networks. The focus of this dissertation is specifically on English-medium posts; however, reference will be made to posts published in other languages if the contents of those non-English posts are pertinent to my study.

In order to gather newspaper content, I first used the SA Media database which digitises a large portion of South African mainstream media. Here the keywords "Fees Must Fall",

"student protests", "Uprising", "Rhodes Must Fall", "tertiary education" and "tuition fee increase" were used in order to search the database and collect articles relevant to the topic and published during October 2015 from the *Daily Sun*, *Cape Argus*, *Pretoria News*, *The Star*, and *City Press*. In addition, I accessed articles from these publications that were not digitised on the SA Media database through the National Library of South Africa. The National Library of South Africa keeps copies of every edition of these newspapers and I carefully worked through each of the various newspapers' 2015 October editions to find relevant content. Articles published by the student publications *Perdeby*, *Varsity*, *Vuvuzela* and *Oppidan* were available on their respective web pages. I searched their websites using the keywords "Fees Must Fall" and "protests" as well as worked my way back through their online archives (which are chronologically ordered) to collect articles relevant to the topic. In addition, their print editions were accessed via issuu.com to ensure that I collected any articles that were not published on the student newspapers' websites. In order to establish the dominant story favoured by government, I searched through the archives on the homepages of the presidency and the Department of Higher Education (www.thepresidency.gov.za and www.dhet.gov.za, respectively) for government press statements released in October 2015 relating to the Fees Must Fall protests.

Because social media is a public forum, anything published on Twitter and Facebook is accessible to, and can be used by, anyone without the consent of the individual who published it. This creates a vast database of information that does not need ethical clearance in order to be used in research. Because social media data constitutes a vast data corpus, I have narrowed the focus by identifying the key groups in the Fees Must Fall movement which are Uprising (UP), the Black Student Movement (Rhodes), and the Rhodes Must Fall movement (Wits and UCT) and in opposition to them, Afriforum Youth (national). Individual, high profile students who were all outspoken student leaders during the movement include Tumelo "Duke" Rasebopye (UP), Kgotsi Chikane (UCT), Nompendulo Mkhatshwa (Wits), Shaeera Kalla (Wits), Jodi Williams (SU) and Zikisa Maqubela (Rhodes) and the posts of these individuals are used as data in my research. In order to use their public posts as data, I captured their tweet archive for the period of the protests. This was done by contacting individuals directly as, even though I did not need their permission to use their tweets, Twitter only displays a limited number of tweets on an individuals' page. Thus, many individuals had tweeted extensively since October 2015, effectively "burying" their old

tweets with new ones. For Facebook, I worked through their personal profiles for any public posts published about 2015 the protests.

Incidentally, my focus on individuals is at odds with the strategy employed by the protest groups which made a point of underplaying individual interventions and activities. In all actions, decisions were made by a leadership group that consisted of unaffiliated individuals. This was because students wished the movement to remain apolitical and free from personal agendas. Because of this strategy, I have, where relevant, made use of comments published by individuals other than those I have expressly selected. In this case, I conducted manual searches through the comment sections on Facebook pages associated with the movement such as that of the Rhodes Must Fall movement and UPRising. With Twitter, I used the search function, searching for tweets from 2015 using the hashtag 'FeesMustFall'. As my study progressed, Twitter updated its search function; by 2017, I was able to search for tweets between specific dates, with specific words, and by specific individuals. For student media, I also captured the tweet archives of the various publications I selected. I did this in addition to selecting print content especially because South African student publications are weekly, bi-weekly or monthly publications and therefore much of their Fees Must Fall reporting was done on Twitter rather than in print.

This project draws on a wide range of conceptual and theoretical resources, including work on the notion of the public sphere as well as the insights provided by media and journalism theory, feminist theory, colonial representations of blackness, stereotypes of violence, post-colonial theory, critical race theory and the digital humanities. Jurgen Habermas's notion of the 'public sphere' is central to my analysis. Published in 1962, Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* focuses on the role of newspapers as a forum for public debate and discussion. Habermas first proposes that the public sphere is a space that all private individuals are guaranteed access to and in which public opinion can be formed. Along with this space comes a sense of freedom from state bureaucracy and expected social behaviour and a freedom to express opinions, irrespective of whether they differ from the norm. Harbermas then proposes that newspapers provide such a space in which the public can articulate views, especially oppositional ones which may be in tension with those privileged by the state. These oppositional views present the public's own interpretations and explanations of particular events and allow members of the public to engage in critique and make connections with others.

Feminist critic Nancy Fraser (1990) offers a critical perspective on Habermas's theory. According to Fraser, marginalised groups are excluded by his theory of the public sphere. Because of this, Fraser claims, these marginalised groups form their own public spheres known as 'subaltern counterpublics' (1990:123). These subaltern counterpublics are alternative spaces in which marginalised groups can express their views and tell their stories. The concept of the subaltern counterpublic has direct relevance for the Fees Must Fall movement as the movement addressed South African citizens who felt marginalised. The concept therefore invites researchers to consider alternative spaces in which public discussion about the movement took place. Building on Fraser's insights, this thesis gives particular attention to the counter-public spaces represented by student and social media. It is my belief that Twitter and Facebook in particular can be seen as such examples of subaltern counterpublics as they provide an alternative space in which marginalised groups can participate.

Gerhards and Neidhardt (in Gerhards & Schäfer, 2010) draw attention to another dimension of complexity in the public sphere. They argue that different forums in the public sphere are used differently. According to them, newspapers form part of mass media and have a specific target market, which is usually the dominant group in society. In contrast to Habermas' notion of a relatively open public sphere, Gerhards and Neidhardt (in Gerhards & Schäfer, 2010) argue that mass media such as newspapers are often biased and strongly regulated as editors and publications are controlled by financial decisions and political pressure and that this results in publications systematically privileging powerful, institutionalised individuals and groups at the exclusion of minority groups, civil society and public debate (Gerhards & Schäfer 2010). Gerhards and Neidhardt argue that various kinds of encounters such as face-to-face meetings and public events such as protest rallies are more open to participation by the marginalised and lack such strong institutional-favouring regulation.

As technology has evolved questions about whether social media has a place in the public sphere have arisen. In other words, there have been recently developed theories that give attention to the broad shift in contemporary media production from 'proper' journalism to the new forms of journalism made possible by a range of social media platforms. Gerhards and Schäfer (2010) argue that the internet and, in particular, social media can be seen as a new extension of the notion of the public sphere. Gerhards and Schäfer propose that communication via the internet is generally more open than any form of traditional

communication. However, they argue that despite this 'openness' all forms of internet communication seem to share, some forums in the cyber public sphere are more regulated and norm-favouring than others. They propose that emailing and instant messaging is comparable to face-to-face encounters, discussion boards and blogs are comparable to public protest, and search engines are the cyber equivalent of traditional mass media. In this sense, search engines are the not as open to participation from general society as, in comparison, posts published on Twitter and Facebook (sites which can be seen as a type of 'discussion board'). Because of this, we must recognise that the variety and intensity of the posts on social media will be greater than the articles, columns and letters found in newspapers and that social media is more inclusive of the marginalised and radical views. This gives a strong reason to consider social media in this study along with content found in newspapers.

Narratology is a vast field of research with numerous trends and focus areas. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Porter Abbott, 2008) is one of the major works that attempts to present the basics of narration and the issues associated with the study thereof. Porter Abbott defines narrative as "the representation of an event or a series of events" (Porter Abbott, 2008: 13). His definition emphasises the necessity of an event in order to separate narration from other modes such as description, lyric or argument. While newspaper articles and tweets are not typically recognisable genres for narrative (in the way that a novel, play or poem might be), they still contain the building blocks of narrative in that they offer an account of an event through story (action) and narrative discourse (how that action is presented). Porter Abbott also notes that several stories can be embedded in an overarching concept about which there is some agreement. This overarching idea can be termed a frame and the identification of a frame allows us to "examine the interaction between audience and text in terms of the models of understanding, or frames of reference that audiences bring with them" when reading a text (Porter Abbott, 2008: 29). Also of importance to understanding narrative is the various elements of narrative rhetoric (causation, normalisation, master plot and closure) as these are what inflect meaning by generating feeling and thought in the reader. In terms of interpreting narrative, there are a number of features that require the interpreter's attention. Those relevant to interpreting print and social media could include narrator, distance, gaps, cruxes and repetition including themes and motifs. Interpreters must also be aware of the various readings they can conduct. A symptomatic reading of texts seems most viable for my research as it aims to focus on the implicit meaning of a text and reveal the narrator's frames of reference that are unintentionally used to construct their narrative.

In light of Fraser and Gerhards and Schäfer's work as well as typical ideas of narrative, it is also relevant to note Jean-François Lyotard's concept of metanarratives ([1979] 1984:37-41). Lyotard encourages distrust in grand narratives or metanarratives as they tend to promote a general universal truth while ignoring minor nuances in similar accounts or the chaos that simultaneously-occurring but opposing narratives create. He also argues that grand narratives take power away from individuals by homogenising human experiences and denying the possibility of a relative truth. In addition, Lyotard proposes that grand narratives are created and reinforced by the major power structures, making them inherently untrustworthy. "Localised" narratives or considering the variety of and diversity in naturally occurring, similar or contradictory narratives is suggested as a remedy to the grand narrative.

Because the Fees Must Fall movement is such a recent event, the amount of research in my field of interest is, at most, limited. Much of the published research on journalism and media in South Africa maps the particular styles and preoccupations of South African journalism. Anton Harber (2004) traces how journalism has developed from the apartheid era to the post-apartheid era and the new challenges that have arisen as a result of a dramatically changing context. The absence of the grand apartheid narrative (and the stark moral dilemma with which it was associated) has resulted in a shift in journalistic styles. Surveying the contemporary media landscape, Harber makes a distinction between gutsier, outspoken, alternative and non-commercial media on the one hand and conservative, conventional media on the other, and argues that this divide is a South African media tradition that dates back to the apartheid. However, while the style of the apartheid era was polarised either against or for the apartheid government, the current journalistic style is more complex.

One of the reasons for this is the emergence of new struggles such as the fight for media autonomy and neutrality. Media autonomy means that publications are independent from any external authority and are not subject to external control. In other words, South African publications would be fully autonomous if they were not under any state or corporate influence. However, this is not often the case. In this sense, publications must overcome political pressure in order to separate themselves from the pro-ANC/anti-apartheid position they took during apartheid and adopt a position as a neutral government watchdog during the current ANC-led post-apartheid era. The Right2Know campaign has a special space in the South African media in light of this. The campaign aims to defend media autonomy and a free press and counter government interference, particularly amid growing threats of

censorship and the government's proposed secrecy bill (Right2Know). Harber (2004) also draws attention to the plight of small, independent papers and the financial and political pressures they face. In this climate it is difficult for small, outspoken or alternative newspapers to survive financially, resulting in a diminished public sphere or one that is increasingly inclined towards business or government. While there is a decrease in critical, independent journalism, there are still some examples in existence. This trend is reflected in similar forms of opposition between more conservative and more radical responses to the Fees Must Fall movement and the platforms on which they were published.

The semi-failure of media's transition from apartheid to post-apartheid is also taken up by the work of Jane Duncan (2012a). Duncan bases her assessment on the media reportage of South African protests over the last two decades and argues that the rise of public protests is indicative of a public space that does not represent everyone equally. Duncan (2012a:1) proposes that in terms of media itself, what has been achieved so far is only "a framework for media transformation" that has opened up spaces for media democratisation but which has also constrained the media's ability to transform to the extent where common public spaces for deliberative debate can be established. This is based on the larger reality that when South Africa transitioned from apartheid to post-apartheid, the transformation was not a social revolution but a democratic one that can be easily reversed. Upon this is built an increasingly commercialised media that exacerbates the social instability of a society made up of 'haves' and 'have-nots' or, as Mathatha Tsedu puts it, the public that is "well organised, which understands its own interests and knows how to push it" and the public that consist of "'the silent ones' and whose interests are marginalised by virtue of their silence" (cited in Duncan 2003:6).

The under-representation of the working class in media is underpinned by the under-representation of black South Africans as well. This is because the class divide is characterised by a strong element of racial separation as well – black South Africans remain the poorest South Africans. This under-representation is also extended to women, who find themselves overlooked in media both as newsmakers and sources, and when they do, are typically stereotyped (Duncan, 2006). South African media remains predominantly white-owned and caters to the upper classes (who carry the promise of money and power). Because of the lack of variety in target market, media tends towards a homogenised view; it lacks critical analysis and facts are frequently altered to suit the dominant view. This is in place of

diversity in content, language and themes which would appeal to the white middle to upper class as well as those currently at the bottom of the social ladder. Instead of being an "instrument of liberation that is critical but truthful" (Duncan 2003:3), media and journalists fail to build a relationship with their communities they claim to serve as they cannot "relate [to] the needs and interests of [these] communities" (Duncan 2003:2).

According to Duncan, print media is particularly resistant to transformation as it is not as easily regulated by the state; at the same time, however, this lack of regulation can create a space where critical, investigative and independent journalism could flourish. As Duncan (2003) has also argued, print media has not been without threat from the government's attempts to regulate it. She points to the tension between the state's investment in serving the 'national interest' and the media's arguments that a primary duty is to serve 'public interest'. These terms seem to run counter to each other and while public interest is a defined concept, national interest lacks a solid definition. For Duncan, it is not so much the idea of a transformed media that is at issue but rather the government's attempts to push the news in particular directions resulting in a failure to engage with those who are under-represented such as women and black South Africans. While national and public interest may overlap under a popular democracy, South Africa's representative democracy requires another approach. Duncan suggests that "it is important for society to believe in its inherent capacity to change how it has been organised, principally by the state, and to take power from below" and that we should "re-envision the media as a component of the public sphere". However, she cautions that the "unavoidable lessons of South Africa's negotiated transition to democracy also need to be learnt, the most important being that media transformation is ultimately not sustainable without social transformation" (2012a:17).

Alternative publications that deviate from the mainstream media have always had a special place in the South African journalism landscape. In an article titled "Why alternative journalism really matters" (2009), Chris Atton explains that alternative media forms are important as they encourage participation from ordinary citizens in the formation and reporting of news. According to Atton, "Alternative journalism suggests that authority does not need to be located institutionally or professionally; that credibility and trustworthiness can be derived from accounts of lived experience, not only from objectively detached reporting; and that there be no need to separate facts from values" (2009:284). This alternative media can include student media and social media. During the Fees Must Fall

protests, student reporters reported on student matters and, while they may have tried to do so objectively, the separation of the student reporter from the events was impossible. However, building on Atton's argument, student media can be seen as valuable for the closer connection it obtains between journalist and reader, a connection that provides an inside perspective that is not bound by corporate agendas. Likewise, reportage by student protesters, antagonists and other participants in the events of Fees Must Fall makes their experience relatable to members of the general public and presents a well-rounded picture when all stories are viewed together.

Social media in particular dominates this alternative media or "new media" space. Social media undoubtedly opens up conversations between individuals about current affairs and allows members of society to self-publish news stories. Social media therefore has an influence on news reportage. In his paper "The rise of social network journalism" (2008a), Harber highlights a number of things that the introduction of social media has brought about in journalism. Two of these are relevant to my study. The first is the citizen journalist, an individual who no longer just receives news but helps to create it. The citizen journalist was seen in the Fees Must Fall protests as students and members of the public published news content online on their social media sites, independent of mainstream media. The second is the changing voice of authority. Previously, appropriately framed news content was published in newspapers or broadcast on television. As Harber argues, however, "[n]ow we are faced with a constant barrage of conflicting, shared messages which mix information, fact, rumour, innuendo and humour" (2008a: 4). This makes news more of a conversation than an authoritative, uni-directional communication. Because news takes on a conversational nature, news reportage becomes more story-like. Furthermore, much like a conversation's ability to be open-ended, citizen news reportage avoids easy resolution or balance but rather continues indefinitely in a series of debates and discussions in the public sphere. Harber advocates for these changes as he feels they give others, especially the marginalised, a voice. If this is the case, social media is a crucial element in this study as social media played a major role in organising the protests and expressing the accounts of the marginalised.

Existing studies on Fees Must Fall specifically include Jane Duncan's book *Protest Nation*, Susan Booysen's work *Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa* and the compilation of student perspectives on the movement *Rioting and Writing: Diaries of Wits Fallists*. Those that will be particularly pertinent to this research

17

include Thierry Luescher's article "Frantz Fanon and the #MustFall Movements in South Africa" (2016a) which looks at the role of social media in mobilising, conscientising and coordinating the movement as well as in the sharing of "an unending stream [of] what [was] happening around the country" (2016:23) both in the public sphere and in cyberspace. Luescher's article "Towards an intellectual engagement with the #studentmovements in South Africa" (2016b) will also be important. In the article, Luescher proposes that intellectuals and academics need to make sense of the 2015 student movements in South Africa and play a role in exposing the underlying concerns and aims of the movements. Luescher highlights the multitude of perspectives on the movements and shows that many of the perspectives are at odds with each other. Luescher suggests the need for an academic study of these perspectives and, quoting Badat (1999), argues that by studying these perspectives, we will come to "understand the role, character, and significance of the movements". This is relevant to what I aim to achieve with my study. As Luescher argues, by giving attention to the various concerns which arose in the public sphere, academics may be able to help with "forging a new national culture" (2016b:3).

A lot of work has been devoted to the media representation of political and social events in the media, all of which are pertinent to the proposed research. Here, I highlight Harber's contrasting comparison of the *Daily Sun*'s and *The Star*'s approach to, and reportage of, the 2008 xenophobic violence (2008b). *Daily Sun* and *The* Star are both national daily newspapers with large circulations but their difference lies in that *Daily Sun* is targeted at township-dwelling working class South Africans and *The Star* is aimed at the suburban middle to upper classes. Initially the use of terms such as 'criminal aliens' were commonplace in *Daily Sun* and it took two weeks for *Daily Sun* to condemn the violence and the use of words such as 'alien'. By contrast, *The Star* chose to side not with the local but with the foreign victims by using terms such as "mob" and "they" to describe locals who were violent. *The Star* quickly condemned the violence but made little effort to humanise the attackers in the same manner as they did the victims. Harber shows that during the period of xenophobic violence, *Daily Sun* portrayed the South Africans involved in the xenophobic attacks in a positive light, but also gave prominence to other stories about daily township life which depicted different township locals as violent vigilantes and angry protesters. He further argues that the publication's contrasting views of locals is indicative of a newspaper that consistently reports a more realistic perception of township life as opposed to any other local newspaper. Harber shows that the two different types of reportage found in *Daily Sun* and

The Star ultimately serves the interests of the publication's target market. The research does not advocate for reporting in a particular way but rather demonstrates the variety of perspectives an event may generate. This in turn highlights why it is necessary to consider all the perspective offered on the Fees Must Fall events.

A similar approach is evident in an article by Yu Huang and Christine Chi Mei Leung (2005) that compares the negative western press coverage China received and the positive western press coverage Vietnam received during the SARS crisis. The findings of the study run counter to the typically held notion that the 'other' (non-western and communist individuals and groups) is only portrayed negatively in the media. However, Huang and Mei Leung argue that the positive light in which Vietnam was portrayed was dependent on how the country responded to the crisis. They go on to propose that Vietnam's response was determined by a number of factors but that their decisions created a specific image of the country, one that was seen as acceptable to the Western press. In this sense, Huang and Mei Leung argue that a group is not simply othered because of who they are; instead a marginalised group actually has the ability to make their portrayal positive through 'socially acceptable' actions. The study also advocates for viewing a crisis in context by considering the perspectives of those enduring the crisis as well as the perspectives of onlookers, and what might have generated them, to make clear sense of the crisis. This urges us to come to an understanding about the Fees Must Fall protest through considering the accounts of protesters, government, universities and onlookers.

Despite protests typically being portrayed as irrational and violent in media, public perception around protests has changed over the last ten to fifteen years. Simon Cottle (2008) argues that Western media is no longer limited to the dominant "law and (dis)order frame" which seeks to label protesters as "deviant and delegitimise their aims and politics by emphasizing drama, spectacle and violence" (2008:5). He argues that protests are increasingly represented as an acceptable and legitimate means of expressing concerns for a large spectrum of people. The development of the internet, a rising anger at the elite and a sense of global community through the help of technology add to the change in public perception surrounding protests. Protests, regardless of where they are in the world, become significant to many people as they speak to broad concerns. Cottle's principal argument is that members of the public are no longer "negatively disposed" to protests. Cottle further explains that protests are now more likely to bypass "traditional political structures and

political influence" (2008:858) and that the "cacophonous field of contemporary protests opens up, at least in theory, the possibility for correspondingly more complex range of media responses to protest and demonstrations in the past" (2008:857). This includes media focuses on the protest's communicative strategies, interactions with law enforcements and interactions with the media instead of just its sensational elements. This is specifically seen in media's willingness to support or side with certain campaigns and protests. Because of this change in attitude, protesters find themselves able to use the traditional "law and (dis)order frame" to their advantage. The stereotypical perception of protests can be used by protesting groups to promote unreasonable attacks against them as a means to stir up sympathy for their cause and give evidence to their complaints.

Cottle's argument is backed up to a certain extent by Rachel Brooks's article "Politics and protest – students rise up worldwide" (2016). Brooks shows that since the beginning of the 21st century student protests have increased in frequency across the globe. She highlights examples such as Chile, Germany, Canada, China and Turkey. Brooks suggests that these protests have a few things in common. Three of these factors are the theme of fee introduction or increase (or the privatisation of tertiary education), the use of technology to link up locally and globally, and students' disenchantment with formal politics. Despite the perceived political apathy of students, Brooks proposes that students are in fact politically active but do not feel best served by mainstream political parties and election systems. Brooks also notes that student protests have become globalised, aided by social media, and highlights the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall protests as examples. The similarity of these protests points to shared frustrations. However, how effective these protests are, Brooks argues, relies a lot on how the government view the students as representatives of a wider community.

Duncan (2012b) challenges the views held by Cottle and Brooks, suggesting that these positive perceptions of protest have not taken hold in South Africa yet. In her analysis of the reportage of the Marikana protests and shootings by mainstream newspapers including *The Star, Mail and Guardian, Sunday Times* and *City Press*, she found that of the 153 initial reports on the events, only 3 percent of all articles included miners as a source. Instead articles favoured more authoritative voices such mine owners, police, businesses and government. The term 'massacre' used to describe the events carries the connotation of unnecessary and widespread murder. However, articles that used this term failed to pin the

blame on anyone or point out the main victims and aggressors. Duncan suggests that what this did was to let official accounts of the events remain unchallenged and the narrative to become biased against protesters. It also encouraged a perception of the miners as violent, irrational criminals, superstitious and primitive. While attempts were made to tell the miners' story later on, Duncan argues that the damage had already been done in reinforcing the country's inequalities and undermining the story of the marginalised. Duncan's research therefore suggests that Cottle's views are noteworthy but possibly limited to UK and US media and Brooks' argument for efficacy is too general.

As indicated above, my focus on media representation pays particular attention to language. A useful example of a similarly-constructed study is Corinne Sandwith's article on the public debates generated by the anti-foreigner violence in 2008, "Postcolonial violence: narrating South Africa, 2008" (2010). Sandwith attempts to identify the various story strands which arose as a means of both containing and explaining the 2008 anti-foreigner attacks in South Africa. In her work, she identifies a number of stories put forward in the public space by media, public, and government. These include stories of criminality and an 'external third force', governmental failure, vigilantism, and justified anger about the quality of life many experienced in South African townships. These stories either made heroes or villains out of those who enacted the violence and either sympathised with or blamed those on the receiving end of these actions. Sandwith goes on to show how these various stories expose "lines of fracture and points of tension in the broader South African polity – social divisions, the limits of available discourse and the fragility of national myths" as well as the pervasive representation of 'criminal' vs 'citizen' that encourages a sense of moral dualism by relying on "a particular model of criminality that achieves the restoration of social wholeness (and the goodness of the nation) through the expulsion of the deviant few" (2010). This study enriches mine as I will also attempt to expose the dominant stories surrounding a crisis and what they reveal about the state of South Africa.

As suggested earlier, Alan Sinfield's work *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (2004) gives attention to the socio-political importance of stories as a means of cultural reproduction and sense-making in the public sphere by highlighting the various preoccupations of British media and how these were used to frame stories about the second world war. Likewise, Sandwith's book *World of Letters* (2014) highlights South Africa's tradition of debate on literature and culture in the public sphere, particularly during the pre-

and early apartheid era. Sandwith focuses on fragments and traces of debate found in a variety of publications and public activities. Through this she gives historical and contemporary value to these opposing, competing, complementary stories and opinions which differed from the social norm. The study proves the importance of these stories and opinions in the production and reproduction of culture (or more particularly the myths, attitudes and assumptions) for communities in the South African public body.

The stories told about the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement are intricately intertwined yet there are still major themes that emerge out of the public debate. I have chosen to organise my chapters thematically using the three major story strands that arose as a guide. The first major story strand is a story about blame. In this chapter, I will deal with accounts that attempted to explain the movement but that resorted to placing blame instead. Chapter one includes stories of government culpability, university mismanagement, public indifference and student entitlement. The second major story strand to emerge revolves around the representation of and the explanations offered for the movement. It includes stories of suffering parents, the legacy of apartheid, revolution and heroic battles. This chapter will analyse the parallels that were drawn between the Fess Must Fall movement and a number of other historical moments as well as the debates the movement opened up about the social, political and economic state of South Africa. Also, an important aspect of the debate these stories generate is discussions around gender, social responsibility and the tension between entrepreneurism and welfarism. The last chapter focuses specifically on how protesters and other role players in the crisis are portrayed. It is closely linked to Chapter two as it explores the stories told about the various constituencies involved in the movement. I will look at how in some instances student activists were heroised (while those that opposed them were villainised) while in others student activists were villainised (while those who opposed then were heroised). I will also look at issues of violence in the movement as well as issues of gender. I will therefore have three chapters of analysis. I have decided to loosely organise the content of each chapter according to the various constituencies, however, I break away from this organisation to avoid a repetitive and fragmented analysis. Of key importance is exposing the main themes and trends in the debate and so this also plays a role in how I have structured my content. In my analysis, I will highlight whose interests are served by the various stories and how the opposition is portrayed in light of them. I will do this by maintaining a focus on language, idiom and rhetoric.

In the conclusion, I will use the various story strands discussed to assess the complexity of the responses to the Fees Must Fall events. I will highlight the friction between the stories and, through this, attempt to expose what these frictions reveal about the 'state of the post-apartheid nation'. I will also consider the role women played both as narrators and as role players in the stories. Finally, I will make a claim for the importance of narration in understanding society and as a means of progress and nation building in South Africa.

CHAPTER ONE
BLAME GAME

An analysis the various mainstream, student and social media responses to Fees Must Fall movement shows that initial reactions in the public sphere took shape as an attempt to explain the crisis. However, as I go on to demonstrate, these early efforts of sense-making were less a search for understanding as a quest for someone or something to blame. This question of culpability revolved predominantly around the reason for the unusually high proposed fee increase but also addressed the reason why students responded through protest. The focus on blame is perhaps the outcome of society's fascination with causation in narrative: the need to establish a cause and effect relationship is a dominant feature in the accounts that place blame. However, we must keep in mind the proptor hoc fallacy: the correlation of two things does not necessarily equate to a cause and effect relationship (Porter Abbott, 2008:41 – 43). This fault in logic and the resultant friction between various forms of explanation suggest a complex social reality. In this dominant rhetoric of blame, responsibility for the crisis was handed to a variety of actors and agents, including universities, government, students and the public with reasons given such as greed, disengagement, entitlement and even racism as well as the failure of the Mandela-negotiated settlement to address hard faultlines. My goal in this chapter is not to answer the question of who was to blame; instead, I aim to present a close analysis of the discourse of blame, noting both its characteristic themes, emphases, tropes and interpretive assumptions. At the same time, I also seek to elucidate the social fractures and tensions which this blame-placing narrative exposes.

In my exploration of the dominant rhetoric of blame, I turn first to print media accounts to elucidate the principle trends in the medium. Most prominent in these accounts were stories of indifferent universities, alienating government and betrayed parents. From here I turn to an exploration of student activist accounts which, I argue, were dominated by stories of government illegitimacy, disillusionment with the post-apartheid state, and middle class disengagement. This is followed by a discussion of the various government accounts of the crisis which tended to place emphasise on the mismanagement of universities, entitled students, irrational activists and an ignorant public. I then turn to the responses from university management where the rhetoric of blame is dominated by stories about

government as neglectful, interfering and ineffective. Lastly, I look at various public commentator reactions to the crisis arguing that, in this case, the rhetoric of blame tended to be directed towards government wastefulness and student laziness. In all cases, the accounts have been loosely ordered according to chronology and constituency, however, a thematic order takes preference.

Noma ngingamemeza, akusizi lutho

In their attempts to make sense of the crisis, mainstream newspapers tended to be ambiguous about whether students or those against them should take the blame. Of all the newspapers I examined, *Pretoria News* presented the most intense anti-protest rhetoric: the paper did not necessarily blame students for the protests; however, students were frequently labelled as violent, destructive hooligans. The *Daily Sun*, by contrast, remained loyal to a pro-Fees Must Fall rationale. This is evident in their predominant focus on student and parent accounts and reactions. *The Star* tended to go out of its way to describe the student protest action in detail thus promoting a positive framing of student actions by giving them space; however the paper also demonstrated a preference for authoritative voices, evident in the fact that it published far more government and university management accounts than other mainstream newspapers. *Cape Argus* also promoted student voices by allowing student activists to edit their 23 October edition while giving space to individual voices from the public in their extensive letter section. *City Press* articles represented an important shift in conventional reporting techniques as it tended to draw some of its information and comments for print articles from social media, an alternative public sphere that promotes non-authoritative and marginalised voices that are often sympathetic to students. The publication also encouraged debate in their large opinion section that included comment predominantly from government, education and student leaders.

When one considers the target audiences of the various publications, it suggests a reason why these papers favoured a particular stance. The *Daily Sun* is predominantly read by black, working class South Africans and so their position on the events supports the accounts offered by poor, black South African students and onlookers. Alternatively, *Pretoria News* attempts to access a more urban and conservative audience than all other regional dailies, and so the audience is best associated with an anti-Fees Must Fall stance. *The Star*, *City Press*, and *Cape Argus* all cater for a target audience of mixed race in the lower-middle to upper

class range, and thus their ambiguity seems rational when viewed as an effort to cover all their readers' preferences and perspectives.

Returning to the question of blame, the dominant themes in mainstream reportage tended to focus on state and university disengagement, blaming either university management or government for the crisis. This argument is supported by a reading of the various newspapers' headlines. On one occasion, *City Press* for example, described government as "Falling, falling, falling", suggesting failure and collapse while another of their headlines intimated government disengagement by calling government "out of step" but "bumbl[ing] on regardless" (Heard, 2015:5). *The Star* had a similar headline to suggest government dismissiveness in relation to the student march to Parliament: "With mayhem outside, Nene forges ahead with his speech" (Merten, 2015b:3). *Daily Sun* said that there was "No end to Blade's headaches" (Tau, Makora, Tlape, & News24, 2015:2), characterising the government as contemptuous toward students who are metaphorically represented as irritant or 'headache'. In an alternative reading, it also suggested that Nzimande and the government are suffering from a sickness that needs to be dealt with; however, it is unclear if the student protests are the cause or the symptoms of this sickness, only that the government have been ineffective in addressing the illness. *Daily Sun*'s headline "Halt hike now!" (Tau, Moagi & Zibi, Khomo, Qwazi, Mokgolo, Sisulu, Muvhenzhe, Chikhudo, & Nare, 2015:2) suggests outrage at the proposed increase, helping to strengthen student protester stances and the blame placed on universities. *Pretoria News*'s headline "Tuks caves in to demands; reopens after protests" (Makhetha, 2015c:1) accused universities of being weak for capitulating to student demands, adding to the blame placed on them for the protests.

Many newspapers articulated a strong pro-Fees Must Fall argument, one which was directed against management and their refusal to meet and engage with students, thus telling a story of management indifference and intransigence. One aspect of the story about the universities' lack of engagement focuses on the image of the distressed, dismissed student. In *The Star*'s "SA students revolt", journalists Morrissey, Nkosi and Kalipa comment that when Wits management refused to meet student activists, student activists sang a song that says "Noma ngingamemeza, akusizi lutho" [no matter how many times we cry out, it doesn't help] in retaliation (2015:1). Here the inclusion of this detail helps lend support to the students' cause by invoking the image of a crying child. The image suggests that these student activists are in pain, defenceless and in need of help. However, the fact that the crying "doesn't help" suggests that students are ignored despite their desperation, implying that university

management behaves cruelly toward the helpless and innocent. The journalists support their stance by quoting former Wits SRC president, Mcebo Dlamini, saying "The university doesn't take us serious[ly]. It's not just today. They have not been taking us serious[ly]" (Morrissey, Nkosi, et. al., 2015:1). The use of the present perfect tense in Dlamini's last sentence relates to the student's song that "no matter how many times" they cry out, they are ignored, implying that the students' dismissal exists both in the past and in the present; this further suggests that this dismissal is a long-standing tradition of university management and that these acts of exclusion and of diminishing student concerns are not limited to the Fees Must Fall crisis.

Similarly, mainstream media journalists also blamed universities by depicting universities as places where students are a low priority. *The Star*'s article "SA students revolt", for example, promotes this framing by saying that the Wits university council "seemed to ditch the students gathered in Senate House after agreeing to meet them" (Morrissey, Nkosi, et. al., 2015:1). The idea of being ditched suggests a purposeful action, which undermines the statement that management had agreed to meet students. The article's accusatory tone also suggests disapproval of management's actions. In these and other instances, university management is framed as uncaring and cruel. What is also evident in this example is the representation of university management as dishonest: they do not keep their word. The account also implies that management incorrectly believe that student concerns and receiving student input is not vital; in this way they are presented as arrogant and self-important for showing preference for their own agendas and time over those of their students.

Daily Sun chose to portray universities as hostile toward the poor and black by giving particular prominence to the accessed voices of working class, black parents. This unique approach featured extensively in their 23 October edition. This suggests that *Daily Sun* wished to promote the perceptions of those who were directly affected by the increase and protests. In the article "I will join the protest", mother Paulinah Masilela is quoted as saying "I sometimes feel they are trying to force our children out of university because they know black people can't afford the high fees" (Tau, Moagi, Mokgolo, Sebola & Manona, 2015:3). The use of the word "force" and the emphasis placed on the way it is enacted on "children" (rather than students) creates the impression that universities are attempting to retract the access they have given these black students by forcing them out, suggesting that universities are racist. In this way, institutions are represented as hostile and even violent. Even worse,

this antagonism is performed on the helpless and innocent. Furthermore, this racism is not entirely overt but rather relies on subtle decisions that universities know will affect black South Africans most. In this and other similar accounts, university institutions are represented as a counter-progressive force in terms of the country's attempt to create political and social cohesion. As I go on to discuss, this image of the hostile and exclusionary university is also in line with student activist accounts.

The story strand of the exclusionary university also featured the repeated image of the absent vice-chancellor. An example of this can be found in the *Pretoria News* article "Tuks caves in to demands; reopens after protests". In the article the journalists choose to label Vice-Chancellor Prof. Cheryl De la Rey an 'absent mother'" (Makhetha, 2015c:1). The image of the vice-chancellor as an absent mother draws on the conventional conflation of woman with mother: here the connection between vice-chancellor and a parent is only made in terms of a female vice-chancellor, suggesting a sexist construction of a female leader that cannot be perceived outside the role of a mother. In this way also, the line between the duties of a vice-chancellor and mother is blurred since being a mother to students is not within the role of a leader of a university. A similar blurring occurs in relation to student and child as students are not the immediate responsibility of university staff. This depiction suggests the vice-chancellor's inability to embody qualities typically associated with a mother (such as empathy, care and protection), proposing a sense of inattention and preoccupation with other things on the vice-chancellor's part. The figure also suggests something weightier – in her absence as a mother she has neglected and abused her children who require her help. In this way, she is depicted not just as absent but also as immoral. This representation may seem to contradict the idea that universities are weak, suggested by the image of 'caving in to student demands'. However, I would suggest that there is continuity between the ideas of weakness and the figure of the absent mother in the sense that absent parents often spoil their children because they feel guilty.

As the protests progressed, mainstream media tended to shift the blame from universities to government. The trope of the disengaged government was evident across a range of newspapers where a sense of alienation and the idea of government hostility was emphasised. This was best expressed in an article that appeared in *City Press* which describes students protesting at the Union buildings as "sending smoke-signals to the leadership" through their burning of public toilets (Makhanya, 2015:1). Accounts like these intensified the depiction of

students as desperate to be heard and even somewhat justified in the violence that played out during the protests: what this interpretation suggests is that students have to resort to archaic methods of communication (or destruction) to be heard. The idea of the alienated and alienating government is also evident in various examples of Twitter journalism, a form which tended to allow for a more expressive and informal style and which enabled journalists in particular to express their personal opinions without the filter of an editor. In one instance, media commentator Eusebius McKaiser labels government as "unresponsive" (22 October 2015a). On 23 October, media commentator Khanyi Dhlomo also tweeted about the fence separating the students from the Union Buildings and the presidency saying "While the role of the #UnionBuilding fence is understood, the sad symbolism of students fighting barriers to a better life is hard to ignore" (2015). The metaphor of the fence as a barrier to a better life characterises the students as purposefully excluded by the government. This metaphor also appears in student activist accounts, particularly the letter by Mukovhe Masutha, where ladders and doors are used as metaphors for access to education and social mobility; Dhlomo's comment therefore adds to student accounts by expressing the wider social concern that some youths are purposefully excluded from education.

In sharp contrast to the accounts in mainstream newspapers, student newspaper reportage tended to be overwhelmingly neutral and devoid of any expressive images or rhetoric. This is perhaps the outcome of individuals attempting to navigate a space where they are both student and journalist, a space that demands that they remain neutral but also connected to students. Student newspapers *Perdeby*, *Oppidan Press* and *Vuvuzela* tended to favour reporting via Twitter, with online news articles published every evening to outline the day's main events. *Varsity* published no news articles about the protests online but reported solely on Twitter. The preference for Twitter not only indicates the changing media landscape but also strengthens the idea that student papers wished to report events in a sequential, blow-by-blow fashion rather than offer a position on the protests. Print editions, particularly those of *Varsity*, *Oppidan* and *Perdeby*, were dominated by student opinion pieces, suggesting a preference for student voices and student accounts rather than of those in positions of authority.

As suggested above, student newspapers tended to avoid the rhetoric of blame evident in other examples of public debate. However, there are a few accounts that express a concern for managerial openness and accessibility. *Perdeby* chose to promote the perception of

institutional arrogance, particularly the aspect of transparency through a focus on student anger. Articles highlighted the idea that universities were slow to respond and that when they did open discussions with students, these engagements did not happen publicly, urgently, or with the correct individuals in management (Slingerland & Johnston, 2015). This encourages sympathy from the reader toward student protesters as it offers a reading of university management as uninterested and disengaged. Therefore it also makes the point that this may have contributed to growing student frustration and anger. This same concern was also evident in *Wits Vuvuzela* but did not feature the vice-chancellor in the apportioning of blame (Da Silva, 2015a). The article details how Vice-Chancellor Prof. Adam Habib agreed to wait with students in Senate Hall until the Wits Council agreed to meet with them. In this way, Prof. Habib is portrayed as humble and sensitive to his students. The focus on the Wits Council refusing to meet with student activists and vice-chancellor reinforces the idea that both the students and the compassionate vice-chancellor were abandoned by a management team that is dismissive of the urgency of the matter and concerned with themselves rather than their students. A similarly sympathetic treatment of the figure of the vice-chancellor was to be found in the *Oppidan Press.* Here, Dr Sizwe Mazibela is portrayed as openly defending protesting students and confronting police for escalating the situation at the protests (Lee-Rudolph, 2015).

They should understand our pain as poor, black students

Turning to student accounts of the protest, a similar rhetoric of blame is observable with students placing responsibility for the crisis on a number of constituencies. Initially, student activist accounts blamed universities for the unusually high fee increase and the protests, arguing that their dismissal of student objections left no other means of addressing the issue. In the various stories that were told about the protests, universities emerged as bad managers, absent, unwilling to engage, arrogant, racist, and untransparent. Accounts targeted vice-chancellors and university management specifically, describing these individuals as physically and emotionally absent as well as neglectful and immoral. As protests broke out around the country, blame was also shifted onto the ANC government which was characterised as illegitimate, untrue to its values, detached and uninvolved; government officials seemed not to show concern for and empathy for students in that they were dismissive of the seriousness of the crisis. As the protests formed and then escalated, students also placed blame on the middle class and private sector, constructing narratives around their lack of financial involvement in tertiary education.

The trope of the absent vice-chancellor was not just a feature of mainstream media but was present in student accounts; however, here the trope was associated with the story of university mismanagement. For example, Wits SRC legal affairs officer Mohamed Patel said that Vice-Chancellor Prof. Habib "should stop hiding from students [by attending summits] and issuing statements on radio" (Kumalo, 2015a:2). Patel adds: "[Prof. Habib] is ashamed to face us. He runs the university like a business. The fee issue needs to be concluded now and not later" (Kumalo, 2015a:2). The comments suggest that student activists view Prof. Habib as shameful and cowardly. This portrayal is extended by the accusation that Prof. Habib does not wish to engage with students on the ground but would rather talk via detached channels such as radio; this adds to the characterisation of him as disengaged and arrogant. What is also proposed is that he does not have the students' best interests at heart if he operates the university like a business whose focus is on making profit and benefitting top management instead of ensuring that the university is an institution of learning for all where students are the most important beneficiaries. The idea of Prof. Habib running the university like a business hints at the emerging narrative and anxiety that universities are driven by a business rationale, mismanaging funds and autonomy to benefit the 'CEOs' instead of their students.

As in mainstream newspapers, the story of university disengagement was continued through the depiction of students as a low priority to universities. Student Keke Maki says protesters will "stop all academic and administrative processes at [the Cape Peninsula University of Technology] until they [are] afforded a meeting with management" (Tswanya, 2015:4). Similarly, student leader Brian Kamanzi explains that they "have tried to engage institutions but they don't want to listen. If [student protesters] close all campuses, then Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande will notice and take [their] demands seriously" (Monama, 2015a). These phrases are marked by a tone of desperation. In this reading, student activists are portrayed as anxious to engage with but ignored by a stubborn and hostile university. In addition, the repeated description of universities as unwilling to listen suggests that universities see little value in the students' concerns and input. This renders universities as arrogant because they assume that they are superior to and more knowledgeable than students. What is also important to note is Kamanzi's use of "will" in relation to governmental help which suggests that students are certain that the government will help them; in this way, government is depicted as compassionate and a source of redemption.

31

Another area of focus in student accounts was racial discrimination as students chose to frame universities as sites of institutional racism. A Cape Peninsula University of Technology student, for example, offers a specific and emotive rendition of universities and their mistreatment of black students in an article by *The Star*. The student says: "[f]inances are used to kick away the black child. The institutions [have] been intimidated by the influx of black students and they keep bringing increases to keep them away" (Tswanya, 2015:4). Here the image of a child is used again but it is a jarring one of an institution "kick[ing] away the black child". The action of kicking someone away is a violent one, worsened by the idea that the person being kicked is a child, who is granted the characteristics of defencelessness and innocence. Further, the explanation offered for this action is intimidation. In this way, the institution is characterised as fearful of and threatened by black South Africans, suggesting that the universities are weak in character but also racist because this sense of fear and threat is based on race. In this way, universities are presented as bullies, violent and uncaring. This example also points to the tensions and questions around the identity of an African university when the academy is seen as a product of the Western world. Universities are portrayed as racist as they wish to maintain a white identity in an African setting. The language of rejection was also evident in social media. Student Zikisa Maqubela, for example, also addresses race through his tweet that "'black' universities have raised the need to transform but [it] has only been taken seriously now that 'white' universities [are affected]" (16 October 2015). Racism is suggested by presenting the needs of black students as inferior to the discomfort of white students, staff and university management as it is only this white discomfort that moves anyone to action.

A tone of suspicion and an attitude of cynicism toward the authorities and their statements is also prevalent in student activist accounts. For example, in an article by *The Star* an unnamed student targets universities and their management of funds, saying that they "do not even receive financial statements stating how much of [their] bursaries are being utilised and on what, and then [they] are just informed that [they] owe the institution money" (Phillips, 2015, p. 3). Another aspect of this suspicion played out in the questions that were raised about university autonomy. Students, such as South African Students Congress president Makhombuti Ntuthuko, argued the university autonomy "made it difficult for the government to regulate the way they [universities] decided on the fees" (Moatshe, 2015a:1), proposing that government investigate the fee hike (Moatshe, 2015a:1). Again this suggests an attitude of suspicion. In this way, students placed the blame for the situation on universities,

highlighting another nuance in the blame game, namely that universities greedily mismanage their funds and autonomy. In this way, they are presented as unwilling to relinquish control for the betterment of the state and its citizens.

As suggested above, a new angle was introduced into the debate by student protester accounts that placed blame on government instead of the universities. This angle appeared about a week into the movement as students started to question the ANC and its legitimacy. An example of this is found in Mcebo Dlamini's statement that "he had always known the ANC to be a party that respected people" (Tau, Moagi, Zibi, et. al., 2015:2). This comment could be read as sarcastic in tone, suggesting that Dlamini disbelieves his own statement. This sarcasm further suggests that Dlamini is holding the ANC to its traditions, thus challenging the values of the ANC and questioning its integrity and dependability. In this way, government is construed as untrustworthy and disloyal, both to its values and to its followers. Dlamini is also reported asking ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe to address the student protesters on the ground, not on the stage, and for him to sit down because it "is not an ANC rally" (Tau, Moagi, Zibi, et. al., 2015:2). This comment has a caustic tone suggesting criticism of the ANC for being arrogant, further representing them as untrue to their party ideals. This highlights an important stand in the student's protests as they are seen to place blame for the protests on the government who seem unwilling to address the issue or student needs (because they no longer adhere to their own values of education for all) and wish to seem superior to the students in this confrontation.

Questions of ANC legitimacy were also raised in relation to the story of youth entitlement. Student protester Sinikiwe Mqadi accused the government of setting students up to feel entitled in her piece "Student revolution should be led by the collective, not individuals". She says:

> A group of ANC comrades, in their party shirts driving BMWs and Audis, arrived to deliver pizza and drinks for student protesters.
> Many students screamed and chanted: "Welcome, fellow comrades!"
> With my hoarse voice, I questioned those around me: "We just sang that we don't want capitalists' agenda but we're accepting charity from the party of corruption and clowns? The party that gave South Africa its neo-liberal agenda; the party of BMWs and Audis". (Mqadi, 2015:12).

Mqadi criticises the ANC on a number of fronts. First, she suggests that the ANC are capitalists, which is at odds with the ANC's history of communist alignment and its left-leaning manifestos. She implies that not only do they not adhere to their party values and traditions but also that they are willing to participate in the corrupt and competitive nature of capitalism that results in the oppression of the working classes. The insinuation is that they do not actually wish for poor students to have access to the means of social progression, such as education, thus de-legitimatising the actions of the ANC toward these student protesters. Second, she suggests that the ANC encourages students to mindlessly demand their rights, like education, in the same way that the government insensitively encourages poor students to accept and expect luxuries such as BMWs and pizza; in the process, they set students up to be entitled. Third, she also suggests that the government use unnecessary gifts as license to flout their actual duties, such as bettering funding for education. The suggestion that the government does not adhere to their more social democratic values ultimately points to the tension in society between different understandings of the social: in this instance, Mqadi questions whether society should be defined by capitalist competition or communist solidarity. What this tension suggests is that the ANC has adopted a kind of pseudo-communism in that they preach solidarity but undermine it with capitalist actions that continue to exclude the poor both from the means of production and from avenues of social mobility.

This debate is also strengthened by Mqadi's title in which she questions how society is perceived: as competing individuals or as a collective that work together. Mqadi suggests that right now society is comprised of individuals and so what is needed is political and social transformation as the government has set society up to align with capitalist values. This angle on the crisis thus undermines the notion of South Africa as a democratic nation, suggesting instead that change could be perceived as far more difficult to implement as it requires not just economic but social reform as well. As this example suggests, student activist reportage tended to frame the government as the silent source of the students' sense of entitlement but also as unwilling to fulfil the actual needs of all students. Other comments that focused on youth entitlement at the hands of the government included those made by Afriforum. A Facebook post that blamed the government's transformation agenda for the protests (Mabotja, 2015:4) suggested that by encouraging students and youth to pursue transformation, the government implicitly condoned dangerous and unlawful behaviour like that associated with protests.

Another significant point in student activist accounts is the way that student activists chose to frame government in similar terms to the universities, namely as disengaged from and hostile towards the poor. Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania president Ndiyakholwa Ngqulu, for example, said: "We thought that because he [President Zuma] is from a poor background, he would understand where we were coming from" (Moatshe, 2015a:1). This indicates that students felt that President Zuma had forgotten his history as a poor person (and therefore the experience he shares with students) by becoming wealthy and powerful. Here the discussion elicits debate about forms of political solidarity based on class and race as well as the ANC's commitment to the poor. In this light, student accounts tend toward the depiction of government as disloyal to poor and black South Africans and as reneging on their promise to uplift the poor. This also adds to the developing discussion of the ANCs failings and contrasts with an alternative reading of government as sympathetic and involved when universities were not. This criticism of government leaders was extended to black university managers. One student protester criticised the black vice-chancellor of Rhodes, saying that the students expected Dr Mazibela to "understand [their] pain as poor black students" (Tau, Moagi, Zibi, et. al., 2015:2). Again, this comment suggests that black leaders were perceived as denying their connections to the poor.

Various student activist accounts confirm a view of government as unable show genuine concern and empathy with struggling students, even in decisions meant to benefit them. They also tend to confirm a view of government as dominated by self-interest, evident in the overwhelming emphasis they placed on ending the protests, even if only temporarily. A number of student accounts accuse government of being uninterested in finding a remedy and having no "clear direction in dealing with student demands" (Cele, 2015:14). This labels the discussion as futile and repetitive. This line of thought is also promoted by the author of the article, S'thembile Cele, who describes the resolution of a temporary moratorium on fees as a "last-ditch attempt by government" (2015:14). What is also evident in many student accounts is the tone of disappointment, suggesting a pervasive disillusionment with government process. This is emphasised in use of the words and phrases such as "no clear direction" and "futile exercise", and "no results" as well as the perception of a cyclical pattern in which issues are discussed repeatedly with no progress being made. This is echoed in the idea that the moratorium on fees was a "last-ditch attempt" to end current nationwide chaos rather than an attempt to prevent the crisis from resurfacing. What these comments suggest is that the student perceived the government's response to the crisis as lacking in seriousness;

government also seemed to endorse misdirected aims that were of no benefit to poor students. The crisis is therefore blamed on a disconnected and dismissive government who do not wish either to address or find long-term remedies for the issues at hand.

This sentiment of a disengaged government was also upheld in public commentator accounts with Naushad Omar saying "The ANC government needs to wake up from its self-induced coma and provide the requisite leadership to solve the university funding problem" (2015:12). Academic Pierre de Vos made a similar point when he tweeted that "There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced or the preferably unheard" (27 October 2015). The tone of these comments is disdainful, suggesting a perception of government as being at fault because they have not engaged with students and the crisis. These comments therefore imply that government is aware of the issues but that they purposefully exclude students and universities by ignoring them and using the excuse that they are actually unaware of the situation and their role in it. In this story strand of government dismissal it is clear that the government seems not care about its citizens as they should, portraying government as moribund, inert and backward.

While student activist accounts placed a large portion of the blame on universities and government, they also expressed the idea of a collective social responsibility that many other constituencies had neglected, thus echoing Mqadi's question about definitions of the social. One important topic in this discussion was that of education and how it can be used as an exclusionary tool. Thus one commentator framed his argument as a reaction to "the commodification of higher education" (Masutha, 2015). In this and other examples, the debate about Fees Must Fall thus widens significantly to include the broader question of post-apartheid education. Student Mukovhe Masutha argued that more thought needed to be given to the necessity of formal education as the main means of occupational and social mobility in order to avoid tertiary education becoming a form of racism. He says "If the ladder of educational opportunity rises high at the doors of some youth and scarcely rises at the doors of others, while at the same time formal education is made a prerequisite to occupational and social advance, then education may become the means, not of eliminating race and class distinctions, but of deepening and solidifying them". Here the metaphors of a ladder and door places emphasis on differential access and the difficulties faced by poorer students who fall short of the requirements because they lack suitable aid. This metaphor also alludes to the idea of 'climbing the social ladder' and of education as a tool of social exclusion. Therefore

the blame for the ongoing social and economic inequality, and crisis in general, is attributed to the universities, government entities, such as the National Treasury and the Department of Higher Education and Training, as well as the wealthy.

Masutha also raises the issue of the youth's dissatisfaction with the new South Africa in relation to democracy and the associated idea of social solidarity. He says:

> If we claim to agree with President Nelson Mandela when he said education is the most powerful tool we can use to change an unjust world, then we must also agree that prohibiting some youth from accessing education is an act of keeping an unjust world the same. (Masutha, 2015).

By invoking the image of Nelson Mandela, Masutha suggests that there is a tension between democracy according to Nelson Mandela and the youth's experience of post-apartheid South Africa. This suggests that the public are hypocritical as they choose to ascribe ideologically to Nelson Mandela's view of post-apartheid South Africa, and use it for their own agendas, yet do nothing to ensure its implementation for everyone. This line of thinking also invokes the failure of the government as they have been unable personally to adhere to (and encourage the public to implement) the values and dream set before them by their previous leader. Masutha and other student leaders thus present society as disengaged and quietly supportive of discrimination and injustice. This dehumanises society for their lack of concern and care for fellow citizens, suggesting that they are the ones to blame for the current reality of inequality.

Other student's accounts placed emphasis on the failure of the post-apartheid state by challenging the myth of the Rainbow Nation, such as Ameera Conrad's opinion piece "The kids are not ok", published in *Cape Argus*. She says:

> Black people are stuck. And after 21 years of swimming, we're finally coming up to breathe, but we're finding that we can't, because so-called "adults" keep trying to cover our mouths. People keep trying to shove this idea of a peaceful and unified Rainbow Nation down our throats with their Bokke Friday and their #ProteaFire, but our country is on fire, and until recently the "adults" haven't realised. (Conrad, 2015:12).

The metaphor of swimming suggests that black South Africans have struggled since South Africa became a democracy, thus challenging the idea that political and legal equality equates

to equality in real life. The extended metaphor suggests that "coming up to breathe" is the attempt to voice these struggles, suggesting that black South Africans can only survive if they express their experiences and explain their struggles. However, even 21 years into democracy "adults" attempt to stop them from breathing and speaking by "covering their mouths", suggesting both metaphorical suffocation and actual silencing. The "adults" Conrad refers to include the government, university management and the privileged members of society that ascribe to and attempt to perpetuate the white middle class ideology of the Rainbow Nation – that South Africa is a diverse nation and all challenges can be overcome through this diversity – by participating in what Conrad suggests are stereotypically middle class distractions from reality such as "Bokke Friday and #ProteaFire". Conrad disrupts this ideology by suggesting that some challenges cannot be overcome by "embracing our diversity" alone and that university management, government and even some members of the middle class are aware of the reality of the poor but choose to ignore it. The tension between social classes here is highlighted by the idea that, in addition to doing nothing to solve the country's obvious issues, those who have authority and class and economic power continue to ignore those that are trying to raise these issues and find solutions. Stories like these challenged cherished national values and assumptions by suggesting that the Rainbow Nation ideology is a farce. This builds into the narrative of student protesters being excluded by the upper classes and authorities of South Africa by undermining the prevailing post-apartheid myth of "national reconciliation", ultimately placing the blame of the crisis on these socially superior groups.

Another aspect of the story of middle class neglect alleges that the Fees Must Fall protests only caught the nation's attention because they disrupted white middle-class space. This argument is taken up, for example, by Leila Khan in her opinion piece "Connecting struggles: bread, milk and money" (2015:4). Here the title alludes to the biblical image of the promised-land: the land of milk and honey. However, the utopian image, which is used here as a reference to South Africa, is undermined by reducing the name to basic necessities. In this way, it is suggested that while post-apartheid South Africa has been idealised by many as a land of unity and equality, the reality is that there are basic struggles that destabilise this myth. In addition, the actual piece also suggests that the protests were only noticed by the white middle class because the voicing of this basic struggle was inconvenient to the group and not because they were moved to sympathetic action. This plays into a broader narrative of exclusion and whiteness or white disengagement where South Africa's white middle class

are perceived as being removed from, and uncaring toward, the poor both in a physical and emotional sense. Interestingly, Melissa Steyn suggests that this attitude is a result of white South Africans having lost their place of ideological privilege in the new South Africa and is therefore the discourse of a group too preoccupied with attempting to re-claim their identity and resisting the re-placement of their power (2004:169). Steyn's argument adds to the figuring of white South Africans as self-centred. One would assume that because the two groups of people overlap in a physical space, the exclusion of the marginalised would be removed. However, the exclusion that these marginalised groups experience is rather intensified as the privileged group continues to neglect the oppressed. This highlights the class tension prevalent is South Africa as these stories of middle class neglect suggest that the values and lived realities of the classes do not correlate and so there is no empathy shown by the economically privileged toward those who are downtrodden. In this way, South Africa emerges as a fragmented and divided society, separated on class and race lines.

In line with this are the views of another commentator on Twitter who argued that "The cost of tertiary education sends the message that [you] are unworthy of an education if [you] aren't rich" (X, 15 October 2015). This shows a shift in the focus: the privileged classes seem not only to neglect the poor by ignoring them but also seem to go out of their way to oppress them and prevent them from studying. This intensifies the cruelty associated with the middle class and fashions a new story of class struggle and oppression.

Education is still ANC's lodestar
Government was quite slow to join the public debate and, when they did, their statements were largely perfunctory and aimed to dismiss the situation. Government tended to rely on individual voices of authority, such as higher education minister Blade Nzimande, instead of releasing thorough reports as a unified group. When they did release accounts, many took the dominant form of blame. In the initial stages of the crisis, government responded by blaming universities and cited their autonomy as the cause; however, they soon moved onto blaming students for the protests, depicting students as wayward. In this earlier discourse, universities are presented as exclusionary, entitled to funding from the state, greedy, racist, classist, uninvolved, disengaged and stubborn. In turn, stories about wayward students included portrayals of them as unwilling to work for financial aid, uneducated, impatient, greedy, entitled, violent and intransigent. As with the student activist accounts, the government also

included other constituencies in the general rhetoric of blame such as the private sector and the middle and upper classes.

As in the student accounts, government engagements with the crisis placed emphasis on material exclusion and the obstructive role of university authorities, thus placing the blame for the crisis on universities. In a press release titled "President Zuma looking forward to meeting students and university leadership", President Zuma clearly blames universities by saying that they are fully autonomous and that the increase was "determined by universities independently of the government" (The Presidency, 2015c). As with the students, the dominant tone was one of suspicion and cynicism. Higher education spokesman Khaye Nkwanyana made the following point: "Institutions of higher learning sometimes raise their fees in ways that… serve as an exclusion mechanism" (Morrissey & Monama, 2015:2). Nzimande echoed this sentiment by questioning why some universities were increasing fees by 7% and others by 12% (Jansen, 2015:6). He said that "inflation-linked fee increases [are] inevitable" but where the fee hikes are "double the inflation rate" it is irrational, not transparent and in need of investigation (Jansen, 2015:6). This angle continued to be proposed by government throughout the crisis; the ANC and the Higher Education Transformation Networks said that they believe that the Higher Education Act (and the subsequent institutional autonomy that tertiary education institutions enjoy) had been twisted and abused by universities in order to "delay transformation" (Petersen, Serrao, & Mtyala, 2015:1).

In this reading of events, President Zuma, Nkwanyana, Nzimande, the ANC and the Higher Education Transformation Networks suggest a suspicion about the institutions' spending and an anxiety about institutions' motives behind the proposed fee increases. Ulterior motives, such as excluding certain types of students and having absolute control, were suggested on the basis that the result would be different if someone else had control over fees. In other words, government having control over universities would ensure that fee increases are driven by necessity only. Nzimande furthers this sense of suspicion and portrays universities as the main culprits of the crisis. In this way, universities are represented as exclusionary, classist, racist and wishing to fulfil their own agendas. They are further accused of abusing their autonomy to resist transformation into an "African institution".

Part of the dialogue around who was to blame led the government to articulate a view of universities as suffering from the sense that they are entitled to more funding and support

from others rather than securing the funding on their own. Nzimande complained that the "public purse [was] already overstretched" and that "greater efforts should be made [by universities] towards collaboration with the private sector" (Maqhi, 2015:12). The use of the exaggerated term "overstretched" creates an image of a government that is over-extended in its commitments, under pressure, and tied to institutions that refuse to play their part. Through the use of the comparative term "greater", Nzimande also implies that there has been a lack of effort from universities. In this way, universities are depicted as entitled; they demand concessions from an overreached government but do not fulfil their responsibilities as a community institution. In this sense government spokespeople drew on the capitalist discourse of entrepreneurship against the competing claims of state responsibility, thus emphasising a view of the university as financially independent and needing to 'pay its own way'. This relates to one of the main ideological disputes the movement initiated: where does state responsibility begin and end? A contradiction is found in this argument as here government seem to tend toward the idea that a university should be run like a business. Yet, their previous statements about autonomy suggest that they disapprove of universities managing their own funding as universities are inclined to make financial decisions that benefit top management over the students. In similar fashion, universities are also blamed for their inability to deal with the crisis themselves while President Zuma often emerges as the hero who intervened and "eased tensions" (Makhetha, 2015c:1). This framing is at odds with student accounts of the crisis which tended to suggest that government was disengaged and aloof.

When student activist and public accounts starting targeting government more intensely, government continued to divert the blame away from themselves. In a defensive letter by the special advisor to Nzimande Stephanie Allais titled "Attack on Nzimande wholly unwarranted", Allais debunks some of the accusations and blame-placing made by political analyst Eusebius McKaiser. She starts off by saying that Nzimande has not wished to "sacrifice institutional autonomy" and therefore has not been absent in his role of "making public statements, meeting key stakeholders, and searching for additional funds (Allais, 2015:15). Secondly, she explains that institutional transformation is an ongoing process, but has been urged on primarily by Nzimande and his unique transformation program. Lastly, Allais says that the Department of Higher Education and Training has inherited a corrupt, inefficient and ineffective Skills Education and Training Authorities system that has ignored adult education and community colleges. In these statements, government is depicted as

ethical, responsible, efficient and rational as they choose to not overstep their boundaries, invest in those that have been historically overlooked, and remedy past inattention. In this way, government is also redeemed from previous portrayals as disengaged. Instead, universities are blamed for abusing their autonomy; the public are blamed for being critical about a lack of transformation when they are just uninformed and impatient; the department's predecessors are blamed for neglecting their duties; and students are blamed for greedily denying more deserving and desperate institutions the funding they need.

Allais claims are reinforced by other political figures who argue that universities have been purposefully exclusionary not only toward students but also the government. One such example is the account by Alex Mashilo, spokesperson of the South African Communist Party who argues that "Since 2009 there are many instances where the Minister [of Higher Education and Training] intervened when disagreeing with [university] decisions, and [the universities] took him to court, where the courts upheld universities' autonomy" (Magome, 2015:2). This account suggests that universities are exclusionary because they reject any government interventions, even if these interventions may benefit students, because they do not benefit university agenda or their autonomy. This account highlights a more general anxiety about university autonomy and whether it is beneficial to the people universities are meant to serve or not.

As suggested above, this story strand was superseded by another which chose to place blame on students' lazy and entitled attitudes. In this way, the students and the universities are aligned. Government accounts claimed that students were snobbish as they only wished to study at the country's best institutions and proposed that students felt superior to attending colleges or technical universities where government already provided free education (Jansen, 2015:6). They were also accused of being unwilling to make the effort to secure the full financial aid government awards "academically deserving" students, even despite government increasing funding for the poor by nearly 1000% (Jansen, 2015:6; The Presidency, 2015a). This argument blames students for the protests as they are perceived to be entitled; in this reading, they engage in disruptive protests despite the fact that free education is already available. In addition, this claim suggests that protesting students are not academically-deserving because genuinely-deserving, poor students would already have government-aided education and do not need further help for now. Thus, what is also alleged is that students are greedy. Further, in this version of the story, government leaders are

accorded the position of benevolent providers as they have already ensured that free education is accessible to those who are willing to accept it. In this way, the government questioned the legitimacy of the protests and undermined the students' position. Additionally, this line of argument indicates an important social fracture between the government and public's perception of the quality of technical and vocational colleges and that, contrary to government claims, the public continues to assume that social mobility is only granted through top tier universities.

Along with the story of snobbish and entitled students, government also chose to shift the blame onto students by questioning their intelligence and rationality. In a news article tellingly entitled "Students told: read more, ruin less" Nzimande is reported as saying, "You march and demonstrate, but read and develop tools of analysis, which is crucial because you often burn buildings when you can't argue anymore" (Hans, 2015:2). This quote delegitimises the protests by emphasising their destructive nature and highlighting students' immaturity: according to Nzimande, they lack the intelligence to present a convincing argument and thus turn to violence; they also continue to fight even when the authorities have reached a final decision. It must be noted, however, that a different reading of this criticism raises another point of contention in the movement: if students cannot access education, how are they supposed to be educated? Nzimande's account ignores this question suggesting that it is not a relevant counter-argument.

Another element related to portraying students as unintelligent can be seen in the accusation that students had misinterpreted government statements, particularly statements about free education and the nature of the government's engagement with students (Morrissey, Nkosi, et. al., 2015:1; The Presidency 2015f). This indicates that one of the ways the ANC dealt with its failure to deliver is by accusing people of faulty reasoning. The government's comments include an emphasis of funding specifically for the "academically-deserving poor", which seems to makes a distinction between the legitimate and non-legitimate poor, and engagement specifically with "student leaders", which seems to make a distinction between which students' input is valid. In this way, students are depicted as the guilty party since they are holding government to account through disruption for something that was not offered in the first place. The tension created by the question of who actually is to blame for the violence suggests a fracture in the expectations of government service delivery and the resolution of the crisis.

The public were given similar treatment to students in government accounts as the government also blamed them for being impatient to implement change. Government press releases emphasised that they were aware of the fees issue even before universities announced their fee hikes and that they had been busy formalising a plan to address the issue (The Presidency, 2015b; The Presidency 2015d). While these statements make the point that government is well aware of the issue and had been intent on solving it, it most importantly allows the government to depict students and members of the public as pushy and focused on the instant implementation of the demands rather than the long-term process and goals that the government are working toward. This perceived lack of patience from the public, similar to that of students, is also given as a reason for government's lack of progress in averting the crisis. In addition, the idea that government are engaged with students and connected to reality contradicts accounts which tended to depict government as disengaged. What is interesting here too is the government's promotion of a discourse of gradual social change which is in direct opposition to the discourse of revolution that student activists promoted.

Gwede Mantashe, ANC secretary-general, chose to focus on the aspect of transformation, excusing the ANC by blaming an uninterested public. Mantashe assures critics that the ANC has come up with and are in the process of implementing policies for better access to higher education as it is still their "lodestar" (2015:4). A lodestar is a guiding light and this image is used to suggest that free education is the main goal of the ANC, rejecting accounts that accuse the ANC of ignoring their promises to deliver free education as well as those that suggest that free education was never a promise made by the ANC. However, unlike the responses that blame students for being ignorant and greedy, Mantashe depicts students as involved, praising them for "assisting the ANC to implement its policy decisions" through their protests because "demanding change cannot be left to government or the ANC alone" (2015:4). In Mantashe's reading, government and students emerge as in tune with one other as they both have the same goal, thus countering other accounts that portray government as disengaged from students. This suggests that the public's wilful disinterest and lack of recognition work against the government and student's actions and goals to follow their "lodestar". In addition, Mantashe places blame on universities again saying that universities constantly use the ANC "as a scapegoat for their decisions" (2015:4), thus positioning universities as part of the group whose actions run counter to the government' and students' mission.

44

As protests drew nearer to the end of 2015, government also mirrored student blame-placing when they began to implicate the private sector. Nzimande argued that "there [is] enough money for free university education, but the resources [are] largely in the private sector" and that "government must have the political will to tax the rich and wealthy to fund higher education" (Merten, 2015c:4). Later in the debate, Nzimande's deputy Mduduzi Manana presents the private sector as silent (Merten, 2015c:4). These comments place a portion of the blame on the private sector which is represented as lacking in social responsibility. This accusation also ties in with a much broader debate about the South African economy and whether it should be seen as an example of laissez faire capitalism based on unfettered competition and the survival of the fittest or a society which offers support for the poor and vulnerable, thus drawing on the model of the welfare state. However, in using the word "must" in connection to the term "political will", Nzimande also implicates the government, thus suggesting that government leaders have failed to extract this money from the private sector. This points to another tension in society about who owns the means of production and how they choose to spend their resources. While the money is rightfully the private sectors', there seems to be an expectation of social responsibility placed upon them that will have to be enforced should they choose not to act upon it themselves. This responsibility, however, is an ideological one that the private sector has no legal obligation to fulfil. Interesting too is the contradiction in the government's position: they promote corporate responsibility but also blame universities for not being corporates in the more traditional sense. Debates such as these expose the tensions and contradictions between a capitalist society and the values of the constitution which emphasise social responsibility and redress.

Mamphela Ramphele offers a contrasting perspective on social responsibility by critiquing a variety of constituencies in her piece "A four-step plan to tackle the education needs of SA". She takes an inclusive approach, arguing that we are all in some way responsible for the protests and, as a result of our failures, students have now had to speak out for themselves (Ramphele, 2015:5). Here the question of who is to blame is raised again with a far more complex approach. Ramphele suggests that there is no simple answer to the situation and that a social role, and a social responsibility to fulfil that duty, is given to everyone including the government, universities, the private sector and the public. This account juxtaposes sharply with the general trend of the debate which is to deny culpability and shift the blame. In this way, Ramphele highlights the fractured nature of South African society as the accounts of

other various constituencies never accept responsibility for the crisis but rather insist on placing blame solely on another group.

Falling falling falling

The story of the event, as related by university management, repeats many of the blame-placing gestures of previous accounts. An analysis of various media statements reveals two main narrative strands. Firstly, university accounts were dominated by stories about government neglect and the failure of the post-apartheid state. Secondly, university accounts also chose to feature student activists in their narratives, depicting them as greedy and undeserving. While universities blamed government as the initial cause of the crisis, it was students' actions that were blamed for the extended length of the protests.

Universities were quick to defend themselves and the proposed fee hike by blaming the failure of government. Prof. Andrew Crouch, for example, is quoted saying that the "core issue should be the under-funding of institutions", as it results in universities compromising on the quality of education (Monama, Morrissey & Mani, 2015:6). In this view, universities are portrayed as victims of a poor economy, particularly when much of the study and library material is internationally sourced; in this sense they are over-reached providers who already play a major role in supporting disadvantaged students (Monama, Morrissey, et. al., 2015:6). A similar reading of events was articulated by other political commentators such as DA leader Mmusi Maimane and Zwelinzima Vavi. Here these commentators accused government of violating the Bill of Rights because of their financial neglect; this suggests a serious noncompliance to the ANC's original values. In these claims, government is represented as unsupportive of their own state institutions. They also contradict the version offered by government in which universities are represented as uncaring toward their students. In this way they offer a challenge to other views of the government as liberating and redemptive, thus opening up the broader critique of the ANC and their failure and dishonesty in dealing with poor and black South Africans.

The debate about universities' institutional autonomy also received input from universities. Max Price, vice-chancellor at UCT, spoke against removing institutional autonomy arguing that history has demonstrated what happens when governments become the main power holder in African post-colonial universities and that universities without autonomy "become controlled by the state in ways which [start] serving state interests rather than the interests of

a neutral and independent academy" (Petersen, et. al., 2015:1). In this way, Price renders government as interfering, disinterested in student's academic needs and potentially corrupt. In light of this, a fear was raised about government being poor decision makers with arguments highlighting the idea that government only responds to issues in moments of crisis and that that leads to poor decisions (ANA, 2015:6). This story also counteracts the government's depiction of universities as unresponsive and dismissive, deflecting the idea of universities as poor decision-makers and managers back onto government. Because of this, government become portrayed as a group who are geared more to quash the physical crisis and save themselves instead of making a plan that is the best (and sustainable) for all involved parties.

University accounts also placed blame on students for the cause of the crisis, thus revisiting the question of welfare and subsidy. Questions around who deserves free education arose, adding to the debate about whether education is a right or a privilege (Monama, Morrissey, et. al., 2015:6). In this argument, financially stable students are the ones made to take the blame for the crisis specifically as they would prefer not to pay, even though they can. In this way, middle class students are presented as entitled and greedy as they wish to have the same benefits as those who are realistically deserving of and desperate for benefits. This stance also raises questions about what the wealthy will do with the money they save on tertiary education, suggesting that they may not reinvest that money into education but rather use it to widen the gap between poor and rich more. These ideas were echoed by students who did not want to protest. Some argued that "the demand for free education is impossible" and should be abandoned (Nkosi, 23 October 2015). Others argued that "Rome wasn't built in a day but it can be destroyed in one" and so student activists should allow for the processes to take place before demanding overnight change and obstructing others' right to education (Chetty, 23 October 2015).

The libraries have more people than your "mass action"
A variety of other individuals and groups gave accounts of the protests and published their opinions on who was to blame for the crisis. These public commentators included academics, cultural groups, parents, and general members of the public. Themes of state failure, disengagement, racism, and student waywardness were also found in public commentator accounts. However, public commentators offered fresh perspectives on these themes.

Universities also faced blame from other members of the public, most particularly and interestingly from academics. Although the stories told by lecturers and other support staff were limited, there were a few examples posted on social media. The fact that these accounts were published on a social media is relevant as it suggests that these commentators were not able to access print media. In the stories that were told, universities were depicted as purposefully confusing, non-committal and alienating toward students (Concerned Academics at the University of Witwatersrand, 2015). These stories of the crisis clearly problematise the lack of communication from the university councils, particularly through their scathing tone. While the academic groups gave some sympathetic treatment to security personnel in their accounts, security was predominantly characterised as complicit when students became frustrated and panicked. These accounts principally present student activists as physically and intellectually excluded by universities.

The recurring image of the vice-chancellor in their ivory tower and the perception of university management as arrogant were found in accounts from a variety of constituencies (for example Isaacs, 2015:14). The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines the term ivory tower as "an impractical often escapist attitude marked by aloof lack of concern with or interest in practical matters or urgent problems" or "a secluded place that affords the means of treating practical issues with an impractical often escapist attitude" (2016). Visually, a tower is something that is tall and therefore removed by vertical space from other buildings. It gives the idea of being imposing or prominent, a place of comfortable refuge but also a place of seclusion and imprisonment. Ivory is a precious natural material, suggesting superiority, which is strengthened by its whitish colour which could indicate purity, righteousness, or even the colonial and apartheid idea of racial segregation and oppression of black bodies. The recurring image of vice-chancellors in ivory towers perpetuates the framing of student activists as physically, emotionally, and socially excluded by university management, places the blame for the crisis on universities that feel superior to students, and points again to the anxiety that those who are in authority over a group do not care for that group's interests.

Members of the public also blamed the government's excessive spending as the reason for under-funded institutions. Mother Brenda Olwagen posted on the UCT Rhodes Must Fall page that "government would rather spend millions, nay billions when added up over the past 20+ years, on their own immediate self-gratification, ludicrous overspending on ANC

conferences and parties, exorbitant and unnecessary luxurious travel costs (and let's not even go into Nkandla)" (20 October 2015). Olwagen uses exaggeration to portray government as wasteful and over-the-top. What is also interesting to note is the idea that she perceives government to rely on "immediate self-gratification"; government use this same excuse to blame student and public greed and impatience for the protests. Goemeona Mathule adds to this with his tweet that reads "No money for free education. What happened to the 36000 ghost employees ko bokone Bophirima [in the North West]? Useless government" (30 October 2015), alluding to the discovery of 36 000 employees on the government's payroll that were unaccounted for and that were costing the state R19 billion per annum. Mathule here undermines the government's excuse that they have no money as they Mathule proposes that they do but it is wasted on illegitimate expenses.

A permutation of the theme of the lazy, entitled student was found in accounts by members of the public that argued that student entitlement seemed to prevent them from finding a job to cover their fees. Many argued that their "children [found jobs] even though there was a trust fund set up for their further education" (Maxwell, 2015:12). The words "trust fund" allude to the middle class character of a trust fund baby, a person whose parents have set aside money for them to live off, removing the need to work. What these arguments suggest is that even when children of the middle to upper classes fit into this stereotype, they undermine it by working and so protesting students have no excuse not to do so too. These comments fit into the myth of the American Dream: that financial success and upwards class mobility is determined by hard work and enthusiasm, not an education, the access to resources or privilege. In addition, the value of working for an education was argued by the idea that it teaches poorer students not to drop out, which seemed like something poor students were prone to. The accounts used sarcasm and a condescending tone as well a sweeping statements to characterise protesters and, by extension, the working class and black South Africans (as protesters were mostly *poor*, *black* South Africans), as less intelligent and lazy. This argument particularly highlights the tensions and fractures between races and classes in South Africa, especially as the wealthy classes are predominantly the white minority and the working classes predominantly the black majority of South Africans.

A further nuance in the image of the lazy, entitled student was found in argument that the prolonged protests were the result of students refusing to study. This argument was promoted by a number of social media comments; one example is found the responses posted in the

comment section of UPRising's final list of demands that was published on UPRising's Facebook page. Student Layla du Plessis comments: "The libraries have more people than your "mass action" has. While you are out there fighting for your irrational and unrealistic demands, the rest of us are studying and preparing. We will see who win in the end, when the exam results come" (26 October 2015). Here the contrast between the fullness of the library and the protest crowds suggests that protesters diverge from the norm and are therefore disinterested in studying, choosing rather to protest and demand cheaper fees than work hard to achieve the necessary means of paying the fees. This ultimately suggests that student activists are the cause of their own crisis.

Discussion

This chapter has revealed the extent to which the public debate about the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement was dominated by the question of blame. By exploring the details of this central narrative strand, this chapter has sought to elucidate the various nuances of the wider arguments as well as the ideas, preoccupations and assumptions that inform them. In general, what is most interesting to note is that in all the accounts that address the question of who is to blame, not one constituency voluntarily accepts responsibility for the crisis or the blame placed by others on them for the crisis. Instead, all constituencies make a concerted effort to shift the blame onto others. This trend suggests that various tensions exist in South Africa and that there is an absence of cohesion between South Africans in general and that there is a sense of "each man for himself" in the crisis and progress of our nation. This is directly opposed to the values of the Constitution and democracy that promote a communal mission that requires all citizens to participate in building up their country and uplifting the poor and oppressed.

The stories of blame took a number of different forms. Universities were blamed for being disengaged and dismissive of student interests. They were also accused of racism and being absent leaders. Government were blamed for being disconnected from the public and for lacking solidarity with the poor and black. They were also accused of being illegitimate and the source of the post-apartheid state's failure. Students were blamed for being entitled and greedy as well as irrational. Lastly, the middle class and private sector were accused of being apathetic and ignorant about transformation and the poor's struggle. The discussion opened out from the narrower educational sphere to consider larger socio-political questions such as whether education is a right or a privilege and who should have access to free education.

Other questions revolved around how we should perceive society and whether South Africa is a group of competitive individuals or a collective working toward a shared goal. This opened up further debates about social responsibility and welfare. Some interrogated the purpose of university autonomy and the identity of universities, suggesting that there was confusion about whether they are state institutions or private businesses.

The various stories about blame were born out of the need to find the cause of an event and so explanations about who was responsible for the unusually high fee increases and the student's reaction to it featured extensively in public debate. By exploring this dominant rhetoric of blame, the chapter provides insight into the particular fractures, contradictions, anxieties and tensions in contemporary post-apartheid South African society. The first social tension that was exposed in the public debate was that between those with power and those without. The anxiety most predominantly expressed was about control – who should control universities and who should control the crisis. This anxiety was articulated by government, students, universities and parents and also led to the questioning of those currently in authority such as the ANC and university management, and whether these people truly support the aims of those they represent. Out of this emerged some interesting ironies: that universities were perceived by some to be businesses that benefit top management and exploit students rather than institutions of education that prioritise students; and that government is perceived to be a threat to democracy rather than a means of upholding it. This view is linked to widespread perceptions of government failure in the post-apartheid period, one which is particularly evident in the ANC's inability to align itself with its founding values. Primarily, those under the authority of others felt that their ideals were not being fairly represented by those in authority and that those in authority had their own agendas. Another theme in this debate was the question of communication or lack thereof. Students argued that universities and government did not communicate with them on an equal level and had a difference in perception about the urgency of the crisis, the resolution of the crisis and who the "academically deserving" is. Students felt that the response to the crisis was not urgent enough, the resolution was not sustainable enough and that the term "academically deserving" was limited whereas government (and universities, to some extent) felt that the crisis had been sufficiently rectified and clarified.

Another social fracture expressed by the accounts related to race and class, primarily the social tension between the poor black majority and the white middle class. Related to this is

the ongoing debate about the South African economy and the tensions that were exposed between the ANC's social democratic values and its capitalist actions. Other discussion revealed perceptions of TVET colleges in comparison to universities, where those who could not afford universities did not want to attend more affordable TVET colleges because they lacked prestige. The perceptions about whether South Africa is best served by welfarism or entrepreneurism and self-sufficiency was also discussed along with perceptions of social responsibility, where those with more financial power where questioned about the extent and nature of the help they offer those poorer than them and whether this help is a requirement or voluntary gesture. Further, this fault line generated the debate about who the "academically-deserving" is and if they are defined by race, class, previous oppression or a combination of factors. An anxiety was raised through this friction too which expressed the doubt that the wealthy would reinvest the money they save on free education back into the education sector and so the argument was made that the wealthy should not be included in any financial benefits or cuts. Overall, the social fracture between the predominantly white wealthy classes and predominantly black working classes suggested that the working classes viewed the upper classes as uncaring and stingy where the wealthy classes viewed the working class as lazy and undeserving of their financial aid.

Public debates also revealed social tensions between older and younger generations. The friction highlighted the concern of the older generations that the younger generations had been raised to expect everything as a right rather than a privilege to be earned. Part of this conflict also included the tension in perception of a democratic South Africa – the youth's perception of a democratic South Africa is a negative and hopeless one when compared to Nelson Mandela's perception of a democratic South Africa that older generations still cling to. Generally, the youth argue that while there may be ideological and legal change post-apartheid, the lived reality of many of the South Africans that were oppressed in apartheid has not changed. This discord between ideals and reality also relates to fragmentation in the race-class nexus: the perception of a democratic South Africa according to Nelson Mandela has become a white middle class ideal and a means of dismissing the current needs of black and poor South Africans. This is because the rationale that political and legal equality equates to practical equality is maintained as a logical argument in the face of clear economic and geographical race-class segregation. A fracture between cultures was also found in the accounts, particularly in terms of the tension surrounding the identity of a university in South Africa. While universities are seen as a product of Westernism, students felt that they should

still embody some sense of African identity, particularly in regard to student demographics and institutional priorities; however, student felt that white students were privileged over black students by university management, suggesting an institutional racism and denying the possibility of an African identity.

CHAPTER TWO

IT'S NOT ABOUT FEES, IT'S REALLY ABOUT INEQUALITY

As discussed in the first chapter, one of the main themes to emerge in the public debates generated by Fees Must Fall was the rhetoric of blame. In Chapter two, I expand on this question by looking at how the movement as a whole was portrayed by various constituencies. In considering the range of explanations of, and justifications for, the protests, this chapter discerns two primary motivations, those relating to the pursuit of social justice and those framed in more individual terms as personal relief. These explanations help to shed light on the current social, political and economic situation of South Africa, particularly by questioning its post-apartheid manifestations. Many of these explanations seek to describe the emergence of the movement, thus proposing various stories or myths of origin. As in the previous chapter, I will turn first to media accounts of the protest. I assess the general trends and themes of news reportage, paying attention to particular choices of language, narrative framing and images. I will then address student accounts as an important 'eye witness' constituency and then go on to consider the accounts offered by government. Finally I will analyse the stories told by other public figures including politicians, academics, parents and members of the public whose debate was published in print and on social media.

This youth protest is about everything

Unexpectedly, print media tended to endorse the presentation of the protest offered by student activists and Fees Must Fall supporters, using language and imagery in order to portray the movement as a positive, or at least purposeful, event. However, there were many different nuances to these positive portrayals as well as negative portrayals that counter-act them. Student media maintained a relatively neutral stance but also attempted to place the Fees Must Fall protests in the context of the other protests that took place on South African university campuses during and prior to 2015. In terms of mainstream media, the choice in language was far more expressive than that of student media. *Pretoria News*, for example, favoured descriptive imagery of uprising, revolution and war that linked the protests to previous political and social events. *City Press* offered a more intellectual engagement with the origins of the movement, interrogating whether the movement was politically, socially or

personally motivated. Other journalists, particularly those associated with *Cape Argus*, suggested that the movement was to be seen as an action against those who uphold the status quo; therefore the movement was characterised as a form of resistance to patriarchy and an attempt to engage with the plight of those living in a third world country. *Daily Sun*, by contrast, chose to highlight the personal experiences of poor, black individuals, encouraging sympathy from readers and suggesting that the movement was a reaction to systemic oppression and cyclical poverty.

Student media offered positive readings of the student protests by publishing pieces that explored not only the 2015 movement but also South Africa's long history of student protest. An interesting example is found in the article "University of KwaZulu-Natal on fire", published by *Vuvuzela*. Although published before the emergence of the official Fees Must Fall movement, the article is written in light of the fees protests that took place at UKZN in late September 2015, protests that anticipated later events. The article provides a timeline of previous student protests at UKZN, a university that author Zimasa Mpemnyama says "has been riddled with protests" over the last 15 years (2015). The article details what these protests have been about: outsourcing, food prices, financial exclusion, transport services, and accommodation, most of which affect poor, black students (Mpemnyama, 2015). The article also details incidents relating specifically to fees in 2000, 2010 and 2015 (Mpemnyama, 2015). In a similar fashion, *Oppidan Press* attempts to place the Fees Must Fall movement in context of the other student protests that took place in 2015. The article "2015 activism timeline" details major and minor protest events that took place throughout the year including the Rhodes Must Fall movement, the publication of the *Luister* documentary and the #BigotryMustFall SRC scandal at UCT (Oppidan Press, 2015). What these student publications do is place the Fees Must Fall movement in relation to these older campaigns, suggesting that the 2015 movement is a continuation of previous issues that university students face. In this sense, student media tended to promote the idea that the 2015 Fees Must Fall protest was just another attempt to change an ongoing reality of inaccessible or unfair education. This pre-empts the themes of long-term suffering, systemic and continued oppression as well as a variety of interlocking social issues which, as I go on to demonstrate, were dominant in the accounts of student activists.

While mainstream media tended to offer favourable representations of the movement, there were a few articles that took on more negative tones. A reading of headlines exposes the

negative representations of the movement in mainstream media. Headlines from *Pretoria News* exclaimed that the "Fees fight [had hit the] city" (2015) and that the "Country could go up in flames" (2015). The words fight and the image of destruction was complimented by *The Star*'s headline "SA students revolt" (2015). Here images of violence, aggression and ruin serve to render the movement as dangerous and rebellious. In addition, a similarly sensational depiction was found in the headline "State readies for fees chaos" (*City Press,* 2015), allowing the protests to appear disorderly. These images delegitimise the movement by representing it as superficial, irrational and even socially damaging.

Mainstream media also attempted to contextualise the movement in relation to other campus struggles by highlighting the secondary demands of the movement, instead of reporting solely on the fee demands. In "Students aim to close down campuses countrywide", published in *The Star*, journalist Tebogo Monama makes the point that students also demanded that universities end the outsourcing of support staff, adding that many of these outsourced workers joined the fees protests too (Monama, 2015a:4). Here Monama presents the motivations behind the movement as multi-faceted and driven by the desire to remove practices that do not benefit poor South Africans, such as fee increments and outsourcing as both outcomes seem equally important to students and the workers they represent. Thus, newspapers gave sympathetic attention to those that are not students or directly affected by the fee increase by presenting the movement as community-centred.

A common feature of mainstream news reportage was the use of war imagery. This was in accordance with the idea put forward by students themselves that the movement was a battle in an ongoing war for better access to education. These include images such as that of students "invading" Senate House in the article "Students up in arms!" published by *Daily Sun* (Kumalo & Motloutsi, 2015:2). The word invasion suggests an attack on a foreign or enemy land and the phrase "up in arms!" suggests chaos and outrage but also perhaps a call to arms in protest of a national horror. The headline "V-day for students" (Khoisan, 2015:1), published as the lead article in the 24 October edition of the *Saturday Argus*, relates the protests to the end of the Second World War. Tankiso Makhetha reports in "Protester furious over JZ's failure to address them on zero percent hike", published by *Pretoria News*, that after the march to the Union Buildings, "motorists entering the city from the N4 and N1 posted on social media that the city looked like a sea of smoke and fire" (2015a:1), suggesting a war zone or city after a bombing; *City Press* actually calls the scene outside the

Union Buildings a "war zone" ("#What does it mean?", 2015:5). While presenting the protests as a war may seem negative as war carries negative connotations, it is also important to note that this is one of the ways in which student activists presented the movement. Therefore, here mainstream media tends to validate student protests by supporting their narrative of the protests as a battle against oppression and those who entrenched it.

As suggested above, many commentators in the mainstream media sought to explain the events by comparing them to previous uprisings and revolutions, particularly the French Revolution. The French Revolution comprised a number of bloody public uprisings against the excessive French aristocracy that took place in France between 1789 and 1799. The revolution was known for its use of the guillotine in the execution of some of the aristocracy, including the king. It is also remembered for an event known as the Storming of the Bastille, when protesters forced entry into the Bastille Saint-Antoine, the fortress and prison that represented the aristocracy's oppressive power. While student activists represented the movement as a form of revolution, it was mainstream media that drove home the idea of revolt with imagery drawn explicitly from the French Revolution. *Daily Sun*, for example, reported that protesters were "Storming the gates" of Parliament or the Wits Senate Hall, much like the storming of the Bastille (Moobi, Muvhenzhe, Mokgolo, Plaatjies, Manona, Qwazi & News24, 2015:1). In an article in *The Star*, "Student power", it is reported that students "called for his [Nzimande's] head" (Merten, 2015a:1), suggesting images of the guillotine. *The Star*'s front page on 20 October 2015 is emblazoned with the headline "SA STUDENTS REVOLT" (Morrissey, Nkosi, et. al.), confirming that the mainstream media see these protests as a revolution led by student revolutionaries. This rendition of the protests suggests a political tone as a revolution is generally an uprising against an organisational structure or those with political power, which, in this case, can be applied to the country's government and university management. As previously discussed, revolution does not always have a positive connotation; however, here mainstream media concurred with the explanations and motivations favoured by student activists by figuring the movement as a political response to a governance system in need of radical change, thus helping legitimise the campaign.

Parallels were also drawn to the Arab Spring rebellion. One example is *City Press*'s information piece titled "#What does it mean?", an article that reveals their perceptions of the movement while also trying to explain the movement to the reader. The Arab Spring was an

uprising that played out across the Middle East in 2011 and was noted for its youthful leaders and use of social media in organising the demonstrations. The main aim of the protests was to fight against a number of social issues including government corruption, economic decline and violations of human rights. According to the *City Press* article, "The Arab Spring was a historic moment for many countries and millions of young people throughout the Middle East. But that movement, also spread by social media, proved as ephemeral as our Rainbow Nation. The students' movement should have greater longevity" (2015:2). This parallel suggests a few things. The first is that the Arab Spring and the Fees Must Fall movement are similar in the political reforms they aimed to achieve, thus portraying the 2015 protests as a revolution. Secondly, the socio-political circumstances of South Africa are emphasised through the comparison between the Arab Spring and the ephemerality of the "Rainbow Nation". This comparison suggests that, like the short-lived Arab Spring, the idea of the Rainbow Nation did not really take hold in South Africa and certainly does not exist today, confirming that the actual motivation behind the Fees Must Fall movement stems from more than just a desire to overthrow a political party but also arises from a demand to better the social circumstance of those still suffering from the legacy of apartheid. Lastly, this parallel suggests that the Fees Must Fall movement will have a greater impact and longevity, thus giving value to the movement as a serious vehicle of social change. This articulate a general tendency in mainstream media accounts to render the movement as a highly effective means of transforming the political and social state of South Africa.

Senior political consultant at the *Sunday Times* Caiphis Kgosana, however, offers a different view of the protests in his opinion piece titled "This is no Arab Spring" published in *City Press*. He says that despite the similarities in organisation, student leaders and the "unprecedented breach of the parliamentary gates", "those at the forefront of the movement have never characterised it as an uprising against the state. It is a rallying call against the immorally high cost of university tuition, boarding and other associated costs" (Kgosana, 2015:6). He notes that even at the storming of Parliament, students only wanted leaders to listen to them and to address them; they did not want to overthrow them. In this view, the Fees Must Fall protests are depicted not as a movement against systemic oppression or government failure but rather as a simpler act against the unaffordability of tertiary education. This reading of student protest reduces the sense of social duty or civil responsibility which other representations of the movement tended to promote and emphasise. Here the movement

is presented as more one-dimensional and self-centred in its reasoning as it only targets a perceived immorality in the fee structure, rather than society and government more generally.

As a further counter argument to those representing the movement as political action, Kgosana notes that "frustration about corruption, maladministration, mismanagement, bad governance and out-of-touch politicians… are spawning resistance movements that authorities will find increasingly difficult to ignore" (Kgosana, 2015:6), suggesting that other protesters may perceive the government as not entirely guilt-free and that, while the movement does not target these issues specifically, it has the potential to spur other forms of protest action in the spirit of the Arab Spring. Kgosana argues that any new movement with wider political aspirations will, however, have to be conducted by the general public as Kgosana argues that "political power is too entrenched and, frankly, it is too powerful, to be dislodged by students alone" (2015:6). Kgosana's portrayal of the student movement as too weak to overthrow the political status quo forms a contrast with stories that highlight the movement's great longevity and impact.

Many commentators also made a link between the 2015 protests and the Soweto Uprising in 1976. The youth uprising on 16 June 1976 was a protest against the apartheid regime's introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of tuition in schools, especially the schools of black South Africans. The protest mobilised thousands of participants and it was met with intense police brutality, resulting in hundreds of deaths. The *City Press* rendition of this connection went as follows: "South Africa has a long history of being led by its young people. 1976 marked a turning point when young people set South Africa on the path to democracy and the first freedom. Are they going to lead us into the second freedom of social justice?" ("#What does it mean?", 2015:5). Here, the students of the Fees Must Fall movement are given value because of the comparison to previous, successful and idolised freedom fighters. What the phrase also suggests, however, is that we appear to need a "second freedom of social justice" and a need for tangible change post-apartheid because we do not have actual current social justice, either because that there has been no concrete change post-apartheid or because the country is currently suffering from a post-apartheid 'hangover' where the legacy of apartheid still affects the daily life of the average South African. Here the movement is portrayed in a positive way as a means to achieve the necessary, promised social change and the next step in our democracy.

The portrayal of the movement as a means of change also featured elsewhere in print media. Journalist Bhavna Singh says in her piece "Women students show how protests should be run", published by *Cape Argus*, that "While the chastised politicians make their excuses as to why [students] were shown the door, students are shaking their heads at the rest of us for swallowing the rhetoric for so long that we forgot we have the right to do the same" (2015:14). Here Singh uses the image of swallowing to suggest that the masses have been placated by the empty words of government which they seem to take like a regular dose of medicine. The movement is therefore characterised both as a reaction against the failure of the government and as a rejection of the rest of the society that meekly or ignorantly accept the lack of change.

Singh also highlights how the theme of change is relevant to gender norms, an angle which is also confirmed by the article's title:

> After the events of this past week, I keep thinking back to *Titanic* and Leo and what it would be like to have a queen of the world. A queen of the world would not go down with the sinking door. She'd have climbed on to it, with the other warm body. Two black female students took the reins and did just that, inspiring the beginnings of a revolution. Some will say it didn't begin with them. It began with a statue in Cape Town. A statue of a man. He fell and it divided the room. (Singh, 2015:14).

What this points to is a new myth of origin. Singh makes allusion to the film *Titanic,* specifically Leonardo di Caprio's line "I'm king of the world" and the irony in his death and proposes that a woman, a queen, or the female leaders of the Fees Must Fall protest rule differently, more intelligently and without faltering. As evidence for this claim, she argues that the movement was also characterised by the literal and metaphorical fall or decline of a man, a fall that caused division rather than unity. What this account does is swap the stereotypical perceptions of gender roles in protests by granting women a central place in this history and by suggesting that women were the most proactive and influential in the success of the movement. It also suggests that part of the Fees Must Fall struggle is motivated by dissatisfaction with patriarchy and the need to counteract its divisive effects. Principally, the idea of the movement as an action for change is strengthened by the argument that it seeks change not just in a political sense but in areas such as gender norms that do not seem obviously related to the movement.

The legacy of apartheid and its relationship with capitalism was also granted an important place in the explanations and stories that arose. This can be found in the *City Press* opinion column by political writer and analyst Ebrahim Harvey. Harvey says that "probably nowhere does the race-class nexus apply more than when it comes to meeting the costs of education at universities. As part of their privilege inherited from apartheid, white students would be more able to meet these costs than would black, coloured and Indian students" and that these people who struggle to pay are often those who "built [Johannesburg] to be the richest city on the continent" (Harvey, 2015:3). Again in this example, the movement is figured as a response to the ongoing oppression dating back to apartheid. However, Harvey also suggests something more: the image of the poor building Johannesburg into the richest city on the continent conveys the idea of the working class literally creating and forming the upper classes. This is an image not just of oppression but also of the capitalist exploitation of the working class to benefit no one else but the wealthiest in society, an echelon of society that both white South Africans and politicians belong to. In this perspective, the protest emerges as an anti-classist reaction against the continued oppression and exploitation of the poor who are used to strengthen the wealth of the middle to upper classes.

Stories of the protests also took shape as a means of addressing the difference between Nelson Mandela's dream of a democratic South Africa and the lived reality of students. In a number of articles, the image of Mandela was used to suggest the idea of a Rainbow Nation, and the juxtaposition of his statue and the protests is used to suggest the discrepancies between reality and ideology. In a *City Press* article, titled "Out of step Parliament bumbles on regardless" Janet Heard describes how "Not even the thunderous boom of stun grenades, which were flung around the Madiba statue, interrupted [finance minister Nene]" and his speech in Parliament (2015:5). Likewise, a *Pretoria News* article reports how "students pulled down part of the [Union Building's] fence, which had for the most of the morning separated them from the Union Buildings, about 20m from the Nelson Mandela statue. With Madiba's giant image watching over the altercation, police responded by throwing stun grenades" (Makhetha, 2015a:1). Another *City Press* article by Tau, Comrie and Mashego describes how "the iconic statue of Nelson Mandela at the Union Buildings disappeared behind clouds of smoke as chaos erupted beneath his feet" (2015:2). In all these excerpts, the seemingly violent reality of the protests play out "around" and "beneath [the icon's] feet" or while he is "watching over" it. While Mandela is an icon of peace and unity, the jarring positioning of him right next to images of violence suggests that his vision is out of place in

the current South Africa. Essentially, journalists used the physical presence of the statue to underscore the various contradictions revealed by the protests and the ways in which they were managed. In these accounts, the protests are explained or represented as a form of political protest, an attempt to overcome either the gross neglect of Mandela's democracy by the ANC or the failure of Mandela's idea of democracy.

Daily Sun's representation of the protest was particularly interesting as they chose to give a great deal of space to the accounts of students and parents. This allowed the *Daily Sun* to promote these views as theirs. In addition, these accounts demonstrated a personalisation of the movement. In the 23 October *Daily Sun* #FeesMustFall special, a prominent article is titled "Grace doesn't want her son to be a dropout and says 'I will join the protest'" (Tau, Moagi, Mokgolo, et. al., 2015:1). The article explains that Grace Mamabolo is a street vendor outside a public hospital and that she struggles to pay fees and fears her son will be unable to complete his studies because of this (Tau, Moagi, Mokgolo, et. al., 2015:1). She also says that she has been waiting for more accessible education and that she is "tired of empty promises" from the government (Tau, Moagi, Mokgolo, et. al., 2015:3). Several other parents are quoted in the same article, all of whom work as domestic workers or taxi drivers, jobs that are demanding but pay little. Mother Ntomboxolo Sithukuthezi describes their situation as "a real challenge" and "painful", especially when they are reliant on their employers when crisis strikes and how they have to witness their children struggling without money (Tau, Moagi, Mokgolo, et. al., 2015:3). Here these parents are portrayed as honest, hard-working and desperate for their children to have accessible education despite the systemic lack of access and the government's failure and neglect. Here the *Daily Sun* employs the stories of mothers in particular to elicit sympathy for the students' cause. In this sense, *Daily Sun* represents the movement in a personal way. In addition, the paper tended to disrupt the middle-class ideology that hard work will bring financial stability as well as accuse the ANC government of neglect. The inclusion of personal stories in *Daily Sun* reports also helps legitimise the movement as it is seen to be a sincere reaction to a genuine struggle. *Daily Sun* therefore emphasised two stories: the story of personal suffering and the story of political protest.

Mainstream media also chose to explain the movement in terms of the cycle of debt and the plight of third world citizens. The *Cape Argus* article "How to fund child's studies without breaking the bank", by columnist Georgina Crouth, elaborates on the country's inability to

uplift poor people and how poverty cannot be overcome by the middle-class ideology of simply working harder. She says:

> There's no shame in admitting that some of us worked to put ourselves through university because our parents couldn't, or wouldn't, pay the fees… Students the world over have always had to do this to get by. But these are – sorry – #FirstWorldProblems. Not everyone's able to do that, and judging by the prohibitive fees these days, working double shifts over high season wouldn't make much of an impact. (Crouth, 2015:9).

The piece also satirises the idea of a student loan as a viable option with the anecdote: "Possibly the most ironic Facebook post I have seen in recent days has been of an older man boasting that he'd finally paid off his student loan" (Crouth, 2015:9). In this article, paying tuition fees is presented as a long-standing issue, arguing that many students from all social standings have had the stress of finding the money to pay for their studies. While this indicates a systemic issue, Crouth's term "#FirstWorldProblems", following the mode of Twitter that functions as both a summative comment and connection to global trends, further sets up holiday work to be a first-world luxury as being unable to find holiday work, or things such as transport to make holiday work possible, is far removed from the actual systemic issues these students are faced with, such as hunger and lack of housing. While the idea of an older man only paying off his student debt later in life is initially funny, it is also presented as the heart-breaking reality of many citizens who have to resort to "crippling debt" that lasts years in order to pay for an education. This also then proposes an issue with the system and a catch-22 situation the country's poor find themselves in: many have to decide between being a graduate with debt or a non-graduate unable to ever earn a living wage. Thus the Fees Must Movement is characterised as being not just a reaction to unaffordable education (as many have been unable to pay for it, even when privileged) but a reaction against the third world plight of the poor and cycle of debt in South Africa that prevents them from progressing economically.

Connecting struggles: bread, milk and money

As expected, students' portrayals of the movement were generally positive. There were obvious similarities with mainstream media since, as I have argued, mainstream media often chose to support student explanations. These similarities included the story of the suffering mother and the story of a battle in a war. The movement was thus presented in numerous ways ranging from self-centred and personal to duty-driven and socio-politically motivated.

Students tended to represent the movement as a just struggle against oppression: they therefore made reference to their lived realities and those of their parents, a reality marked by the legacy of apartheid and the systemic issue of cyclical poverty. Others chose to focus on the failure of the post-apartheid state, political corruption and race-class struggles. As in many mainstream newspapers, others chose to focus on the past by drawing parallels between the events of apartheid and the French Revolution. Personal anxieties about debt were articulated while others expressed a desire to change the circumstances of those less fortunate than them.

Student accounts touched on both personal and wider explanations for the student activists' support of and participation in the protests, as seen with the letter to *Vuvuzela* by former SRC president at Wits and now current PhD student Mukovhe Masutha. Masutha's letter touches on almost all the themes of other student activist accounts, covering financial, personal, social, and political issues that were exposed by student protests. Firstly, Masutha's letter places emphasis on the unaffordability of fees: "If you take my mother's annual salary and multiply it by three years, she still wouldn't afford to pay for a single year of study at the University of Witwatersrand" (Masutha, 2015). The comparison between one year of university fees and three years of salaries suggests that this difference is irreconcilable. This argument is deepened by Masutha's use of "my mother". Masutha does not refer to mothers in general or an unspecified mother but rather *his* mother. This suggests that his account and motivation is drawn out of a personal place and personal struggle. This emphasis also becomes emotionally loaded as the mother figure is typically treasured and revered, further suggesting that this fee increase is perceived as an assault on, and an act of disrespect toward, the mother figure in particular. Here a wider social motivation, such as poverty, is made personal by telling the story through the image of "my mother"; this articulates a more general tendency in student accounts in which the struggle is personalised by participants. In addition, it gives detail to the reoccurring story of the suffering mother.

In this example, Masutha uses his mother's daily lived reality to gesture to wider systemic issues. He says: "[My mother] is one of many cleaning mothers across my country who leave home at 4:30am and return from work around 6pm. This has been my mother's routine for the past 26 years and sadly, this routine has conditioned her to genuinely believe that what she receives as a cleaner is what is due to her" (Masutha, 2015). What is important to note first is that Masutha broadens the application of his narrative by saying that his mother is

"one of many" and so while this story is personal, it is similar to the stories of students like him. In addition, the middle class ideology of 'hard work results in social progress' (as suggested by the American Dream myth) does not seem to apply to Masutha's mother as her strenuous work as a domestic is rewarded with difficulty, stagnation and oppression. The emotional intensity of Masutha's account about his mother elicits sympathy for the poor, allowing us to understand this to be an inspiration for the movement. Apart from this, the use of the word "routine" indicates the conditioning of workers and introduces the idea of a cycle of disenfranchisement and a systemic issue of oppression.

Masutha elaborates on this cycle of disenfranchisement and systemic issue of oppression in his next lines: "If this revolving door of poverty and marginalization is not militantly disrupted today, the majority of South African sons and daughters will follow in my mother's footsteps of normalized pain and conscious submission to a humiliating system" (2015). The image of a "revolving door of poverty" suggests a cycle of disenfranchisement as poor youth follow in their parent's footsteps; it is a "humiliating system" which suggests a robotic obedience to the current norm. These images further relate to social progression as is it because of this cycle of disenfranchisement that the poor lack the ability to move upward socially. Thus the cycle of disenfranchisement is active and will entrap future citizens as they mature into the role of working adult. In this view, education is presented as a means of counteracting this system: thus "free higher education will be the biggest salary increment our mothers will ever receive in their lifetime. Restoring the dignity of our communities and safeguarding our future and that of our country is an ideal that we must beg no one for". In this example, education is posed as a necessary requisite for social mobility and a right rather than a privilege, suggesting that student accounts took this stance in the debate about access to education. In addition, students argued that access to education can only be achieved through militant disruption, linking student protesters and the movement to stories of soldiers and war. Masutha therefore depicts student activists as agents of necessary social change and the movement as the desperate, bold means of challenging the current norm.

As in many other activist accounts the cycle of disenfranchisement is explicitly linked to the failure of the post-apartheid state. In addition, the lack of redress for black South Africans means that education should not be free to everyone; thus the implementation of free education should adhere to the "principle of redistributive justice" rather than yet another "misguided Rainbow Nation approach" (Masutha, 2015). This is a similar argument to the

one made by universities as seen in the example "UCT rector opposes free education for all" (*The Star*, 2015). Masutha suggests that the cycle of disenfranchisement continues because apartheid was not dealt with redistributively thus allowing those who benefitted from the unfair social structure to remain privileged. In turn, those who were oppressed remained so and still do because no other means of redressing the past has been implemented since 1994. Here the protests are figured as the means to break out of the cycle of oppression but Masutha deepens and extends this idea by raising the question of genuine post-apartheid redress. In doing so, Masutha connects past with present, thus describing the Fees Must Fall protests as a "logical continuation of the struggle of the class of 1976". Masutha also adds that students must emulate the bravery of the 1976 student protesters (who faced live ammunition) in order to confront those that uphold their oppression. What is noteworthy here is that while students do not face live ammunition like they did in 1976, they still face a symbolic form of ammunition, which is the dismissal of their lived realities. This idea is intensified when Masutha states that even when he was a student at Wits and would discuss fee increases with management, the council, "made up of old conservative right wingers, would vote against the students' lonely voice as represented by [himself]" (Masutha, 2015). This statement suggests privilege (particularly of apartheid whites) is maintained in the post-apartheid present and that in this way the apartheid regime lives on. In this respect, importantly, the after-effects of apartheid are presented as another dimension of the protest's origin.

Further evidence for the framing of the movement as heroic struggle is to be found in the emphasis on student debt. Students argued that they struggled to secure funding through salaries or bursaries and so had to turn to student loans resulting in debts that remain with them for years after they graduate. An article in *Pretoria News* refers to a student's placard with the words, "Education is not a debt sentence" (Monama, Morrissey, et. al., 2015:6). Here debt and a death sentence (or capital punishment) are compared to each other, suggesting that debt is as bad as capital punishment. In addition, simply wanting education is represented as a crime. The attempt to avoid this punishment, which affects personal wellbeing, is therefore given as one of the main motivations behind the protests and therefore the protests are portrayed as a heroic struggle against death. Other examples that told the story of the heroic struggle presented the movement as part of a long-term plan to produce a more general social equality. Former Wits SRC president, Mcebo Dlamini is quoted as saying, the protesters are "also fighting for [high school students] because [the] next year, when they come [to Wits], they may not be able to afford the fees" (Kumalo, Mnyakama,

Ndawuni & News24, 2105:2). Likewise, student leader from CPUT Keke Maki argued that protesters were aware that "their actions were unfair, but in the long run, every student would benefit" (Tswanya, 2015:4). In this way, protests were justified as they sought to fight against inequality and produce change both now and in the future.

Student activists also represented the protests as a means to support their parents, particularly in relation to the ANC's promise of free education, thus indicating another way in which student personalised the movement. One example of this is Alfred Seolwa who says: "Our parents were sold dreams in 1994 and we are here to claim a refund" (Moobi, et. al., 2015:2). Among these "dreams" was the promise of free education. The idea that it was "sold" suggests that parents had to pay something for it; however, this payment was made through something such as voting power or party loyalty. In 21 years, these parents have yet to see the return on this purchase and so their children need to collect the "refund" for them, as the "money" would be used better elsewhere. Part of this is also the idea of reclaiming dignity for parents as a deal that only satisfies one party is not honest and makes a fool of the one who loses out. The reference to "our parents" again personalises the movement because students are portrayed as acting on behalf of their betrayed parents in order to hold the ANC to account. These unfilled promises become the source of the protests thus reinforcing the idea of the movement as motivated by achieving political and social justice.

The theme of relieving suffering also arose in the personal explanation that the protests were a means to alleviate their family's burden of tuition fees. SU student Lwazi Pakade, for example, says that he used to live in a hostel with his mother, grandparents and aunt who were all supported by his grandfather's security guard salary (Huisman, Ngcukana, Harper, Cele & Tau, 2015:5). However, when his grandfather passed away they had to survive only on "his grandmother's state pension, his aunt's piece jobs and his mum's wages" (Huisman, Ngcukana, et. al., 2015:5). Pakade stresses the unaffordability of fees and says that he has taken out loans which are necessary as he says that "this degree will be a win for the Pakades" (Huisman, Ngcukana, et. al., 2015:5). In this account, it is implied that the cost of education is so high that it cannot be budgeted into a family's monthly expenses. However, education is presented, ironically, as a 'necessary luxury' and a means of evading a difficult financial situation. This account also suggests that the pressure of finances (which should be dealt with by adults) removes students for the typical student experience as they must have the maturity to protect the family emotionally and financially now and later in life. The idea

that the degree will save the Pakades alludes to the reality of "black tax", the phenomenon that entails somewhat wealthier black graduates using their salary to support their families who live in poverty. In addition, it also highlights the lived reality of many poor families in that consist of non-normative structures such as Pakade's as hid family includes extended relations; Pakade's burden post-graduation is worse off that privileged graduates as he will become responsible for his aunt and grandmother in addition to his mother. This motivation is intensely personal and Pakade presents the protests as a form of duty to his poor family that he wants to provide for.

Like Pakade, students on social media frequently chose to express sympathy for their parents' realities and used them to legitimise the protests. Rhodes students Zikisa Maqubela, for example, tweeted: "Remembering the stress and headaches my mother had to deal with this year trying to get the #RhodesMIP is an experience I will never forget" (15 October 2015a) followed by a retweet of Martin Masalesa's tweet "Ever heard your mom/gran/parent praying elila ebsuku for imali yeMIP [weeping in the night for money]? The worst feeling in the world #RhodesMIP" (15 October 2015b). These tweets take on a tone of guilt as these students demonstrate an awareness of the difficulty their studying has caused for their parents or grandparents. The image of a parent or guardian weeping in the night is haunting as it suggest that they suffer from some trauma yet it cannot be shared with anyone else and so must be confined to night time. The grouping of grandparents with parents, and the fact that these students will not forget these adults' experience, hints that this issue is not limited to parents alone. Due to the struggles of being a black South African (including non-normative family structures and black tax), this issue affects individuals, such as grandparents and children, who should not carry this burden. Here attention should also be given to the fact that these suffering individuals are most often depicted as women; this suggests that the legitimacy is deepened by the respect accorded to, and specialness associated with, the image of the mother. Interesting to note too is that the second tweet makes use of code switching, a common characteristic of tweets. This code switching suggests that perhaps the sentiments the student wished to express were so intense and moving that they could only properly be expressed in his mother tongue. This heightens the tone of guilt in this tweet. This sense of guilt and the awareness of their parents and elders' struggles leads to a deeply personal connection to the movement as it implies that the movement is born out of their wish to remove the desperation and burden placed on their parents. The various ways in which the

movement was personalised demonstrates how the affective dimension of the issue was continually foregrounded.

Student activists also chose to underline non-normative family structures in their defence of the value of the movement. Jacques Swart, for instance, speaks about how his single mother, a small business owner, struggles to pay tuition fees for her three children. While he acknowledges that his family is not living in poverty, he is also aware that his single mother has to sacrifice more than the average family would (Huisman, Ngcukana, et. al., 2015:5). This motivation presents the idea that even families living above the breadline struggle to pay fees, arguing that the unaffordability of fees is worse for families who are not the typical nuclear family, such as Swart's single parent home and Pakade's family unit that includes his extended family. Thus stories of personal and family difficulty also promote the idea of the movement as a just struggle while, again, the mother is given a central role in validating the movement.

As these and other examples suggest, a dominant rhetorical device in student accounts of the movement is to establish connections between personal participation in the protests and broader social and political issues. A tendency to characterise the protests as a means to address social issues was encouraged by the portrayal of the protests as an act of civil duty. As Yumnah Cassim explains, she and other students have a "duty to fight for affordable education" (Huisman, Ngcukana, et. al., 2015:5). Her classmate Nidaal Hassim, although privileged and unaffected by the increase, agrees and adds that "the situation does affect [him] in terms of social bias and stereotypes" (Huisman, Ngcukana, et. al., 2015:5). Cassim, as a previously struggling student, has insight into the struggles of poor students and Hassim notes that this issue affects all South African citizens as we all participate in an unequally distributed economy and society and so participation from everyone in changing the circumstances is necessary (Huisman, Ngcukana, et. al., 2015:5). This suggests a positioning of the movement as founded in group solidarity, one which recognises an intersection of interests. Also interesting to note is that Hassim suggests that participation in these protests can have a positive personal effect on the way people of colour, like himself, are treated in society. This suggests the movement is characterised by the need to remove all types of oppression in society. In this way, the protest is principally portrayed as a matter of civil duty to those disadvantaged by the social system.

Within the wider context of inequality, the protests were characterised as a struggle for economic justice, more broadly, one which includes the uneducated and poor. Leila Khan reflects on an ongoing race-class struggle in her piece "Connecting struggles: bread, milk and money" published in *Cape Argus*. Khan says that the event of the Bread Prices Must Fall protest at the Khayelitsha Mall, inspired by the Fees Must Fall protests, is a valid expression of frustration rather than a ridiculous incident of "jumping on the bandwagon" (2015:4). Khan explains that "What must be highlighted is that the #BreadPricesMustFall protest clearly speaks to a certain historical time and political moment. This is not an isolated incident, but follows logically from the context of unending service delivery protests… It only makes sense that the particular language of this struggle ("Must Fall") would find expression in spaces occupied by the most oppressed in society" (2015:4). Firstly, Khan highlights that black South Africans face poverty and frustration in all areas, including education, food, employment and service delivery, during this particular historical and political moment and so all this frustration appears to have the same source. However, Khan does not explicitly state what she believes this source is. Khan also suggests that, because "what is happening in universities is directly connected to [basic] issues", bread and education are of the same priority in society because education has been presented as the means of escaping the reality of not being able to afford basic necessities such as bread. This again invokes the idea of "black tax", that the ability of students to afford education is directly proportional to the ability of their communities to afford bread as black graduates become responsible for caring for their communities. Both students and adults are faced with a race-class struggle that prevents them from accessing education or bread and thus economic freedom is presented as a major characteristic of the protests. This rendering of the protest is one that is not just personally motivated but is also socially and community driven as the alleviation of suffering in one area is connected to the alleviation of oppression in another.

In rendering the protests as a means of addressing the legacy of apartheid, parents were not always treated favourably, further suggesting that the protests were an act of solidarity with the youth only. In one example, student protester Ameera Conrad writes a letter to *Cape Argus* titled "The kids are not OK" and says that "People seem to think that the second apartheid ended, this magic TRC wand was waved and suddenly all of our problems were gone… This is the biggest lie that our parents ever fed us" (2015:12). In this way, the image of the suffering mother is somewhat undermined as parents seem to be complicit in

maintaining systemic disenfranchisement by denying that their lived realities are characterised by oppression.

The protests were also presented as a radical challenge to lingering institutional racism as well as an act of reclaiming identity. Wits student leader Shaeera Kalla posted on Facebook:

> Comrades, for too long we have allowed a system that perpetually excludes the poorest of the poor from the gates of higher learning. For too long we have allowed lily-white councils to mercilessly dictate how we should live, how we should eat, how we should study and what we should study… This week we have affirmed we are an African university… we have proven we are ready to truly reclaim our country and make history. (24 October 2015).

Here Kalla refers to the continuation of apartheid through racism engrained in institutions and social norms. She argues that university councils are "lily-white", suggesting that councils are made up almost totally of white purists, like during apartheid, which is unrepresentative of South Africa's demographics. She also argues that the stereotypes of apartheid still affect people of colour because people of colour still see these racist stereotypes as the standard to aspire to. Therefore they allow their cultures to be made inferior by the continued promotion of white culture as superior. Kalla uses the word reclaim to suggest the essence of what the movement is about. It is a challenge to change the institutional culture of South African universities; in this way, the movement is represented as a challenge for South Africans of colour to finally choose how they wish to define themselves, independent of white apartheid thought. A similar argument was found in a submission to *Perdeby*; Noluthando Maseko says that "discrimination has been structured in a way that shuts... out the black" even post-apartheid (2015). This suggests a shift in the argument in that these actions are not just socially entrenched but now seem to be maliciously constructed to harm black South Africans. In this rendition, the protests emerge as a response to the repetitive, purposeful discrimination against black South Africans that continues in the post-apartheid period.

A similar argument about reclamation was made by some politicians and activists such as Mamphela Ramphele who supported the protest by describing it as a necessary student movement that challenges the political status quo:

> Young people have again seized the opportunity to rewrite their stories. They are correctly questioning the narrative of the past 21 years. It is a narrative of a heroic leader owed loyalty by voters unrelated to performance and accountability for

71

meeting the basic needs of citizens. Young people are rejecting this narrative, which breeds dependency. (Ramphele, 2015:5).

The idea of rewriting or overwriting a story suggests that the protests are motivated by a desire to have a say in defining the social norm rather than accepting the dictates of authorities. In this reading, the protests are clearly defined by a political agenda in which government is dismissed as "inadequate, unacceptable, or faulty". In light of "then", the student movement of "now" is figured as both intellectual and revolutionary in nature; it is a declaration of independence by students "determined to be active citizens with rights and responsibilities".

Like mainstream media reportage, student activists sought to provide a framework for their protests by linking them to the events of the French Revolution. In the article "The faces of #FeesMustFall", for example, it is reported that Thomas Kenyon, a Rhodes student, stood outside Rhodes with a placard saying "The French aristocracy never saw it coming either" (Huisman, Ngcukana, et. al., 2015:5). This clear parallel between the French Revolution and Fees Must Fall suggests that the protests are also a reaction to socio-political conditions in South Africa. The comparison between government and university authorities, on the one hand, and the French aristocracy of the 1790s, on the other, underlines the ignorance of those in power and their indifference to the working classes' suffering; it also hints at growing anger and the desire to overthrow the powerful. The aristocracy and those that uphold the cost of tertiary education in South Africa are aligned through the common characteristic of complacency. In this way, Kenyon presents the wide-reaching effects of ignorance and dismissal as the motivation for his participation in the protests, thus also locating the origin of the movement in the desire for radical social change. Twitter and Facebook posts also portrayed the protests as revolutionary in nature. A tweet by student Kgotsi Chikane, for example, says "Do not be left behind in the revolution Mr President #FEESMUSTFALL #LalelaZuma [#ListenZuma]" (23 October 2015). In this tweet, Chikane targets President Zuma specifically, suggesting that this revolution is not only political but also social as he is willing to let President Zuma have the opportunity to play a part in it or else he will be cast aside along with the old regime. Thus the movement is represented as a means to do away with a state and social order that does not serve the public's interests.

The metaphor of the Fees Must Fall protests being "one battle in a war" for access to education and actual lived equality featured extensively in student activist accounts. This metaphor is born out of the students' preoccupations with systemic oppression, cyclical disenfranchisement and the legacy of apartheid. This "war" began with the colonisation of black South Africans and continues today until actual equality is realised; thus student activists of 2015 are the next set of soldiers that must continue the struggle. Links between the 2015 protests and the 1976 Soweto Uprising fall under this image as the events 1976 were often figured as an earlier battle. The trope of protracted warfare appears in a variety of ways. Student activists argued that "[They] have won a battle, but [they] have not won the war" and that the "struggle is not over" (Moagi, 2015:2). Other activists warned fellow students "not to celebrate an incomplete victory" (Cele, Masondo, Stone & Nhlabathi, 2015:1). An anonymous student leader says that "The struggle was that fees must fall. Not that fees must not increase. We have not achieved anything yet" (Cele & Masondo, et, al., 2015:1). SU student Bradley Frolick also says that the 0% increase is "only the beginning" (Cele & Masondo, et. al., 2015:1). The idea that the Fees Must Fall movement was a single battle in an age-old war suggests a further presentation of the movement as a community-driven duty, one which seeks to continue what past generations have fought for until they, or a future generation, can finally achieve it. The contradiction in the idea of "incomplete victory" suggests that students are just a new set of soldiers, and the protests are just another battle: the war will not end until status quo is overthrown for genuine equality in education for poor, black South Africans.

Finally, some students argued that the protests were a way to attain the free education that *they* were promised by the ANC at the end of apartheid and during their election campaigns over the years (Moagi, 2015:2). This is similar to the students who argued that they wanted to claim the education that their parents were promised but suggests a more self-centred, personal approach. This motivation focuses on an unfulfilled promise and presents this unfulfilled promise not just as a personal offence but an offence to all students. This again suggests the failure of the ANC to deliver on their promises, relating this account to the more general theme of post-apartheid state failure, and presenting the protests as a form of public duty to those whom the government has failed.

Read more, ruin less

As indicated earlier, government were quite slow to enter into the public debate. Nevertheless, government accounts that described the movement formed a stark contrast to the more positive student activist accounts. In general, government chose to represent the movement as irrational and misconceived; it was also presented as a private issue between students and universities. President Zuma admitted that students face a multitude of struggles during their university career which include transformation, living conditions and fees (The Presidency, 2015d). In relation to this, President Zuma said that students wished for him and the government to take action in areas such as "free education, institutional autonomy, racism and what the students call "black debt"" in order to help alleviate the multiple challenges they face (The Presidency, 2015d). Here government portrays the protests as multifaceted in nature, and a campaign that attempts to address the challenges of class and race. However, it is important to notice that the statement subtly suggests that these challenges are somewhat limited to the education sector and should not bleed over into everyday life. This is affected through the careful repetition of these issues in the context of the university experience and the students' request for President Zuma to intervene. This undermines a framing of the protests as a response to the social situation of poor South Africans, caused by inadequate governance; it also undermines a view of the protest as an attempt to overthrow the government by locating the origins of the protests in poor university management and engagement. This position delegitimises the movement as it suggests that national protest action is an irrational response to an issue that should be dealt with privately by university managements and students.

Apartheid is dead. Long live apartheid!

A variety of other individuals also expressed opinions about the way the movement should be perceived. These public commentators included parents, political figures, academics and general members of the public. They focussed on both their personal realities and the state of the South African government. They also addressed the economy and class divides as explanations for the movement. Parallels between other historic events also featured in these accounts as did the theme of the 'apartheid hangover'. Some chose to limit the movement to simple stories such as the unaffordability of fees while others chose to frame the movement broadly as a complete social awakening.

Some members of the public chose to focus on the protests as a measure to avoid crippling debt (and the consequences thereof) and to strengthen the economy. The letter to *Cape Argus* titled "Varsity fees must fall" says:

> Students take on loans to pay for fees, and remain in debt for at least five years after graduating, during which time they do not have access to credit as a result of strict controls imposed by banks to prevent reckless lending. They are already on the back foot after graduating and cannot be expected to contribute to the economy in a meaningful way – which should be a common consequence of a university degree. (Varsity fees must fall, 2015:12).

This explanation also touches on the cycle of disadvantage and debt graduates and students are lured into through high fees and a family's low income. By suggesting that students' contribution to the economy should be a "common consequence" of a degree, the author offers a framing of the protests as a social and economic necessity as lower fees would result in more graduates with more disposable income and thus a stronger economy.

Others echoed the trend in student media by invoking connections between the movement and other contemporary South African protests such as those concerned with service delivery. In a *Cape Argus* article, entitled "Protest handling slammed", Johan Burger, a senior researcher at the ISS, says that the government's handling of the protests is tragic because "it fails to recognise that protest action is not purely criminal or irrational, but is about issues of real or perceived neglect and deprivation" (Staff reporter, 2015b:2). He adds that the issues that are raised are "deeply rooted in high levels of unemployment, poverty, poor service delivery and the absence of adequate housing and infrastructure" and "to make matters worse, many of these problems can be linked to inefficiency and corruption at local government level" (Staff reporter, 2015b:2). Burger also mentions that on average there are "32 'peaceful' incidents and 5 'unrest' incidents daily" (Staff reporter, 2015b:2), suggesting that protests within the movement were just some of the protests South Africa sees every day. First, this suggests that the movement is a non-criminal and rational action and a legitimate and effective way to address issues. Like many other commentators, Burger also makes the link between the protests about education and other more basic issues such as the cycle of disenfranchisement and government failure.

Another theme in public commentator accounts was the comparison of the Fees Must Fall movement with other impactful historical events. The comparisons between the South

African movement and other international movements placed the Fees Must Fall protests into the broader context of student activism, its necessity and success. In her opinion piece "Only radical action brings solutions", international criminal justice lawyer Angela Mudukuti highlights how the Fees Must Fall movement parallels other international student movements, framing the Fees Must Fall movement as a necessary social awakening. She says:

> Student activism was a vital form of advocacy during the fight for civil rights in the US. American students also organised massive protests against the Vietnam War effectively spreading strong anti-war sentiments and forcing average Americans to critically question US foreign policy. Closer to home, students of all ages were instrumental in the fight against apartheid. (Mudukuti, 2015:34).

What this quote suggests is that the Fees Must Fall movement is as necessary and potentially as successful as the other forms of student activism she mentions not just because it seeks social equality but because it also challenges others to rethink their attitudes and assumptions. It also helps to establish the protests legitimacy as the Fees Must Fall protests are presented as a valid way of generating change and social sensitivity. In this way, the movement is represented not just as a way of achieving change but a way of educating society and generating a social awakening. This account gives the Fees Must Fall movement a form of social currency by validating it as a means of necessary social and political change.

Former Unisa vice-chancellor and current President of Convocation at UCT Barney Pityana also drew parallels between the current movement and historical revolutions. In an opinion piece published in *City Press*, he makes the remark that the government will soon suggest that "the poor must eat cake" (2015:5), here alluding to the rumoured response of Marie Antoinette when French citizens were starving and asked for food. The insinuation is that the South African government is similarly ignorant and out of touch. Pityana also suggests that the protests represent "the first shoots of our own brand of the Arab Spring"; this, because of our increasing "disillusionment about the condition of our country" while "the rich get richer and those who are politically connected advance ahead of others through political patronage" (2015:5).

This positive representation of the movement as an act of heroic struggle against corruption and discrimination is reinforced with a story about Pityana's days of protest in apartheid South Africa:

> August 18 1968 was a fateful day for the students of the University of Fort Hare in Alice, Eastern Cape… All 500 students… had been staging a sit-in protest in front of the administration building. We had submitted a petition to the rector on Monday detailing our "demands"… The rector, Professor JM de Wet, had refused all pleas to address the student body, insisting that he would only speak to a delegation of the student body… I was in the delegation that went to confront the rector. As one might have expected the so-called talks broke down. The rector issued a statement warning us to vacate the grounds… by 2pm. We remained. At 2pm on the dot, a convoy of police and military vehicles approached. Armed police and soldiers with dogs chased us. Many of us resisted and sat down where we were – to no avail. (Pityana, 2015:5).

The scene that Pityana describes has an uncanny resemblance to the scenes of the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement. He acknowledges this even in his next paragraph titled "Past and present collide": "That was 47 years ago. It was at the height of the apartheid system… Except for the date, watching the scenes outside Parliament… brought all those memories flooding back... Apartheid is dead. Long live apartheid" (Pityana, 2015:5). This clear parallel with apartheid is a damning indictment of the post-apartheid state; it suggests that despite all the talk of a new South Africa there has been no change over the past 47 years. Pityana reaffirms this idea with the paradoxical statement "Apartheid is dead. Long live apartheid", thus both ironically undercutting the post-apartheid ideal and suggesting that its continuation is desired by those in power. What he suggests is that the only difference between apartheid and the current state of South Africa is that the type of oppression has changed, having shifted from race-based oppression to something more sinister, covert and wide-ranging encompassing both race and class discrimination. In this way, the protests are presented as a means of acting against this reality of ongoing economic and racial oppression.

Other members of the public echoed Pityana's thoughts with Twitter user Erik Hallendorf tweeting: "So the post-Apartheid government is arresting Edwina Brooks, @Kgotsi22 and Markus Trengrove? Forgive me while I climb back" (22 October 2015) and Zweli Ndlazi (25 October 2015) saying that the government's use of force is as brutal and criminal as the force of the apartheid government. Also striking about these examples is the way in which these public commentators shift their focus onto the government's use of force as a way to validate the protests. This shift relates to Cottle's (2008) argument that sometimes protesters use the

violence enacted against them as a way to generate sympathy from onlookers and thus further justify their protest.

In another example, commentator Tom Eaton tweeted that the leadership structure has indeed "sold out" leading to a financial frustration and a lack of progress from apartheid. In his tweet about the storming of Parliament in particular he says: "As of this afternoon all the struggle heroes are outside Parliament. The ones inside just gave up their right to that title" (21 October 2015). Here Eaton alludes to the fact that many members of our government were anti-apartheid activists. His argument that they have now given up their right to that title suggests that they no longer fight for what is fair and democratic, suggesting instead that the youth have taken up the roles that they vacated for their own self-interest. In this way, Eaton characterises the movement as somewhat of a continuation of the struggle against apartheid but only because the new leadership of South Africa has started to represent the old government. Eusebius McKaiser also made a similar remark, tweeting: "I'm tired of narcissistic criticism of our students such as, "When we were student activists at The Last Supper we were reading Marx!"" (21 October 2015). This tweet suggests too that the government is self-centred but also archaic.

Pityana also picks up the on the experience of blackness as part of his positioning of the movement. He says that at the heart of the student protests is "questions of racism on campuses, of Africanisation, of an alienating institutional culture for the majority of students, of the appointment and advancement of a black professoriate, of the language of tuition, and now, more stridently, the question of fees", a complexity of racial issues that interlink with each other (Pityana, 2015:5). Thus the Fees Must Fall movement is depicted as a means to address the national crisis of racism as well as institutional racism. In addition, it is also portrayed as a way to address the lack of a university identity that is "African" and thus independent from Western definitions in that it recognises black thought and tradition.

Members of the public also chose to explain the protests in light of the legacy of apartheid. One example is Mohamed Saeed's letter "20 years after apartheid, some schools still more equal than others" (2015:12). In this piece, Saeed alludes to George Orwell's famous line from his novel *Animal Farm*: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others". This relates to the gap between theoretical equality and actual equality and suggests that this is the case in post-apartheid South Africa: those privileged under apartheid remain

more privileged because there has only been an ideological change. While this argument is similar to previously mentioned ones, here Saeed suggests that it is not just a shortage of funding that place poor students on the back foot but the quality of education in the rural schools. This low quality prevents them from thriving at tertiary education level which results in higher tuition costs as they take longer to graduate, often having to redo modules they have failed (Saeed, 2015:12). This failure to uplift the working classes and offer them services is presented as a symptom of the legacy of apartheid and lack of redress at the end of the regime and so the movement is depicted as a means of finally righting the wrongs of apartheid.

Questions of privilege and the legacy of apartheid are invoked in other examples such as a letter from Madiny Darries which places emphasis on the "incredible impact 50 years of apartheid has had on our society" and the fact that "those who benefited from apartheid have continued to build on those gains" (2015:14). Here the race-class divide is maintained by privileged individuals, such as the white middle to upper class. In this way, the movement is presented as a means of counteracting the power these groups still hold. In addition, the movement is depicted as a response to the way in which privileged groups ignorantly make suffering in post-apartheid South Africa seem endearing or trivial, when compared to the circumstances of the apartheid era.

In other narratives, the protests were characterised as a movement against government wastefulness and over-spending. One such example is Patrick Bond's piece "State should spend on poor – not flaky big projects". What Bond suggests here is that the money needed to fund free education is being channelled into corrupt politicians and unworthy projects that seem grand but are "flaky", in other words, into investments that are unpredictable and risky. In this example, the Fees Must Fall movement is presented as a specific reaction to the government's financial mismanagement, therefore encouraging a critical review of what has been spent on what and why. In contrast to other commentators, Bond presents the movement as only a small victory in a much wider struggle, thus questioning its significance as a truly revolutionary moment. In another example Prof. Mpho Mabona says that the government's financial mismanagement is the crux of the protests and this is evidenced by the fact that the typically apathetic middle class became involved in the protests (Makhubu, 2015a:1). Unlike other accounts, Prof. Mabona addresses the previously ignored issue of middle-class participation in the protests. This highlights a new depiction of the protests as an expression of concern for the country's economy at the hands of a wasteful government. Prof. Mabona's

use of the word "plunder" is also very telling as the action is typically associated with war, suggesting that the movement can be seen as a counter-attack on a government that is at war with its people.

Finally, public commentators also highlighted the story of the mother in representing the movement as a legitimate form of action. Graduate Andrew Ihsaan Gasnolar, for example, praises his single mother and aunt for his education which was "only made possible through [their] efforts" (2015:23) in his piece "It's not about fees, it's really about inequality". However, he also acknowledges his early realisation that his mother would not be able to afford tertiary education. Here, these sentiments suggest a heroic image of the mother or similar female figures (rather than student activists), giving adult women a central role in history alongside other women student activists. However, what is also suggested is that while these adults have done so much for their children, they cannot do everything. This realisation humanises these heroes, evoking our sympathy for them. In this way, students' demands are portrayed not as selfish or excessive but rather something that will aid their entire family and be a tool in ending their ongoing struggle, particularly of those they care deeply about like their mothers.

Discussion

An analysis of the accounts relating to how the movement was portrayed reveals a number of important themes and exposes a number of issues in South African society. While accounts tended to present the movement as a whole in a positive light, there were a few accounts that suggested that the campaign was just an expression of students' violent tendencies or ineffective action against government. As has been suggested, some positive portrayals of the event took a more personal form, while others looked to public, socio-political issues as the origin of the Fees Must Fall movement. These stories quickly opened up into broader socio-political debates, thus providing insight into the broader social tensions and frictions at play in post-apartheid South Africa.

A close examination of the way in which the movement was represented in the public debate reveals the following central themes: the first issue brought to light is that of economic difficulty, particularly the anxieties raised by the catch-22 situation in which you need a job to have funding for tertiary education and a degree to get a job. As suggested above, this explanation and justification for the protests was one which was made repeatedly. In this

frame, commentators raised concerns about the sheer unaffordability of higher education, the problem of long-lasting debt and the more general question of economic freedom. Accounts associated with this framing were often personal and told through the oft-repeated story of the mother. Mothers of students activists were depicted as humble and hard-working but suffering from severe poverty. Often aunts, grandmothers, fathers and grandfathers were included in this reasoning as well as the heads of non-normative family structures, such as single parents and extended relations. Here the revered image of the mother was used to elicit sympathy for protesters and their campaign and provided a sense of validity for the protests. In other ways, this narrative frame was used to suggest that the protests were a means of reclaiming the dignity of the poor. Other strands in the discussion around finances criticised excessive government spending and suggested the movement was a way of addressing this issue and diverting government funding to worthy causes. Another relevant strand to note in this framing is the idea that middle class students participated in the protests as a way to protect their financial well-being, as their financial assets seemed to be under threat.

A further theme in the public debate - one which also relates to the issue of economic failure – was the question of whether education is a right or a privilege. While some argued that education was a privilege to be earned, many others argued that education was a right. Others argued that education was the right specifically of the poor, who struggled against social inequality. This particular emphasis on education as a right is linked to the way in which university education was consistently portrayed as the means to break out of poverty. It was also linked to the benefits our economy would experience in that it would generate high graduate output and thus more individuals in the market place with disposable income. Another way in which it was reasoned that education is a right was by arguing that the government had promised free education in their electoral campaigns.

The question of South Africa's economy also exposed issues with South African governance and political ineptitude. In this framing, constituencies argued that the movement was a reaction to the political state of South Africa: more specifically, a reaction against a post-apartheid government characterised by unfulfilled promises, corruption, ignorant and dismissive leaders, and failure. A tendency to compare the current government to the apartheid government arose in this framing of the event suggesting a public preoccupation with a lack of progress post-apartheid and the legacy of apartheid. This exposed the concern that while South Africa is supposedly a democracy and that everyone is equal before the law,

the lived reality of South Africans oppressed during apartheid has not changed tangibly over the last 20 years. This framing also incorporated accounts that criticised the myth of Nelson Mandela's Rainbow Nation as an ineffective way of redressing the past and a strategy of those in power to dismiss the desperate experiences of people of colour and working class individuals. This framing also drew on other parallels to global political events such as the French Revolution and the Arab Spring, helping represent the movement as a political revolution against an excessive and ignorant government.

A number of other social issues were uncovered through the protests. One major issue was the experience and struggles of black South Africans in post-apartheid South Africa. Accounts exposed the reality of "black tax" which meant that they as black South Africans carried a financial burden even after graduation as they were required to support their family (who continued to live in poverty) with the salary a degree helped them obtain. Other stories centred on institutional racism, white privilege and the need for universities to adopt an African identity separate from Western influence. This narrative frame also tended to highlight the perception of cyclical oppression and systemic disenfranchisement that black South Africans still suffer from even post-apartheid, therefore raising questions about the legacy of apartheid and efficacy of the redress offered to these people, particularly in regard to alleviating poverty and a lack of access to basic necessities and services such as quality education. These issues raised attempted to disrupt the middle class ideology of upward social movement through hard work and long hours as they demonstrated that people like domestic workers work tough jobs yet remain poor. The protests were also portrayed as a way to end other social issues such as the exploitation of the working class, and gender, racial and cultural inequality. This was done by accounts highlighting the importance of the working class in the labour force, the necessity of women in history making, the ability of the protests to challenge social stereotypes about race, and the potential of the protests to reclaim cultural identity and reject Western superiority.

Another issue raised through positioning the movement was the question of protests as a valid form of achieving change. While some argued that the movement was just a display of hooliganism, others argued that it was a valid means of raising issues that would have otherwise have been ignored. This was supported by the accounts that suggest that the movement could be perceived as an act of civil duty to poor and oppressed citizens. This sense of civic duty helped portray the protests as a heroic struggle for social justice and

equality, further validating them. In this framing, student media also made an impact through the trend of positioning the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement in the context of other recent student protests. Out of this arose the notion of the protests as "a battle in a long standing war". This notion linked to the idea of cyclical and systemic oppression and suggested that this long-standing suffering can be traced back to colonialism. These parallels provided the movement with social currency and suggested that the movement would be somewhat as, or even more, successful than these previous protests. Some accounts were hopeful and portrayed the movement as a necessary action that guaranteed social change and social awakening while others were more cautious, suggesting that the movement could be as limited in their success as their predecessors or only had the potential to spur on other bigger social movements rather than change the status quo.

CHAPTER THREE
STRATEGIES OF POWER

In the final chapter I will pay careful attention to how the various constituencies involved in the events of 2015 were characterised in the public sphere. Much of this analysis is linked to the depiction of the movement (as discussed in chapter two) but this chapter differs in that it allows us to consider the protests as a campaign comprised of distinct individuals, not just as a form of group action. By making such a distinction, I am able to discern some of the nuances and complexities of the public debate. As in Chapter two, two main strands of argument can be identified. The first one places emphasis on student activists as heroic and, correspondingly, presents those that acted against them, including the police, government, university management, non-protesting students and the public, as villainous and threatening. In the second strand, the order is inverted: here student activists are villainised and those that spoke and acted against them are praised. Positive depictions of students include images of them as revolutionaries, inclusive, courageous, globally and social aware, responsible and intellectual. Positive portrayals of other constituencies mostly focus on the representation of police as heroes. In more negative portrayals of students, they are framed as violent, dangerous, criminal, directionless, sexist, unintellectual, and governed by personal agendas. In the various negative portrayals of police, government and public, commentators presented them as aggressive and violent as well as apathetic. The various accounts also open up broader questions of the presence of a third force, the necessity of violence and the role of women in social protest. As in the previous chapters, I will first look at the depictions promoted by print media. I will then turn to student activist accounts. Following that, I will address government renditions of the protests and then university narratives. In this chapter I have given special attention to the accounts of police as other constituencies tended to place significant focus on their characterisation. I will therefore deal with versions of the protests offered by police before moving on the public commentator accounts.

The language of the struggle
The choice of language as well as the content of student and mainstream media says a lot about the media's perception of the various role-players in the protests. *Daily Sun* published positive portrayals of student activists more consistently than other publications, again

suggesting the newspaper's concern with reaching its target market of working class, black South Africans. As discussed in Chapter two, student media was not as expressive as mainstream media. However, all other student and mainstream media published both positive and negative portrayals of student activists. Mainstream media did tend to show a slight preference for framing students negatively which is somewhat at odds with how they portrayed the movement positively. This unexpected conflict is possibly related to the media's recognition of the importance of, and public interest in, the various issues that arose in the public debate. The tendency towards the negative portrayal of students can be attributed to the value of sensationalist reportage (as per the dominant protest narrative) as a means of appealing to readers and thus generating sales.

One of the less overtly negative or sensationalist ways in which student protesters were portrayed was reflected in the media's questioning of their strategy. *The Star* article "Campuses divided on when to end fees stayaway", for example, says "What united students a week ago is now threatening to divide them", adding that the protests now appear to be a "self-seeking, politically grandstanding campaign" (Morrissey & Dipa. 2015:1). The contrast between unity and division suggests that students lack cohesion, have no clear end goal in mind and are not able properly to assess their achievements. The characterisation of the protesters as self-seeking or motivated by fame also suggests that protesters seem to have joined the protest for ulterior motives rather than in an attempt to achieve a definitive goal. This positioning was echoed in student media. The *Perdeby* article "Students march over fee increases" presents student activists as unable to agree on whether to stick to university rules of protesting on campus. Therefore the authors present a portrait of students as divided and uncertain. The question of student agreement is important as the lack of consensus suggests ulterior motives – those willing to abide by university rules could just be participating for the sake of protesting (and therefore reluctant to bear the consequences of angering the university) while those who did not want to abide by the rules could be seen as purposefully attempting to cause chaos. Thus protesters are presented as directionless and self-regarding rather than heroic participants in a genuine social and political movement for change.

A particularly strong theme in the more critical strand in the debate was the depiction of student protesters as lawless, violent and provocative. *The Star* article "Irate students bring Wits to a standstill", for example, pays attention to the physical damage caused by the

protests: "A few buildings bore the marks of the protests. One lectern in a hallway had been tagged "Do not submit. Revolt"", and someone had painted "Lynch Habib" on the side of College House" (Morrissey & Monama, 2015:2). Thus, campus post-protest action is depicted as eerie and threatening. The inclusion of these details also helps portray the protesters negatively: the first phrase suggests that the protesters encourage a sense of anarchy and discourage adherence to any system or ruling; the second phrase suggests that protesters encourage brutal mob justice and therefore violence. These are all done in fury and aggression as protesters are depicted as "irate". Other examples of mainstream media portraying students as inciting violence includes the report that protesters shouted "We want more!" at police officers when stun grenades were thrown at them (Tau, Comrie, et. al., 2015:2). This suggests that the protesters seemed to encourage and exacerbate police action. Thus student activists were portrayed as not innocent and peaceful, but rather as dangerous enough to be able to create disturbing scenes.

Student protesters were also depicted as unreasonable and governed by passion. *The Star* article "SA students revolt" says that Wits students responded to a cancelled meeting with university management "with all the fury of a jilted lover" (Morrissey, Nkosi, et. al., 2015:1). Typically a lover who has been deserted would be furious and possibly also embarrassed as they have been cruelly rejected by someone they love and trust. However, the stereotype of a lover also suggests a relationship outside the contract of marriage, implying that there is a degree of risk or instability involved in the relationship. The stereotype of a lover also suggests passion rather than true love. This image therefore portrays students as a group driven by passion that reacts out of overwhelming, but somewhat unreasonable, hurt. This portrays both the students (the lover) and the university management (the one who has rejected them) in an ambiguous way as sympathy can be given or denied to the jilted lover depending on how you view the relationship between student and university. In addition, the allusion to a "lover's tiff" trivialises the protests. Interestingly, the reason for the university abandoning the students is presented as "health and safety reasons" (Morrissey, Nkosi, et. al., 2015:1). This takes us back to the afore-mentioned depiction of students as a threatening and dangerous.

The portrayal of students as violent and threatening is to be found across a wide range of mainstream newspapers suggesting a degree of media concordance. The *Daily Sun* article "Storming the gates!" provides a good illustrative example. The caption of the visual which

accompanied the article describes how students at UP protested, "almost destroying the library" (Moobi, et. al., 2015:2). To destroy a library, particularly the Merensky library at UP, would require great amounts of effort and force. By reporting near-destruction of the library as factual, the journalists reinforce a construction of students as extremely violent and wantonly destructive. The *Pretoria News* article "Fees fight hits city" says that the protesters "went on a rampage and marched to various residences before storming into a dining hall where they were given water, juice boxes and sweets" (Makhetha & Moatshe, 2015:1). The words 'rampage' and 'storm' suggest anger and destruction. The bathetic end to the sentence almost mocks the student protesters, suggesting that their actions are dangerous and extreme but completely unnecessary and disproportionate to their aim. *The Star* article "SA students revolt" describes the situation on campuses as "violent" and "chaotic" (Morrissey, Nkosi, et. al., 2015:1) while a *Daily Sun* article says that the protests were marked by "attacks, intimidation and arson" ("No end to Blade's headaches", Tau & Makora, et. al., 2015:2). The caption of *The Star*'s front page visual on 20 October clearly labels protesters as "hooligans" (Morrissey, Nkosi, et. al., 2015). Words such as "violence", "chaos" and "hooligans" and the idea that the protests were characterised by destructive and criminal acts suggest aggression, disorder and misbehaviour. This helps portray students as vicious and unruly. Because students are portrayed as the cause of this lack of safety on campus, they are framed as thugs and criminals.

Continuing this theme, many commentators chose to place emphasis on the danger protesters posed to campus management. One example is the article "Fees fight hits city", published in *Pretoria News*. The article says that UP Vice-Chancellor Prof. De la Rey "had to be escorted by campus security when students bayed for her blood" at a mass meeting and then had to "sneak out of the backdoor, under the watchful eye of campus security" when the meeting dissolved (Makhetha & Moatshe, 2015:1). The use of the words "had to" suggests that a campus security escort was a necessity as student protesters were so undeniably violent that an attack on the vice-chancellor was imminent. The image of baying for blood suggests that students are both animalistic and blood-thirsty and that they wish to inflict personal harm. The phrase "Sneak[ing] out the back door suggests that the action is necessary in order to remain undiscovered and avoid danger, adding to the depiction of students as dangerous and violent. An alternative reading of this depiction, however, might place emphasis on the portrayal of the vice-chancellor as a coward who uses stealth to avoid confrontation with students. The description of campus security as keeping a watchful eye on the vice-chancellor

suggests a depiction of security personnel as those with the authority and power to protect the threatened. Thus it reinforces a positive reading of those 'under threat'. Furthermore, heroism is suggested through security's omniscient, "watchful eye" as they miss no wrong deed. In this reading of events, campus security are presented as a necessary measure, emerging as the heroes of the day as a result of their efforts to protect the vice-chancellor from the dangerous and criminal protesters.

In other versions of the events, government is portrayed as fearful of student activists and their actions. One example of this can be found in *The Star* article "With mayhem outside, Nene forges ahead with his speech". The article says that Finance Minister Nhlanhla Nene "put on his poker face and pushed on" (Merten, 2015b:3) with his budget speech. The image of a poker face suggests that Minister Nene is hiding his true feelings about the situation outside. A poker face also lends itself more to situations of apprehension and fear rather than anger and aloofness and so we can assume that Minister Nene is being portrayed as fearful of the students. This idea is backed up by his forging or pushing ahead with his speech as this suggests effort, difficult circumstances and an attempt to acknowledge and overcome a challenge, rather than dismissing it. This bravery in the face of an intimidating trial sets government representatives up as potential victims of frightening, dangerous students.

Student activists were also rendered as untrustworthy and malicious. One *Pretoria News* example article says, "No one saw it coming – after all, student leaders had proclaimed that the march to the Union Buildings… would be peaceful" (Makhetha, 2015a:1). The tone of disappointed disbelief is a bit ambiguous in light of previous *Pretoria News* articles as students were often portrayed as violent. This means that the authors could be using the phrase sarcastically to strengthen their portrayal of students as violent or it could be used to suggest that the authors have genuinely had their hopes let down. This phrase therefore suggests that protesters can be perceived to have set the public up to feel sympathy toward their cause when they are not actually deserving of it; in addition, it can also suggest that student activists can be seen to have deceived the public into letting their protests continue despite the protests actually being a vehicle for destruction and violence. The particular phrasing used also suggests that protesters cannot honour their word, thus leading to the view that they are liars and disreputable, calculating and malicious. A similar suspicion was applied to student leaders. The article "#What does it mean?", published in *City Press*, questioned whether the student leaders who met with President Zuma were "genuine

representatives" of the movement when they perceived that "many students were left seething with discontent" and the sense that the meeting with President Zuma and other Cabinet members was "compromised" into a disappointing outcome (2015:5). In this way, protest leaders were rendered as dishonest, spineless and not entirely dedicated to the cause they represent.

'Students as an angry mob' was a widespread trope of news reportage. The *Pretoria News* article "Protesters furious over JZ's failure to address them on zero percent hike", for example, offers the following rendition:

> All hell broke loose when Zuma announced the zero percent increment through live television instead of appearing before the crowd as originally expected. The students became enraged and attacked police officers... Police then responded with more stun grenades and teargas, as well as rubber bullets… However, their action merely sent the problem out onto the neighbouring streets… Roads in the vicinity of the Union Buildings were flooded with angry students spilling into Arcadia and Sunnyside... The streets around the Union Buildings were a no-go zone. (Makhetha, 2015a:1).

In this way, we are presented with an image of extreme chaos and violence caused by student activists. This is contrasted with the choice of the more neutral words – such as "responded" and "action" – that are used to describe police retaliation. This suggests that the police were neither violent nor provocative but merely reacted in self-defence. A negative portrayal of students is also found in the idea that they are a "problem". The word "enraged" suggests passionate emotion, possibly without reason. This is reinforced by the description of students "flooding" the streets which suggests mob-like behaviour. In this way, students are presented as a mob of hooligans who are uncontrolled, a danger to citizens, and unreasonable in their response to the situation.

Students were also presented as criminals through naming. Media made reference to "The Bellville Six", made up of Kgotsi Chikane, Markus Trengrove, Chumani Maxwele, Kevin French, Nathan Taylor and Lindsey Maasdorp, who were arrested outside Parliament, charged with high treason and held in the Bellville Police Station overnight (Huisman, Harper & Cele, 2015:6). Media also employed the name "The Sunnyside Seven" to represent the group made up of seven unidentified protesters, who were known for breaking away from the Union Buildings march to loot and cause damage in Sunnyside (eNCA, 2015). In doing so, they popularised these terms. The use of such names creates the sense that these groups of

students are actually criminal gangs, suggesting that they embody the characteristics of dangerousness and notoriety. This naming can be seen as a strategy of power that relates to events of political and social unrest. For example, the term criminal was also used to describe both the Marikana miners and those involved in the 2008 attacks on foreigners (Sandwith, 2010), suggesting that it is one of the ways in which authorities sought to undermine the legitimacy of the protests. This practice of naming also echoes those used to describe anti-apartheid activists (such as 'The Cradock Four"). In this alternative, less likely reading, these naming practices can also be seen as a form of heroisation as agents of protest come to form part of an elite or famous group.

Despite many negative representations, mainstream media reportage did also portray students as dedicated, serious and intelligent in their protests, suggesting considerable ambivalence in the way in which the protests were understood and explained. In the article "Bracing for the long haul", published in *The Star*, for example, journalist Kate Morrissey angles her article to focus on how student protesters behave while not protesting. She notes that protesters clean the Wits Senate House that they had occupied by sweeping the stairs and picking up rubbish (Morrissey, 2015a:3). By highlighting their cleaning duties, Morrissey suggests that they are considerate of their surroundings and each other. In an unusual act of personal reflection, Morrissey provides an antidote to the hooligan framing by portraying protesters as conscious campaigners. Her perception that the movement does not align with a "typical" South African protest, which she has been led to believe are chaotic and violent, suggests that she perceives these students as respectable and serious enough that they do not wish to endanger their cause by being associated with the history of protest in South Africa. The emphasis on the student's peaceful aims, unlike other protests, also suggests that these students are revolutionary in their approach to protest itself and heroic in that their behaviour seeks not to harm society. Another example of this representation is found in *The Star*'s article "UJ makes heavy weather of march". In this article, protesters are described as showing "the exhaustion of protesting for a week" on their faces (Morrissey, 2015b:3). The image of exhausted protesters undermines celebratory representations of protesters from other commentators. Rather, this portrayal suggests that protesters are just normal beings as they face exhaustion, perhaps from disheartening opposition and physical difficulties. However, this representation evokes sympathy from the reader as we come to understand their struggles and their determined commitment to the cause.

An alternative reading on the violence associated with the protests can be found in the fairly frequent media focus on the *public* as violent hooligans; this is mainly done by articles emphasising the public's response to the protesters. An article in *The Star*, "Students aim to close down campuses countrywide", for example, details an incident against protesters and says "While protesters were dancing and singing outside the [Wits] campus, a motorist in a car tried to run over the students. This was the second time a car had tried to run over students [in that] week" (Monama, 2015a:4). Mentioning this incident as a repetitive action suggests that the journalist sees this as an intentional act. This renders the public as criminal and harmful.

Other journalists chose to portray police as the violent characters. In the *Saturday Argus* article "V-day for students", it is reported that police pursued protesters through a park "where children were playing" (Khoisan, 2015:1).The inclusion of this detail suggests that the police are cruel as it appears that they are willing to risk hurting innocent and helpless individuals, like children, in order to stop protesters. Similarly, *City Press* also chose a more negative portrayal of police. In their article "#What does it mean?" they note that the "signs of [the students'] surrender (arms folded above their heads) were ignored at several big protests" (2015:5). This was echoed in student media such as in the *Perdeby* article "University fee unrest". The innocence of the protesters when police used force on the students was emphasised by saying that "many news sources report[ed] that there was no clear provocation from the protesting crowd" (Johnston & Linden, 2015). The phrase "many news sources" suggests overwhelming evidence. By highlighting this idea in relation to an emphasis on innocence, the authors suggest that they, as well as other news sources, viewed the students as innocent and the police as cruel and unnecessarily violent.

Other examples of this characterisation include *The Star*'s two different articles, "Student power" and "With mayhem outside, Nene forges ahead with speech" and *City Press*'s "Out of step Parliament bumbles on regardless". These examples are also distinguished by their inclusion of government in the theme of violence. These articles say that while students outside Parliament "sang the national anthem, many holding up their hands", police started to scuffle with protesters, forcing them away. It is said that when students fell to the ground, they were "targeted by two or three policemen" each and that some were even assaulted with tasers (Merten, 2015a:1). In addition to this, the narrative describes President Zuma, Nzimande, finance minister Nhlanhla Nene and opposition MPs as "cocooned in the House"

and undisturbed by the violence outside (Heard, 2015:5; Merten, 2015b:3). Later, Nzimande is presented as addressing protesters accompanied by the Police Minister, the State Security Minister and the Defence Minister "behind green railings, surrounded by bodyguards" (Merten, 2015a:1).

The depiction of police and government in this story of events is interesting. Mentioning that police seemed to target students, particularly those who had fallen, further villainises police as it presents them as cruel and dishonourable: they appear to go after students who have already fled or been subdued. Noting that students sang the national anthem and made surrender signs while they scuffled with police forms a contrast to accounts that depicted students as violent because here protesters are represented as peaceful and even united for the nation. The use of the word "cocooned" to describe government and MPs suggests that these individuals were comfortable and contained, unwilling to engage with the protesters. In this way, government and the other Members of Parliament are represented as dismissive of, and superior to, the students outside their walls. In this way, they become villainised and morally suspect, particularly in that they do not react to the violence. Finally, the image of Nzimande addressing students while supported by the Police Minister, the State Security Minister, and the Defence Minister, behind fencing and with personal security, suggests an overwhelming display of superiority and force as all individuals who were present with Nzimande represent physical control and defence. It also suggests that the government can be perceived to be threatened by the students and that, in light of the rest of the article, the government is distanced from, and patronising of, protesters as they hope to use excessive authority into scaring them out of their actions. Other mainstream media accounts that add to this negative representation of government include *The Star*'s article titled "Politicking headlines fees debate in House". In this article, the journalist goes out of her way to note that that no one from the Parliamentary higher education committee was in attendance at the Parliamentary debate about tertiary education fees (Merten, 2015c:4). The inclusion of this fact suggests that the committee is dismissive of the debate and the situation and therefore the importance and urgency thereof.

A further story arising from the protests was the weakness of university management, particularly for agreeing to student demands. Once such framing can be seen in the *Pretoria News* article titled "Tuks caves in to demands; reopens after protests". In the headline and article, it suggests that UP "finally caved in" or "eventually gave in" to student demands

because they could no longer stand the pressure placed on them and the "haggling with students" (Makhetha, 2015c:1). The image of surrender proposes that the surrendering party (in this case, universities) are weak because they do not wish to continue fighting. The use of the word "haggling" does not portray the protesters positively as the word haggling suggests annoying, persistent bargaining. Retuning to an earlier theme, this portrays students as stubborn as they seem never to be satisfied with any proposed outcome. Alternatively, it also reinforces an idea of the weak university as managers choose to surrender on the basis of perceived pressure and the continued, but somewhat insubstantial, action of bargaining.

New activist generation

Student activist representations of the various constituencies involved in the movement were found largely in mainstream media. Students attempted to validate their behaviour by arguing that they took their actions seriously and were inclusive. Unsurprisingly, student activists created a contrast to the positive renderings of their actions by giving negative treatment to those who opposed their campaign. The most common of these negatively-depicted constituencies was the police, who were most frequently portrayed as violent and brutal. Government were also presented as violent whereas media were criticised for focusing purely on the superficial and sensational elements of the protests. Interestingly, there were some instances when student activists chose to represent other protesters negatively, such as the protest leaders (who were portrayed as having personal agendas) and some of the protesters at the march to the Union Buildings (who were portrayed as a potential third force). In this way, the public debate about 'reasonable' violence off-set against hooliganism and crime opened up important questions around legitimate and non-legitimate violence and how these are defined.

In general, student accounts portrayed protesters as a group who took their actions seriously. Wits SRC president Nompendulo Mkhatshwa, for example, said "We are very sober comrades and we know what we are fighting for", adding that protesters have been studying in the evenings (Monama, 2015a:4). Naledi Chirwa, a UP student, said: "We are intellectuals. We've brought our books here [to the protest]; we are willing to be here for as long as it takes" (Moobi, et. al., 2015:2). This sentiment is repeated on several occasions such as the comment from Cabanga Maluleka, regional deputy secretary of the South African Students' Congress, that they "want to go back to class but [they] can't ignore the issues" (Makhubu, 2015b:6). The use of the word "sober" suggests that students are sensible, certain and serious,

and perhaps not drunk on the feeling of power that being in a protest or group can bring. "Sober" also suggests a tone of gravitas, perhaps further implying that the students do not take their actions and situation lightly. The emphasis on protesters as "intellectuals" also promotes a sense of seriousness and the idea of intelligence and forethought. The words "as long as it takes" and the contrast between wanting to study but needing to address the issues renders students as dedicated to their cause. Overall, student accounts suggest that the student activists are determined, genuine, and loyal in their actions.

Another aspect of student protests that was highlighted in student accounts was inclusivity and gender-sensitivity. In this regard, I highlight those accounts that represented protesters as diplomatic and fair. Student leader Jodi Williams, for example, explains that it was decided to give preference to and make leaders of "queer black women" (Huisman, Harper, et. al., 2015:6) and that protest leaders ensured that women were never disrespected or spoken over during the protests, particularly by men (Blignaut, 2015:2). This is done, she says, because "in social justice movements, most of the time leadership positions are hijacked by men… Most of the time in these movements, it is the women doing the work – they do the operational running of movements and men get all the glory for it" and this movement therefore intended to glorify women for their value and efforts (Blignaut, 2015:2). In addition, Williams mentions that women in the movement are referred to as "Mbokodo" [rock] taken from the phrase "when you strike a woman, you strike a rock" (Blignaut, 2015:2).

Firstly, the emphasis on giving prominence to women who are black and queer suggests inclusivity as these women are the most oppressed in society, having to face oppression in three spheres of identity. Secondly, Williams alludes to the patriarchal nature of past protests where women were robbed of their roles and value by men who were heroised instead, thus suggesting that current student activists are a remedy for these past distortions. Further, student activists are portrayed as socially aware, honest, and willing to do something about social inequality. The idea of not only giving women their space in the movement but using the movement to glorify them suggests an inversion of the social norm. What is particularly interesting about this is that the movement is aligned with gender equity as women are given central roles in the movement, and therefore the production of history. Lastly, the reference to women as rocks speaks to their prominence, strength and constant nature and portrays them as the foundation of the movement. Through this emphasis on inclusion, student protesters

94

are portrayed as fair and heroic uplifters of the socially downtrodden and sensitive to gender concerns.

While student protesters were framed as violent in other commentators' accounts, student protesters tended to shift the focus onto the violence of the state. Students from Sol Plaatjie University, for example, told police that "This is not Marikana and the police should not come with their Marikana mentality" (Phillips, 2015:3). This alludes to the controversial Marikana Massacre in August 2012 where policeman clashed with a crowd of protesting miners and killed tens of them. The massacre was the biggest use of police force since the apartheid era. It is unclear what made policeman open fire on the miners but speculations range from perceived to real threats. What this allusion to Marikana and the "Marikana mentality" suggests is that students view the police as violent, repressive and intolerant of dissent; in addition, the police are portrayed as so emotional that they seem prepared to commit another massacre of protesting civilians. This suggests that the police view the students as dangerous and criminal; however, students also seem concerned about the police's tendency to violence. Many student accounts refer to acts of violence such as Kgotsi Chikane's comment that officers "threw [stun grenades] like toys" (Huisman, Harper, et. al., 2015:6). The simile suggests that police reaction took on the form of a cruel game and that the police found the consequences of aiming stun grenades at protesters trivial or amusing. Thus it is suggested that policeman assume students are dangerous and so treat students as if they are disposable; this further suggests that police too have a violent and contemptuous manner in handling the protests.

While most student activist accounts encouraged a positive view of protesters, others suggested disillusionment with the leaders of the protest and their behaviour. This stance helped open up some of the complexity of campus politics and, more specifically, the problems posed by having student representatives of national parties on campuses. Sinikiwe Mqadi, for example, argued that many of the leaders, especially the men, were part of the protests for their own agenda or simply because they were "leaders in some campus political parties" (Mqadi, 2015:12). She suggests that the leaders of the movement use the protests as a means to "build their political career and fight personal battles with the vice chancellor" (Mqadi, 2015:12). She concludes that "The real revolutionaries of the struggle are never mentioned" (Mqadi, 2015:12). Firstly this account suggests that there was a tendency within the movement to focus on leaders. This is at odds with the accounts that suggested that the

movement was a collective. Further, it points to the idea of campus politics as a career route and that the movement is simply a well-timed opportunity for some; thus these leaders appear self-interested. National political parties are also presented negatively in this account as they seem to deter naïve or greedy student leaders and protesters from their real cause through manipulating these students into promoting party politics instead. In suggesting that the grassroots movement activists have little understanding of their leaders' true motives it helps portray them as naïve. In addition, it is also interesting that Mqadi highlights that these suspicious leaders are mostly men, suggesting a reading of the movement as male-dominated and therefore inherently untrustworthy. This runs counter to previous accounts that suggested that women and marginalised groups were given a central space in the history-making processes of the movement. Primarily these kinds of arguments suggest a suspicion of politicians in general as it is possible that they have cemented their position of power by exploiting important historical opportunities for their benefit. These fake leaders and the parties they belong to are presented as the villains while the other protesters are depicted as mislead and unquestioning.

The question of ulterior motives was also raised by other commentators such as Dean of St. George's Cathedral Reverend Michael Weeder in his poem submission to *Cape Argus*. He warns protesters about the "wizards and… promenading priests" and "seducing beasts" among them who will "[slam] heaven's door against the will of the desperate poor" (2015b:14). This poem not only suggests that not all protesters have the cause at heart but also represents these individuals as suspicious and dark characters participating for their own means, much like witches, false prophets and demons who can disguise themselves to ensnare others in their traps. Rev. Weeder believes that these individuals will eventually sacrifice the cause for their own interests as they do not care for the "desperate poor". Instead these shadowy individuals would choose rather to turn them out or away from "heaven", an image that is used here to represent a secular paradise. While Rev. Weeder recognises that not all the protesters are driven by malicious or personal motives, he still tends toward a characterisation of participants in the protests as deceptive thieves who will rob the movement of its "time in history" (Weeder, 2015b: 14).

The idea of the third force was also influential in the broader student activist debate. Wits SRC secretary Fasiha Hassan spoke about the violence at the march to the Union Buildings, saying that:

> [It looked] like people arrived with a mandate to be very, very violent… [She] think[s] there were groups who had some mandate to cause trouble because there were these small groups strategically placed in the crowd that would start running, pretending like there was a problem, then creating mass panic – and then other people would run. But there was nothing to run from. There was no tear gas; there were no flames. (Tau, Comrie, et. al., 2015:2).

This is one of the stories that emerged as a means of explaining the violence. This trend suggested that the legitimate protesters were infiltrated by external groups bent on undermining the students' cause. However, an uncertainty about the source of these violent groups is suggested by Hassan referring to these violent individuals in vague terms like "people" and "groups" rather than by specific identifying terms like "students" or "outsiders". However, a popular reading of this account suggests that these violent groups were sent by government or others that wanted to supress the movement to ensure the march to the Union Buildings seemed invalid. Also notable in this account is the absence of police retaliation, creating a contrast to accounts that portrayed police as violent.

Other accounts opened up the possibility of making violence thinkable or a legitimate response. One example is the comment made by Albertus Schoeman that people "need to be careful before vilifying students who were violent. The president arrived late for the meeting and then failed to address students who had waited for him for more than four hours. That provoked the students" (Makhetha, 2015b:1). The idea that students were "provoked" construes them as victims of another constituency's actions. This suggests that the physically violent reaction of some protesters, while somewhat intentional, was not caused by their hooligan nature but rather was reasonable and should not be criticised, given that the emotional and mental violence inflicted upon the students by President Zuma was equal, if not worse. Thus, by degree, President Zuma is made to seem the violent one in this account. This relates to Mahmood Mamdani's idea of "thinkable violence" in that violence, particularly that on a large scale, is not always irrational but can be made thinkable and therefore somewhat justifiable if one attempts to understand its history and the "logic of its development" (2001:8).

While not as prominent, discussion around the media and their method of presenting the protests also arose in student debate. Many felt the media discouraged people from helping protesting students by sensationalising the protests. One example is the argument made by Stellenbosch student, Ivan Pauw. He describes peacefully marching with fellow students one night while one thought kept occurring to him: "Where was the media? The media had been a presence during the days that passed, but managed to report primarily on only one or two incidents that turned out to be destructive" (Pauw, 2015:6). He implies that media fail to report the good news and the real news, suggesting that the essence of the movement is side-lined by media in their attempts to be sensational and therefore commercially competitive. In this example, the media is represented as a force that excludes more authentic student narratives. In this way, the representation of students as criminals is reinforced in order to fulfil a commercial agenda, also resulting in a lack of support for students who are just hoping to achieve positive change.

When we were student activists at The Last Supper we were reading Marx!
In general, government accounts represented students as violent. Government accounts chose to highlight student's behaviour as largely destructive and irrational. Some accounts went as far as to imply that student protesters were habitual criminals. Consequently, police were framed as heroes in government narrative as they were seen as brave protectors of the public. Again, government statements were perfunctory while accounts given by individual politicians were more elaborate and expressive.

While government chose to express superficial sympathy towards the protests, government chose to condemn student protesters by portraying them as irrational and inclined to violence. Government was also quick to distance themselves from student violence. One example is the press release "President Zuma planned to meet leaders and management" (The Presidency, 2015f) which condemns the violence and argues that students became violent for no reason. This represents students as irrational and unreasonable. In this example, government is also presented as innocent and not the driving factor behind the violence, suggesting that the motivating factor is purely the students' tendency to ridiculousness, stubbornness and hooliganism. Another example is found in the *City Press* article "State readies for fees chaos". The headline of the article and Higher Education spokesperson Khaye Nkwanyana suggests that the main point of concern going into 2016 is disruption caused by students who "go outside structures like the SRC and decide to start a strike" (Cele, 2015:14), rather than

the actual issue that students still will not be able to afford tertiary education in 2016. Nkwanyana adds that "police must act and enforce the law… they must protect our institutions". Here it is clear that the overwhelming concern for government is the safety of the institutions. In addition, government is concerned about the ability of students to undermine authority structures like the SRC. This again suggests an anxiety about control and authority in the broader society; it also references the afore-mentioned questions (addressed in Chapter two) about the right to protest. This poses the question about whether protests have a legitimate place in society. What is also important to note is that Nkwanyana believes that one of the most likely actions of students who go outside structures like the SRC is to strike, thus reiterating government perceptions of students as disruptive renegades. Further, by highlighting the idea of students disregarding their SRCs (despite the SRC being their elected leaders), students are also represented as dishonourable. The use of the word "enforce" also suggests that student activists cannot be convinced into peace and thus can only be controlled through strict action. Because of this, police also appear as heroes in the effort to protect the country's universities and public.

In other accounts, government went as far as to suggest that student activists were actually criminals. For instance, Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training Gwebinkundla Qonde argued that student activists are dangerous, emphasising that the police "complained that students had live ammunition during the protests" (Monama, 2015c:3). This suggests a reading of students as willing to use (deadly) force and thus both immoral and indifferent to the rights of others. It also helps portray police as fearful of students (furthering the negative perception of students) and thus the police are further depicted as brave in their willingness to face up to this deadly threat.

A particularly interesting dimension of government responses to the protesting students was the argument that their behaviour was 'un-African'. One such example is Minister for Higher Education and Training Blade Nzimande's comment that SRC members engaged in debate with university management only "aiming to disagree with university management instead of being open-minded" (Hans, 2015:2) and that this unintellectual behaviour is "un-African" (Hans, 2015:2). The idea of "African" behaviour invokes an essentialist and unitary idea of African identity. In this way, students are depicted as stubborn thugs who cannot and refuse to approach the crisis in a mature way but also individuals who do not fit into the community. This argument also echoes some of the student activist accounts that criticised protest leaders

for having their own agendas. Most importantly, however, the new idea that protesters behaviour is "un-African" opens up a discussion about culture and the relative expected behaviour. One needs to question what is meant by African behaviour but, in light of Nzimande's comment, it can be suggested that it is characterised by civil duty, care for the community, respect for authority and negotiation when placed in opposition to a Western or modern culture that preaches self-centredness, materialism and instant gratification and that assumes everything and anything is owed to you. Thus, student activists were rendered as poor representatives of their culture, people and country.

The favourite argument about the possibility of third force involvement arose repeatedly in government debates about the movement. One examples is the comments from ANC MP Bongani Mkongi that the Fees Must Fall protests were funded and encouraged by "some opposition parties and foreign countries" and that foreign "hooligans" were using "desperate students not to write exams [and] destabilise our hard-won democracy" (Merten, 2015c:4). What this comment suggests is that the protest was not about any form of social or political reformation but rather concerned with overthrowing the democratic state of South Africa and the ANC's position in government. What is also suggested is that students had little to do with the organisation of the protests and that this was rather the work of an enemy force. Even as a joke, this theory totally invalidates the student activists as well as their achievements and actions as it suggests that the students had no agency in developing the movement's arguments, demands and activities. Thus the suggestion of a third force sought to undermine the legitimacy of the protests. This indicates a particularly important strand in the government handling of the crisis as the government sought to present students as puppets and their cause as an enemy attack rather than critically engaging with the events. This strategy of power is closely linked to other situations of unrest such as apartheid protests, the Marikana massacre and the 2008 anti-foreigner violence (Sandwith, 2010, Duncan, 2012a). This is because the idea of the third force can be seen as a way to negotiate threats to dominant national myths and stories (such as that of the virtuous, harmonious community) and a means of those in power to dismiss the seriousness of an event, suggesting that this is a common method of dealing with government inadequacy. In this account, government's anxiety about retaining control is supported by the journalist labelling Mkongi's account a "conspiracy theory", a term that suggests government paranoia.

There is no free lunch in higher education

Like government media, university accounts favoured a more negative treatment of students while portraying non-protesters and police in more positive terms. Echoing other negative renditions of the movement, university narratives implied that student activists were violent, did not represent the majority, were conscious criminals, a hindrance to university activities, self-centred, demanding and untrustworthy. There were, however, some accounts that suggested that student protesters were worth supporting and a positive influence on the institutions.

Some universities argued that protesters received unfair representation in the media because they were made to seem entirely innocent when they were not. One example is Acting Wits Vice-Chancellor Prof. Crouch's argument that "only 300 of the 30 000 Wits students were taking part in the protests" adding that "videos circulating online showing protesting students being attacked by police officers and other non-protesting students were one-sided" (Monama, Morrissey, et. al., 2015:6). The emphasis on the idea that only 1% of the student population participated in the protests suggests that the protests were not representative of the general student populace's sentiment and needs. This undermines the cause. This also goes against previous accounts that suggested ways in which the movement was of benefit to everyone and further counters reports that criticised the media for failing to report on student activists positively. The opposition that was established between protesters and the general student body also suggests that while there were not many protesters, they were nevertheless dangerous and potentially violent, as this small group is perceived to be capable of threatening and terrorising large numbers of onlookers and average people on campus. Sympathy for student protesters is also undermined by the argument of one-sided stories. Thus, student activists are portrayed as actually violent and not always the victim. Further examples of protesters as criminal can found in the comments made by Vice-Chancellor of NWU Dan Kgwadi that their campuses are "under siege" (Monama, 2015b:6) and that the institution can no longer guarantee the safety of students on their campuses. This likens the movement to a hostage situation where universities are being held ransom by criminal-like students. It also suggests that protesters are uncontrollable, ruthlessly destructive and a danger to non-protesters.

Another story thread picked up on government arguments, representing student activists' as stubborn and intransigent. Examples of this include the arguments of Wits spokesperson Shirona Patel and UCT acting vice-chancellor Professor Francis Petersen that student leaders refused to negotiate with university management, despite demanding engagement from management (Monama, 2015a:4; Siyabonga, 2015:4). These accounts use the words "trying" and "continuing to attempt" to suggest concerted effort with no apparent success. Further, it counteracts student activist accounts that say they have been attempting to engage university management but have been dismissed. In this story, student protesters are depicted as a group who just want to protest and make demands rather than a group who wants to articulate their grievances and start the momentum of change that they seem to be demanding.

As in Nzimande's rendition, universities depicted protesters as overly demanding and not fully cognisant of the negative consequences of their demands. UWC spokesperson Luthando Tyhalibongo, for example, said that they had previously tried insourcing but it was a failure (Dano, 2015:8). This statement suggests little faith in the success of the students demands: because one has been tried and has failed in the past, it is possible that it, and all the other demands, will fail this time. In this way, students are depicted as ignorant not only of the consequences of their demands (bankruptcy and a dysfunctional university) but also of the university's previous efforts in implementing them, further suggesting that their demands only highlight problems but do not offer real solutions.

In light of student activists as antagonists, non-protesting students were presented as heroes. Wits spokesperson Shirona Patel notes that protesters were easily overcome by students refusing to leave their lectures (Tau & Makora, et. al., 2015:2). This suggests a battle of two wills, of 'good' and 'evil'. Here non-protesting students are presented as the heroes of the story as they subdue protesters, further suggesting that protesters are villains. In this way, protesters are portrayed as morally inferior to those that stood up to them.

In contrast to university management, several groups of academics at various institutions chose to represent students as agents of robust change. Dr Zethu Matebeni from UCT addressed students saying "We are galvanised. We have challenged the way things are in this government" (Martin, 2015:4). The image of the protesters being galvanised like a metal alloy suggests strength and that they are a force to be reckoned with; this image is similar to

the image of female student activists as rocks. Dr Matebeni characterises students as successful agents of radical transformation who challenge the political state of the country.

In an incident when protesters were provoked by the public, academics also chose to depict student activists as peaceful and responsible in the face of public aggression and incitement. Academics argued that there was "no violence towards cars or drivers whatsoever" and that media reports saying that student activists had been destructive were wrong (Concerned Academics at Wits, 2015). They said that any action by students was "crowd bravado in response to antagonism rather than being a sincere threat" and that when a car intentionally drove at students through police cordons only "a small breakaway group" of students chased the car "in response to this incident" (Concerned Academics at Wits, 2015). They add that "student leaders were present almost immediately and worked to calm the situation down" (Concerned Academics at Wits, 2015). Statements such as these sought to undermine the more dominant framing of protesters as violent. Students are portrayed as only jokingly trying to impress each other with their boldness rather than being purposefully aggressive and violent. In this way, students are rather depicted as victims of an aggressive public. The emphasis on the aggressive students being a small breakaway group seeks to remind the reader that the overwhelming majority of protesters were still peaceful and this seems to negate the reaction of the small group. The inclusion of the perception that leaders responded instantly suggests that the protesters are responsible and controlled. In this narrative strand, protesters are depicted as sensible individuals conducting a peaceful march.

Another example in which students were portrayed as peaceful and responsible was found in the comments of the Head of Security at UP, Colin Fouché, who emphasised that at UP "no police action had been taken, no malicious property damage occurred and that there were no medical emergencies" during the protests (Svicevic, 2015). In addition, Professor Karin van Marle from UP said that students' maturity and responsibility made them a source of moral and ethical improvement at universities as she describes their demands for "accountability, transparency and democracy" as what institutions "should stand for" (Svicevic, 2015). The emphasis on the idea that they caused no issues for the university underlines the story of students as guilt-free, mature and responsible. It also undermines other reports published in print media of students being destructive and violent. However, this account could possibly also draw a contrast between UP students and protesters from other universities, implying that UP protesters were peaceful but that it was not necessarily the case with other activists

who may have been violent and destructive. In addition, these comments suggest that institutions have not been accountable, transparent and democratic previously, thus bolstering positive depiction of students by affirming their necessity in universities and society.

Fees fight hits city

An analysis of police accounts is unique to this chapter. These accounts have been chosen because police were given substantial negative treatment in the stories of other constituencies and so we must investigate how they responded to this characterisation. What we might term the 'police narrative' was obtained through looking at accessed voices of police in the media. Police accounts mostly portrayed student protesters negatively, suggesting that they are violent and habitual criminals. One example of this is the comment from Constable Noloyiso Rwexana who said that in light of the nine arrests made that day, "more arrests were imminent" (Kalipa, 2015:1). Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi added to this idea saying that they are "expecting a lot of problems" in 2016 (Cele, 2015:14). These comments suggest a tone of foreboding and the idea of certainty. What these comments then imply is that police perceive students as habitually dangerous and criminal. In this way, students are depicted as driven only by the need for violence. Similar police accounts of student violence appeared elsewhere, such as in the comments that protesters deliberately provoked police without fear (Tau, Comrie, et. al., 2015:2). In this way, students are aligned with hardened criminals and made to seem threatening and dangerous.

The police narrative also invoked the story of 'third force' involvement. Police officers said that members of the SA Students' Congress had encouraged "drug addicts and criminals" to join the march (Tau, Comrie, et. al., 2015:2). This renders protesters as dangerous as while they might not have enacted the violence themselves, they might have invited other dangerous individuals to act on their behalf or have allowed them to rile student protesters up into violence. As discussed previously, "third force involvement" can be seen as a typical strategy of power enforced by the police to negotiate the threat to their authority, particularly because they do not want to be seen as weak when faced with mere student protesters.

The kids are not OK

Turning to the various accounts by members of the public and prominent social figures, we find a similarly polarised debate with some praising police and others praising students. Similar to student and mainstream media accounts, what also emerged in the narrative of

public commentators is that there was a significant focus on gender and the role of women in the movement with accounts supporting or contesting the perception of the movement as inclusive and non-sexist.

As in the academics' version of events, students were portrayed as revolutionary and agents of social change. However, these accounts were notable because they presented a permutation of the theme. This time the story presented student protesters as revolutionary because of their social intelligence. One example of this is radio personality Gugulethu Mhlungu's comment that student activists have grasped the complex state of South Africa and the intersectional issues that the public face, something the general public and government has failed to do (Mhlungu 2015:3). She explains that "#RhodesMustFall was not about just the statue, and #FeesMustFall is not just about fee hikes. Young people involved in these movements understand… that there must be justice for all" (Mhlungu, 2015:3). This is manifested, Mhlungu argues, in students making the "treatment of poor black workers, queer students, disabled students, and women critical components of their movement" (Mhlungu, 2015:3). This account presents a new suggestion about protesters in that they were uniquely intelligent. This unique form of intelligence can be linked to Antonio Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual" which suggests that a person's intelligence is "distinguished less by their profession, which may be any job characteristic of their class, than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong", or, in other words, their level of intellect is established through understanding something other people do not (1971:132). This kind of intellectual is particularly important for social change as he or she takes on a "directive political role" in helping the proletariat escape from "defensive corporatism and economism and advance towards hegemony" (Gramsci, 1971:133).

Another story strand that was emphasised was the question of protest itself and its legitimacy. For some, the protests confirmed the social role of protest. Thus a debate about the rights of protests emerged. This leads to another debate about relative rights such as the right to education. For example, elements of this debate were highlighted by Angela Mudukuti who argued that the Fees Must Fall movement raised questions around the "right to demonstrate, freedom of expression, freedom of movement and whether the right to education is truly being promoted and fulfilled" (2015:34). This was in light of non-participating students claiming on Twitter that they were "being held against their will and not being allowed to leave campus" or that "others, while in support of the strike, highlighted that the timing was

poor given that exams were fast approaching" (Mudukuti, 2015:34). The contrast between pro- and anti-protest responses suggests is that there is no simple answer to who has a right to education, particularly when both parties feel their same rights are being infringed upon either by the protest or by high fees. Another contribution to this debate was made by Pontsho Pilane who tweeted that non-protesting "students say that others mustn't protest but don't offer alt[ernative] ways of engaging" (14 October 2015a) and that "many not protesting are frustrated but they also see a necessity for this. They agree fees are high" (14 October 2015b). These tweets suggest that non-protesting students are somewhat sympathetic to the cause but do not see protesting as a valid means of raising issues. In this way, non-protesting students are presented as complacent or apathetic. This adds to the questions surrounding what is a valid way to raise issues as protests are rejected but no solutions are offered.

Also of interest in these discussions is the predominance of religious imagery in the descriptions of the protesters. For example, in the opinion piece "Ringing the Angelus bell to remind us never to look the other way" Rev. Michael Weeder argues that "This past week, God's presence was incarnate in the young women and men of the Fees Must Fall movement. They audaciously bore the hope of the poor and the weight of our collective neglect to the very doors of Parliament... Even as they sang the national anthem – our sacred hymn which seeks God's blessing on us, our land and continent – stun grenades were thrown at them" (2015a:21). Thus students were depicted as holy and righteous as well as heroically burdened as they boldly bore the hope of South Africans, who trusted them to protect the public. In addition, the image of the national anthem being a sacred hymn sung by protesters while stun grenades are thrown at them presents student activists as martyrs. In other words, students come in peace yet are still met with violence. However, they happily accept this violence for the sake of their country.

The story of women also featured in public discourse. One example is journalist Bhavna Singh's comments on women as the means to a successful protest in her opinion piece "Women students show how protests should be run". She says that the success of the protests was partly because of the unique protesting style that came to the fore by women leaders. Singh uses the protests as an example to argue that female-led protests could be more

efficient than male-led protests. She reasons this based on a natural analogy:

> I spent a fair amount of time trying to spot any species in which the women butted heads, locked horns or smashed themselves together to prove a point. It's a quirk of the female biology that's been joked about… Women being the gatherers. What our brothers fail to realise that that victory doesn't mean leaving your opponent bloody and broken... Like male lions, they're all roar. It's women who do the grunt work. When we women are in charge, we gather our resources to deliver one fatal blow… [Led by women,] the patriarchy doesn't know what to do with [their] fight. (Singh, 2015:14).

Singh uses the actions of butting heads, locking horns and smashing together to suggest that male protest is characterised by violence in a quest to dominate the opponent. A women's protest, however, is represented by ideas of gathering, suggesting humility and lowliness, which, as Singh suggests, is not always taken seriously or rewarded with social prominence. However, Singh suggests a male protest lacks substance as she says it is "all roar", a threatening but insubstantial action. In light of that, Singh says women do hard toil, suggesting that, unlike males, they make use of substantial and effective action to fight.

This and other accounts reveal the way in which gender emerged as a central point of discussion in the Fees Must Fall debate, particularly the question of the relationship between gender and styles of protest. However, it is important to note that while this account raises questions about gender stereotypes it also reinforces them. In addition, it tends toward gender essentialism in that women are portrayed as peace-loving and less violent, thus opening up a debate on gender identities and roles. Still, because the Fees Must Fall protests were styled as a 'female protest', women are portrayed as vital parts of the protests. This was further demonstrated through the protests being portrayed as a fight against male authorities in that these unique protests could outwit those who only knew how to retaliate physically. In this way, women are given a central role in history making and the success of the protests.

Singh further comments that "the revolution is happening in a *doek* and dress, not a pencil skirt with a tailored shirt. No man has written this manual" (2015:14). This raises additional questions about styles of femininity. She argues that women have "refined the art of public protest" with their "sandwich lines", "military precision", "drop-off spots for supplies", "storage spaces complete with toilet rolls and Panado" and how they "cleaned the floors" after protesting and night vigils (Singh, 2015:14). Singh ends by asking "When are [there

going to be] statues of women? Which women will we bronze?" (Singh, 2015:14). The two images of attire for women represent two different views of a woman. Singh suggests that women can be empowered in the clothes that mark them according to the social norm of domesticity and that being a business woman is not the only way a female can be powerful. The images of sandwiches, toilet rolls, medicine and cleaning all relate to stereotypical female domesticity. However, here women have used their stereotypical, domestic nature in a typically male sphere to out-do their male counterparts. Stories like this reaffirm that previous protests have been unhelpfully dominated by men and that even though women are being given central roles in the Fees Must Fall movement, the patriarchal nature of society poses a threat to this positioning. In addition, the question of statues suggests that all women in the movement have been instrumental in its success, and not just the women who have been in the public eye. Thus women are again represented as central in the movement and the source of movement's success.

In tension with the depiction of the female-dominated movement are those public interventions that argued that there was clear sexism in the movement. One example is Pontsho Pilane's opinion piece "Patriarchy must fall" which portrays student activists as anti-feminist and discriminatory toward women. Pilane's account describes a number of events where women leaders were ignored, criticised or ridiculed (2015c:1). She says that "Crowds would gravitate towards former president [of the Wits SRC] Mcebo Dlamini and the Economic Freedom Fighters' Vuyani Pambo at first glance" and that even photographs from the protest would erase women "who were putting in the hard work equally". Thus she argues that "Other protesters and the media were complicit in the masculine representation that resulted" (2015c:1). She argues that the typical male figure of the politician meant that "Dlamini and Pambo were considered 'strong' because they fit into the existing narrative of political jargon, tone and linguistics, which on its own is hyper-masculine. Mkhatshwa and Kalla [failed] to make up for this 'strength', but this [had] very little to do with them and their ability to articulate themselves" (Pilane, 2015c:1).

This account undermines the portrayal of the movement as inclusive and non-sexist as well as the idea that they worked in an intersectional manner by targeting all forms of social oppression. While the protest is made to seem superficial in this way, another perspective of the issue suggests that male protesters are out of line with the movement's ideals, disrespectful to others and participating only on their terms. In these accounts,

institutionalised patriarchy is exposed in that physical strength is seen as the marker of a good leader, not intelligence or the ability to motivate crowds with words. Thus, student activists are depicted as sexist and unable to respect a group of oppressed individuals within the movement, leading to a questioning of the validity of the movement's claims to aid the socially oppressed. Other commentators also touched on this trend with Eusebius McKaiser tweeting: "How I wish male students can practise feminism too. Can we give the mic to the female leaders too?" (22 October 2015b).

As in student accounts, the story of violent police dominated the public commentator narrative. One example is Barney Pityana's comment that "The arrest of some of the protesters and the reports that they are to be charged with treason, among other charges, is indicative of a state that has lost control. It is shameful" (Mtyala & Petersen, 2015:1). Here a subtle link to apartheid is made in that students were also charged with treason when protesting against apartheid-era oppression. In this way police are presented in a negative light, as they are aligned with apartheid styles of managing dissent. Along with this, Pityana suggests that a charge of treason is disproportionate to the action of protesting, suggesting that those who had issued this charge, be it only the police or the police backed by the government, are unbalanced. A loss of control suggests the state is anxious about who has authority and also hints at the idea that police and government are authoritarian in nature as their means of regaining control is extreme. In addition, this presents police and government as threatened and cowardly, particularly through the use of the word "shameful". Thus police and their commanders are characterised as the real villains in the situation because of their extreme, cruel actions and desperation to remain in control no matter what.

Other examples that portray police as violent include mother Thembela Mantyi's comment that she "was traumatised by the way [the] kids were handled by police" (Tau, Moagi, Mokgolo, et. al., 2015:3). The idea of a mother being traumatised is an unsettling one since, as previously discussed, they were widely characterised as sacred figures. This image encourages sympathy from the reader and confirms a perception of police as extremely violent and uncaring to treat children in a way that would wound their parents.

Another interesting comment about police violence is made by the Muslims from the Claremont Main Road Mosque:

> University campuses are meant to be safe spaces for students and staff to freely exchange and express ideas. The actions of the police, supported by university management on some campuses, violated this space and perpetuated violence (in all its forces) on students, staff and workers. (Galant & Osman, 2015:14).

Here police action is increasingly called into question particularly through strong words such as "violated" and the idea that violence is implemented in both a physical and ideological sense. University management is included in this critical portrayal for they support these forms of violence. Police, along with university management, are depicted as the perpetuators of this violent state and are therefore also characterised as the villains in the narrative. In light of this, students and general university staff are rendered victims.

The story of the wayward student, that labelled protesters as lazy and entitled, also featured in public commentator accounts. One example is Jo Maxwell's portrayal of students as presumptuous and arrogant. She says that it is "patent nonsense that 18- and 19-year-olds have enough knowledge of life or even finance to dictate how a university should be managed and whom it should employ" (Maxwell, 2015:12). What this comment suggests is that Maxwell perceives the students to have overstepped the boundaries of their position due to a sense of entitlement that lets them think that they can and should dictate the means and methods of education and society. In this reading of the situation, universities, authorities and adults are presented as wiser than students (who are resultantly depicted as ignorant of their own basic needs and lived realities). However, universities appear to be at the mercy of students because of the protesters' unreasonable and uncontrollable nature. This position also assumes a social hierarchy in that it suggests that only certain people can act like leaders and others must follow, and therefore can be seen as a means to squash youth agency.

Another permutation of the wayward student is found in the comments of emeritus professor at Wits, Geoff Hughes, who problematises student rhetoric. He says that on the whole student activist arguments have been "crude and propagandist, categorising administrations as "anti-black" and "anti-poor"" (Hughes, 2015:34). He adds that this rhetoric is "dominated by force of numbers and even physical intimidation, rather than by logic and persuasion" (Hughes, 2015:34). Hughes' description of student protester rhetoric suggests that it is unintellectual,

blunt, and dishonest, and intended to manipulate emotions rather than provoke critical thought. In this reading, students are depicted as failing to understand the complexities of university contexts and that their argument is generalised rather than well thought-out and carefully-motivated. This description reduces protesters rhetoric and behaviour to an act of mere thuggery. In these comments, the argument also returns to the question of social hierarchy and particular assumptions about respect for authority and those in power. Thus, again, it can also be suggested that the protests triggered an anxiety about authority as this argument can be seen as an attempt to squash the agency of youth.

A further example of how the public depicted student activists negatively is found in Sanri Mostert comment on the UPRising Facebook page that suggests student protests are excessive and infringe on others' rights. She says: "Tuks is doing the most they can… If [protesters] have any more disputes, [they must] handle it personally with the [vice-chancellor] and then, if an agreement is not met, can mass action be discussed… I do not think it's fair that you guys take away the right to learn and write exams [from] probably more than 90% of Tuks students who want to learn and write exams now" (Mostert, 26 October 2015). Mostert's contrast between "you guys" (referring to the protesters) and "more than 90% of Tuks" suggests that the protesters are out of step with the general student body. This touches on the tension between public and personal and the question of the right to education (as well as other relevant rights) by suggesting that student activists have incorrectly made a personal issue public, thus placing their right to education above the rights of the majority of UP students.

Discussion

A consideration of various public sphere assessments of the different constituencies involved in Fees Must Fall reveals a strongly polarised debate. Some accounts choose to heroise student activists and, correspondingly, to villainise those who seemed to work against them such as university management, government and the public. Alternatively, some accounts depict the student activists in a negative light and, consequently, victimise constituencies such as the police who were the recipients of what is seen as vicious and misguided anger. In addition, these accounts open up debates about legitimate violence and the role of gender in the protests. What is also revealed in the various quests to delegitimise the protests are the strategies of those in power, as attempts are made to negotiate the threat that the protests posed to those in authority.

In general, there was a slightly stronger tendency to villainise student activists. Mainstream media portrayed student activists as divided and disagreeable, destructive, dangerous, unreasonably passionate, violent, mob-like, criminal and a source of fear. Government accounts were also largely critical of student activists and chose to portray student activists as having faulty reasoning and low intellectual ability. They also portrayed them as stubborn, self-centred, violent, criminal, and even un-African. Government also argued that those in authority wanted to engage with students but that it was the student's selfishness that prevented the engagement. Some student activist accounts, while directly involved in the movement, also suggested that protesters were not purely innocent and peaceful. These accounts targeted individuals in the movement and turned a critical lens on student leaders who were characterised as motivated by a personal agenda. Similar to government, university narratives took a dim view of students by presenting them as a minority working outside the wants and needs of the majority; they were also depicted as criminal, unwilling to engage, illogical and a threat to university operations. Public commentator accounts did not contain many negative representations of student activists. However, the accounts that did suggested that student activists were arrogant, too young to be allowed to dictate how a university is run, motivated by personal agenda and unintellectual. In these accounts, students were also depicted as excessive and sexist, their acts of protest treated as an infringement on others' rights.

In tandem with these depictions, campus security and the police were heroised and applauded for their effort to protect university management and public infrastructure. This generated sympathy for them for the task they were obliged to undertake. Alternatively, universities were criticised for being weak and agreeing to student demands. Non-protesting students were also heroised for stopping student activists and were particularly applauded for their commitment to their lectures despite protests.

Positive portrayals of student activists were mostly found in print media, student activist and public commentator accounts. Print media argued that student activists were unlike usual South African protesters in the sense that they were responsible and committed. Other accounts sought to humanise student activists to encourage sympathy for them and to demonstrate their dedication to their cause. Similarly, student activist accounts argued that the movement was inclusive and uplifting of the most disadvantaged in society. While university management was largely absent from this debate, lecturers at various universities

chose to represent students as responsible, peaceful and moral. In light of this, police were often figured as unmerciful and cruel while government were presented as disinterested and provocative. The public were also presented as occasionally intentionally violent toward student activists despite not being provoked. Media were also criticised for an inaccurate portrayal of the students as it was argued that they prefer sensationalism and violence over peaceful events and logical action.

Out of these depictions arose questions about the necessity of violence and whether it was legitimate or not. While many argued that violence in any form is unacceptable, student activists justified their use of violence as being a response to the emotional and intellectual violence inflicted on them by those in authority. This argument is linked to Mahmood Mamdani's notion of "thinkable violence", one which rejects reductive explanations of violence, such as the random manifestation of evil or a tendency toward criminality (2001). Instead Mamdani suggests that violence can be reasonable when we consider the perpetrators' thought process that led them toward violence (2001). The legitimacy of violence is also linked to Frantz Fanon's theories on violence and the idea that the oppressed must use violence (physical and alternative forms) in order to reject their oppression (1963). Also part of this discussion was the question of whether a typical protests does or must incorporate violence to achieve anything and if this 'typical protest mentality' can be broken away from. A further question related to violence addressed police response and the question of what is considered "appropriate force" in attempting to subdue protests and when force is deemed necessary, as accounts suggested that police retaliation in this case was excessive.

Other discussions around violence related to the suggestion of a third force. This debate was found in student activist, government and police narratives and argued that student activists may have been motivated by an exterior party wishing either to attack the government and country or to delegitimise and destabilise the protests themselves. The idea of a third force is often found in government rhetoric, having surfaced in accounts given about other national events such as those – prior to 1994 – which were designed to overthrow apartheid and, more recently, in the 2008 xenophobic attacks and Marikana massacre (Sandwith, 2010; Duncan, 2012b). The tactic can serve to excuse but also undermine the main instigators of the situation, with a preference for the latter. The idea of the third force directly undermines student activists as it suggests that they are easily motivated by dangerous outsiders and also unable to self-organise, further suggesting that they had no agency.

These discussions were also linked to the question of protest itself and whether it is a legitimate way of addressing issues. While the "typical South African protest" may be characterised by violence (Duncan, 2016), deeper issues were also raised such as whether or not protest is an effective means of inaugurating social change. These discussions served either to validate or invalidate student actions. There was also debate about what is an appropriate way to raise issues if protest is not a viable means. Unfortunately, no relevant answer was given yet student activists were encouraged to rather return to class and work hard in the hope that this would resolve their issues. Comments were also made about personal vs. public issues and whether fee hikes are truly a public issue that required national attention. These questions led to further debates about relevant rights including the right to education, expression, movement and the right to protests as well as whose rights are more important when the actions of one party seem to remove the rights of others.

The question of gender featured heavily in these narratives with many arguing that student protesters afforded women a central place in the making of history. Questions concerning the style of protest were also interrogated, with a number of accounts saying that the inclusion of women and their typically domestic abilities was the source of the movement's success. The emphasis on inclusion, not just of women but black, disabled and LGBTQI+ individuals, served to validate the protest as it appeared that student activists implemented social change and upliftment first in their own movements before demanding it from those in authority. Despite this, some accounts still seemed to see the movement as sexist and questioned whether the role women were afforded in history-making was genuine and long-standing or if patriarchy and the figure of the male politician would override their version of the protests.

Lastly, the reoccurring anxiety about authority was exposed through the idea that student activists had ulterior motives or would override the decisions of those in authority with their violence. Campus politics (and the way in which it is used to forge a political career path) was problematized as student activists no longer felt that they could trust the motives of leaders who might instead be pushing national political policies. Others expressed anxiety about authority through attempting to invalidate the protests (and squash youth agency) by arguing that youth were ill-suited to decision making. Lastly, others felt that students lacked respect for those in authority, accusing them of un-African behaviour. This opened up a debate about what African behaviour actually entails. If protest is a regularly occurring event in South Africa, yet is un-African, questions are raised about suitable African ways of

addressing issues. This further suggests that protest is the reason that issues are never resolved, rather than government incompetence or university disengagement.

CONCLUSION

Protest in South Africa has a long-standing history and is of special significance to many. Anti-colonial struggles began in the early 1900s and sought to resist the increasingly oppressive British rule. More recently, anti-apartheid protests helped bring about the end of a regime and some are still commemorated annually for their impact. Youth played an instrumental role in many of these protests, including the Soweto Uprising and the activities of the South African Students Organisation and associated groups. Years later, South Africans still heroise freedom fighters and anti-apartheid leaders, many of whom were then young adults. Thus, the emotion attached to these anti-apartheid protests is largely celebratory and impassioned. In the post-apartheid era, protests are still rife, yet they are more localised as the lack of a stark moral dilemma such as the apartheid system does not seem to demand or elicit a mass response. In recent years, these localised protests have predominantly revolved around service delivery with more recent ones also drawing attention to transport issues and government failure. These post-apartheid protests are not approached in the same way as apartheid protests but are more often dismissed through stories about entitlement, laziness and privilege. The national student protests of 2015 and 2016, specifically the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall movement, stood out from other post-apartheid protests because they were abnormally large, wide-spread and lengthy. This meant that there was a need to decide how to view these unusual events. This gave rise to the intense public debate surrounding the movements, one which raised the issue of the value of protest itself and whether the campaigns should be dismissed, as many post-apartheid protests are, or approached with a more positive, and from the vantage point of 2017, even nostalgic attitude. This debate is clearly seen around the 2015 Fees Must Fall protests, the first of these student protests that generated involvement from almost every university in the country.

Some of the recent research that has emerged since I embarked on this project speaks directly to this issue. Jane Duncan's book *Protest Nation*, published in late 2016, seeks to examine the extent to which the right to protest is supported or suppressed in post-apartheid South Africa. Duncan argues that "the dominant narrative [is that] it has become necessary for the state to step in to limit the right to protest in the broader public interest because media and official representations have created a public perception that violence has become endemic to protests" (2016). Duncan focuses on the role of municipalities in granting and denying

protests to identify larger South African trends. She argues that municipalities and police are often ignorant of protest laws and thus limit or prohibit protests on grounds not identified by the Regulations of Gatherings Act. This limiting is spurred on by the media-generated fear of protest violence. Duncan also argues that unlawful action (along with police violence and a lack of government engagement) is often the actual source of violence in protests as it creates an "injustice frame" around the state as the law essentially becomes lawless. In the book, Duncan makes use of data from activists, municipalities, police and media, collected in the form of media reports, municipal records and interviews, to challenge the idea of one single dominant narrative by critiquing the "the often-skewed public discourses that inform debates about protests and their limitations" (2016). While *Protest Nation* does not include research on the student protests of 2015 and 2016 and is not concerned with analysing public debate, it does present an argument for the necessity of giving attention to competing narratives within the public sphere.

Another recently published study which has relevance to my research is *Fees Must Fall Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa*, published in October 2016, and edited by Susan Booysen. The book is described as a "scholarly assessment of a key moment in post-apartheid South Africa… an academic space for students to articulate their own understanding of what they had just achieved as much as for academic practitioners to reflect on what had occurred" (Booysen, 2016:ix). The "collection of primary and scholarly voices", written specifically for the book, seeks to explain the "roots of the revolution", how the protests became a source of inspiration internationally, how the movement was documented and its various influences such as feminism, history, human rights and economics. This is done principally to assess the impact of the 2015 and 2016 Fees Must Fall protests. Again, this work does not focus on public debate but does demonstrate a trend post-movement to access personal testimony and expose a variety of explanations for the movement. *Rioting and Writing: Diaries of Wits Fallists* (Chinguno, et.al., 2016), published by Society, Work and Development Institute (SWOP) and compiled and edited by a group of 20 Wits student activists, adopts a similar focus on, and fascination with, personal testimony in its discussion of the protests and thus also overlapping in some ways with the project undertaken in this thesis.

In my analysis of the public debates on Fees Must Fall, I identified three major trends. These, accordingly, became the three main areas of focus in this study, also providing a logical

structure for the chapters themselves. Firstly, many accounts, particularly those that were published as the events were initialised, focused on questions of blame as a means to explain the movement. In this way, commentators made arguments about who should be held responsible for the proposed fee increase and provided an assessment of the students' reaction. The second trend to emerge was also related to an attempt to explain the movement. In doing so, the various narratives centred on a debate about how the movement as a whole should be characterised. These stories dealt largely with myths of origin and related closely to the question of whether the protests should be aligned with South African protests during or post-apartheid. The last trend was related to an ethical debate about behaviour. While much of the discussion was centred on the student activists as 'heroic' or 'villainous', opinions were also offered about police, government, public and university leaders that either condoned or condemned their conduct in responding to the protests. In all cases, the stories that were told exposed issues in society and raised questions about how society should navigate these concerns.

Before providing a summary of the way in which the events were narrated and the issues the movement exposed, it is important to consider the question of what differences could be discerned in the way in which the protests were characterised across the different media forms, including student, print and social media. Perhaps the most surprising outcome of this research was that student publications presented the least interesting forms of representation. While media is expected to be factual and neutral, student media demonstrated an overwhelming penchant for objectivity and neutrality, to the degree that there was almost a complete absence of verbal expressiveness. Most of the student media "debate" was conducted on social media and was characterised by a blow-by-blow reporting style. Student media also relied heavily on daily summative web articles. Readers would expect these articles to use expressive language and quoted voices but even these articles consisted of facts. This obvious lack of imagery and figurative language is most likely the result of student reporters overcompensating in their attempt to navigate a space where they have to be both neutral but connected to students and where they have to describe events without their own personal views interfering. It is also possibly the outcome of student activist distrust in media, which would mean that the publications had no quotes to use as student activists refused to talk to them. It could also possibly be the outcome of the necessity to publish as soon as possible which would mean that the paper would have to publish without quotes as it would take too long to wait for responses from sources who have been asked for accounts.

A number of student newspapers compiled "protest editions" at the end of the campaign. In these editions, a few articles and opinion pieces were found. Again, the articles and opinion pieces predominantly served to summarise the events or place the 2015 Fees Must Fall protests in the context of other South African university protests such as the Rhodes Must Fall campaign. Again there was a surprising lack of variety in the voices student media accessed as the quotes in articles, opinion pieces and letters published in these protest editions were almost exclusively contributed by students. Student media did eventually offer a position on the protests in the sense that they tended to engage with and publish for an audience comprising predominantly of students and student activists. This is supported by student media's tendency to characterise student activists as peaceful and innocent and to narrate stories of managerial arrogance and reticence. This weak adherence to a position seems a disappointment in light of Atton's (2009) argument that alternative media (like student media) can help deepen the sense of reality for readers by utilising their connection to the main role players (such as student protesters) to tell marginalised accounts and publish perspectives that are relatable to readers and independent of corporate agendas.

Mainstream media's willingness to offer a position on the events as well as their use of expressive language formed a complete contrast to the bland reportage of student media. As suggested in my analysis, each publication adopted its own unique approach to reporting the events. However, newspapers frequently (and unexpectedly) offered support for the protests. This relates to Cottle's (2008) argument that media has recently taken to offering support for protests, further suggesting that his argument that protests have become a more socially acceptable way to raise issues holds water in a South African context. Perhaps the most unique and interesting form of reporting was found in the tabloid, *Daily Sun*. One of the marked features of typical *Daily Sun* news reportage is sensationalism as well as a tendency towards over-simplification and emotionalism, as one would expect from the tabloid style (Jones, Vanderhaeghen & Viney, 2008:167). The publication is known for its outlandish stories, dramatic headlines and liberal use of exclamation marks. This style was also applied to the stories of the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement. However, this sensationalism did not serve to undermine the events or make the events seem ridiculous. Rather, it provided a means to support both the protests and the protesters. *Daily Sun* stands apart from other South African newspapers because of its style and its target market, which is typically the marginalised in South Africa: black, working class, low-literate individuals. Therefore it can be argued that it constitutes a subaltern counterpublic, (as explained by Fraser (1990)),

because it gives space and a sense of identity to the marginalised group (Jones, et. al., 2008:168). The student activists and supporters of the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement typically fall into the *Daily Sun*'s target market because they were predominantly black and poor. Thus the use of this style implies *Daily Sun*'s support of the protests and protesters because the style reaffirms the identity of activists.

Pretoria News also made notable use of sensationalism. However, in this publication, sensationalism was used in more expected ways to promote a negative depiction of protests and student activists. This form of reportage could easily fit into Duncan's (2016) idea about protest predominantly being portrayed as violent in South Africa as *Pretoria News* presented violence as an inseparable part of protest reportage, even when no obviously violent action occurred. It also suggested that Cottle's (2008) argument that protest has become more socially acceptable is not a theory that can be consistently applied in a South African setting.

Daily Sun was also unique in that it was the only newspaper that allowed the working class to dominate their accounts. News reportage in *Daily Sun* frequently accessed student activist voices, who, as previously explained, were of the same socio-economic status as *Daily Sun*'s main target audience. Interestingly, parents were also given significant space in *Daily Sun*, suggesting that the publication saw value in these voices, perhaps because the publication supported the idea of the protests as a reaction to a national crisis and community oppression, an explanation most consistently offered by the poor. This unique form is closely related to Duncan's (2006) argument that the working class are under-represented in mainstream media as *Daily Sun* was the only publication to favour the working class. This form is also related to Harber's (2004, 2008b) argument that post-apartheid mainstream media has become homogenised and that *Daily Sun* is one of the few that does not conform to political pressure (2008b). In other words, the absence of apartheid and the stark moral dilemma it posed results in a new problem for media. Newspapers that previously supported the ANC/anti-apartheid stance are expected to extricate themselves from political pressure (that asks them to maintain their pro-ANC stance) to become autonomous watchdogs. This is a difficult task that has proven to be too challenging for some newspapers, resulting in fewer publications with independent thought and original reporting. *Daily Sun*'s unique position and narrative about the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement can perhaps be used as an example to support Harber's argument.

City Press and *Cape Argus* were most notable for their extensive letters and opinion sections. However, there was a difference in the types of opinions and letters the two newspapers chose to publish. *City Press* is a weekly publication and the 8 pages of their "Voices" section in their 25 October edition was dominated by comment from academics, politicians, student leaders and other officials. While there were a few letters to the editor from members of the public, the choice in opinion pieces demonstrated that *City Press* had a preference for voices of authority. *Cape Argus* did not have such an extensive letter section but generated a similar total of comment pieces over a week of daily editions. These letters, however, were not dominated by voices of authority. While there were comments made by officials and other professionals, there were more submissions from common people such as parents, onlookers, and members of the public. This trend is also visible in the voices these two publications chose to access in their articles about the protests. *Cape Argus* made more of an effort to access the voices of the public whereas *City Press* tended to favour official accounts. *City Press*'s preference for official accounts was echoed in *Pretoria News* and *The Star* and did not necessarily result in the complete eradication of student and public commentator voices.

The type of voices that *City Press, Pretoria News* and *The Star* accessed is also relevant because it confirms critics' views of the state of South African media, such as that of Duncan (2012a) and Harber (2004) who argue that South African media is homogenised. In general, a wide variety of voices were accessed and published in mainstream media. This suggests that an attempt was made to offer balanced reportage and that space was given to marginalised or 'other' voices. Thus the public were not totally excluded from influencing the narrative of national and regional papers. This runs somewhat counter to Fraser's (1990) critique of the public sphere as she argues that marginalised voices are excluded from newspapers. However, it is interesting to note that quotes from student activists, religious groups and cultural groups in articles were predominantly given by student leaders, religious officials and cultural group spokespeople and so, on the one hand, it can be argued that the voices of the marginalised were still accessed within the context of authority. On the other hand, it can be suggested that members of the general student body and voices from the public were limited because they did not add particular value to articles as members of the student body were not decision-makers in the protests and members of the public were not direct participants in either the protests or their resolution. This, however, should not suggest that these 'ordinary' members of the movement or public did not offer a valid opinion of the events as many valuable comments came from ordinary student protesters and onlookers.

121

What I would conclude here is that there is an evident trend that denies space to the marginalised, an argument that supports Duncan's (2012a) claim that mainstream media have failed, despite efforts, to transition to a more diversified and transformed space that presents the possibility of "deliberate debate".

Social media was also relevant to the idea of marginalised individuals and groups. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter present an area of the public sphere that is unrestricted by gatekeepers such as journalists and editors. Therefore, as Harber (2008a) argues, it seems inevitable that social media would be used to publish opinion by, and provide access to, the perspectives of marginalised individuals. In this way, some journalists used social media to express their views outside of their publications' agendas. In addition, *City Press* drew some of their comments and quotes for articles from social media sites suggesting a unique way in which they attempted to publish 'othered' voices. Here social media can be seen as a useful tool to encourage, at least, a balance between authoritative and marginalised voices in mainstream publications or, at best, to solicit independent thought in corporately controlled newspapers.

While it is expected that social media would contain a more emotional form of comment, given that comments can be published in the heat of the moment, many comments found on social media were surprisingly similar to the accounts found in print media. An interesting aspect of social media reportage, that was unique to tweets, was code switching in which tweeters often mixed languages in order to express themselves better. Code switching can also been seen as a means to support the argument that social media can be seen as a kind of subaltern counterpublic, as suggested by Gerhards and Neidhardt (in Gerhards & Schäfer, 2010). This is because tweets that mixed languages were clearly aimed at a multilingual audience, unlike the content found in English-only newspapers. This was also supported by the volumes of social media posts found on Facebook and Twitter that chose not to use English but rather another South African language to express their ideas.

While *The Star* was rather limited in accessing marginalised voices, the paper was notable for two things. The first is that their articles predominantly quoted official government and university management accounts and also did this to a larger extent than other publications. This suggests a preference for authoritative voices, but particularly the voices of those who seemed to have authority over students and, linked to this, the task of subduing or resolving

the crisis. While student voices did not feature significantly in *The Star*'s articles, the newspaper gave a unique form of sympathetic treatment to students. The publication had a number of long articles that gave extensive detail about student activist behaviour when they were not protesting as well as the difficulties they faced in their protests and the unresponsiveness of government. In this way, *The Star* actually provided a relatively critical view of government as their quotes from authoritative role players worked in conjunction with their depiction of students to interrogate the legitimacy of government response and behaviour.

One of the main aims of my research was to investigate how the events of the 2015 Fees Must Fall protests were narrated in the public sphere with a particular focus on the various story strands that emerged and how the various role players were represented. My analysis exposed a number of dominant story frames which, in turn, enclosed a number of smaller story strands and images. The first theme in the wider discourse pertains to the story of the heroic student. In this framing of the events there was a focus on student inclusivity, courage and commitment. Accounts frequently made comparisons between the 2015 student protesters and previous freedom fighters, particularly the heroes of the anti-apartheid struggle. In this way, students were portrayed as the "new activist generation", fighting against the continued oppression of black South Africans, a form of oppression that dated back to colonialism. Thus, the movement was also figured as "another battle in a war" for equality. Other sub-narratives included that of students relieving the suffering of the poor and that of students actively fulfilling their civil duty. In these stories, non-protesters were villainised for being apathetic and neglectful of their social duty. Tales of students as agents of robust social change also featured in this framing as well as the idea that they were the source of a new social awakening. In these stories, the movement was portrayed as a heroic struggle for social justice and was treated with the same celebratory attitude as apartheid protests.

In contrast to the positive framing of students, other stories constructed students as wayward and disruptive. In this framing, stories of student entitlement, greed, snobbery, deceitfulness, laziness and irrationality dominated. Other stories focused on the prolonged length of the protests and how protesters were dragging the issue out because they did not want to write exams. In these accounts, non-protesting students were heroised, particularly when they continued studying despite the circumstances. Other accounts focussed on the violence

123

present in the movement generating further strands about student criminality, mob action and hooliganism. Students were portrayed as driven by passion and a need for destruction as well as unwilling to study at "lesser" institutions. In this way, the movement was figured as a "typical" South African protest that should be met with disdain. In addition, these narratives figured government as benevolent providers. Accounts presented government as over-stretched in their commitments but still graciously providing free or subsidised education for those willing to accept their conditions of hard work and technical colleges.

Other major stories to emerge centred mainly on the trope of disengagement. University disengagement was one of the first narratives to emerge in the public sphere. In this framing of universities, stories about an unwillingness to engage, an attitude that alienated students and managerial arrogance populated the public debate. Here the image of the vice-chancellor in their ivory tower and the absent vice-chancellor featured extensively. Other stories about university disengagement portrayed universities as a business that operated to benefit management and exploit students rather than operating as institutions of learning where students were the main beneficiaries. Another major story frame that surfaced in the public debate was that of the racist university. Story strands in relation to this depiction included narratives about universities mismanagement of funding and autonomy as well as institutionalised racism. Stories were also told of their resistance to transformation and government intervention, even when the intervention of government would be helpful to disadvantaged students. In this way, universities were portrayed as abusive of their autonomy as it was used as an exclusion mechanism against the poor. Thus, the movement was portrayed as a means to counter university autocracy and transform spaces of higher education.

Stories of government disengagement also dominated public debate, generating sympathetic portrayals of many other role players. Various strands in this framing suggested that the government was self-centred and demonstrated an alienating attitude toward students and the poor. Other stories included those about the government's inability to show genuine concern and empathy for its citizens. Part of this was also the idea that government exacerbated the crisis with its disengagement, inflicting mental and emotional violence on students. Thus, the poor and protesters were figured as suffering and desperate in these accounts. These stories also gave sympathetic treatment to universities and universities were portrayed as neglected

state institutions. In these stories about universities, there was a focus on the decrease in tertiary education funding from government and the effects of a declining economy.

These stories about government disengagement fit into the wider frame of government illegitimacy and state failure. Government officials were positioned as wasteful spenders and the destroyers of the economy in that they did not direct funding to the correct beneficiaries but rather used the money themselves instead. Stories were told of government's fear about remaining in power and its excessive show of might in the face of this fear. Other accounts suggested that the ANC no longer adhered to its values of education for all and the upliftment of the poor and accused the ANC of an inability to create a cohesive nation. Yet more stories suggested that government had failed because it was the source of youth entitlement and because it supported capitalism and individual competition over the ANC's manifestoes that emphasis the spirit of Ubuntu.

The theme of disengagement was also found in narratives about of public detachment and private sector neglect. Many commentators presented the public and private sector as apathetic and unaware of any effort others had made to transform South Africa. They were also presented as dismissive of the poor's suffering and content to reason inequality away with the myth of the Rainbow Nation. The private sector was also suggested to be greedy with its profit and neglectful of its social responsibility to uplift the poor. In addition, these stories depicted the general public and the private sector as uninvolved in society but happy to complain and point fingers at others when a crisis inconvenienced them.

Another way in which the protests were narrated was through stories about suffering parents. The unaffordability of fees and the pressure placed on parents to provide for their children off low salaries and long hours became a way to validate the protests. The image of suffering mother suggested a personalisation of the struggle and that the proposed fee increase was an assault against these revered individuals. Thus, these stories presented the movement as means to relieve disenfranchised individuals.

Police brutality was another common story told about the protest. Versions of this story included the condemnation of violent police retaliation to protesters. They also accused police of emulating apartheid-era security forces; protesters were figured as brave martyrs in light of this. A different story told about police presented police and security forces as heroes.

These accounts portrayed them as protectors of the public and the state's institutions from wayward students.

The public debates around the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement reveal a number of things about the state of South Africa as well as the preoccupations, anxieties, attitudes, and assumptions of the public. These various issues and questions that are raised are not only relevant for reflecting on the state of South Africa during that particular historical moment but also for their ability to facilitate understanding between South Africans and improve future 'nation building' efforts. By opening up the numerous perspectives of the movement, South Africans on either side of social binaries can develop a greater sense of understanding of the frustrations and sense of 'unfinished business' many other South Africans experience on a day to day basis, hopefully resulting in better empathy, social cohesion, and enthusiasm for uplifting a country still affected by a devastating history.

Because the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement was such a unique protest, one of the biggest discussions that arose in the public sphere centred on the social value of protest in general as well as the social value of this particular protest. Much of the discussion was focused on attempts to validate or invalidate the protests and out of that make an argument for its worth. The ways in which the protests were validated or invalidated also opened up other social issues and debates. One of the more prominent ways in which the protest was validated was through the comparison of the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement to other major historical events and protests. These events included the Soweto Uprising, the Arab Spring, the French Revolution, the US civil rights campaign and the anti-Vietnam war protests. These parallels that were drawn helped give social value to the 2015 movement by suggesting it would be as (or more) impactful as these other historical events. In other ways, these parallels helped validate the protest by suggesting that it was a revolution. While revolution may not always carry positive connotations, the idea of revolution that was attached to the 2015 campaign was positive in that this form of revolution was a means to completely cast out inept leadership and social inequality. Thus students were argued to be agents of robust social change and heroic redeemers of those facing social injustice. This approach revealed that tangible social change was one of the 'barometers' of how valid a protest is.

Another way in which the protests were validated and thus made socially valuable was through the image of the suffering mother. Mothers are typically revered figures and so if

something or someone inflicts suffering on them or disrespects them, it is perceived as a threat not just to the mother but also the child. Thus, the image of the suffering mother became a way to elicit sympathy from the reader for the mother and child; a suffering mother is a painful but relatable image for readers and so relieving her from this suffering is seen as necessary and critical. In this way, the movement was also made personal for the protesters and reader. A similar way in which sympathy from the reader was evoked was through the image of the distressed, dismissed student and the argument that the protest was a form of social duty to the poor. While this image does not make the movement personal, it does also relate to the theme of relief from suffering, suggesting that the campaign is a worthwhile cause. Thus, moral and ethical impact was presented as another means to evaluate the worth of a campaign.

The protests were invalidated in a number of ways too in order to argue that protest does not have social value. Invalidation often happened through various 'strategies of power', used by those in authority to undermine student agency and rationality and to protect national myths about the harmonious post-apartheid community. One of the most common of these strategies was the suggestion of a third force in the protests. A third force implies a sinister, external instigator separate to protesters who agitates and initiates an event for nefarious purposes. The idea of the third forces is particularly linked to the apartheid government's suppression of anti-apartheid protests as a way to undermine the legitimacy of the events. The story of a third force also appeared in government responses to the Marikana Massacre and the 2008 xenophobic violence as a way to separate the violent citizens from the harmonious community (Sandwith, 2010; Duncan 2012a). The story of third force involvement in the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement undermined the actions and purpose of student protesters by suggesting that the protests and demands were not the work of students. These stories also allowed government and police to navigate the threat the protests posed to their authority: myths about government and police capability as well as social stability were upheld through this negotiation. In light of this, stories of a third force also suggested that protest action is an ineffective way of raising issues as it is prone to external influence; therefore, the issues that protests raise are not genuine issues but rather demands used by external instigators to distract society from its real issues.

Another strategy of power was accusing student of faulty reasoning. Commentators argued that students had misunderstood promises or government statements and so their protests and

the violence that some protesters enacted was made to seem an irrational, ridiculous response to a crisis that they had incorrectly constructed. Other means of invalidating the protests took place through stereotypes, particularly of black South Africans. Arguments that protesters were just lazy, entitled and snobbish were encapsulated in the image of the wayward student who wished to protest unnecessarily and dictate demands instead of work for privileges. Thus, both these strategies of power reveal racism within the public sphere. In addition, they suggest that protests are the incorrect way of raising social issues as protests are spawned out of ignorance or entitlement, rather than genuine issues. These particular arguments are also interesting as they exposed social anxieties about youth agency as these arguments appeared as an attempt to squash the youth's voice. Questions about whether youth should have agency and the ability to ask or decide certain things in society, to what extent this agency would be acceptable, and in which situations were posed. The answer to these questions depended on how commentators viewed youth: as a rational, engaged force or as immature children. Some commentators suggested that students should not dictate how universities are run while others suggested that youth must have a say as they are the main beneficiaries of universities.

Another way in which the protests were invalidated was through accusing protesters of bad behaviour and an attitude was "un-African". This is somewhat ironic given that protest is a common act in South Africa and thus leads to a further question about whether all protest is un-African or if it was just the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement. Government seemed to suggest that African behaviour is marked by civil duty, care for the community, respect for authority and negotiation as opposed to the ideals of materialism and self-centeredness promoted by Western culture. The idea of "African" behaviour also invokes a problematic essentialist and unitary idea of African identity. As typical post-apartheid South African protests, including the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement, are dismissed as displays of laziness and entitlement, it could suggest that protesting in general in "un-African". This adds a new aspect to the image of the wayward student as students now come to represent something that does not fit into the community. However, it must be noted that a further irony is found in that others argued that government were disengaged and lacked of solidarity with the poor and therefore this could also be seen as "un-African". This questions what exactly is meant by African behaviour. Further, it reveals that protests were invalidated by the idea that they did not represent the community. By rejecting a group of improper individuals, those in authority could maintain the idea of a harmonious community.

In light of this attempt to validate or invalidate the protests, a new discussion opened up about how to raise social issues if not through protest. While those arguing for the social value of protests suggested that protests was a valid, viable means of addressing issues that was becoming more socially acceptable, those arguing against the social value of protests seemed to imply that there were better means of addressing social issues. However, suggestions as to what these better means could be were limited as only two ideas were found. Universities tended to favour small group discussions between university leadership and a delegation from the student protesters as opposed to mass meetings and protest. Other commentators suggested that the answer simply lay in not complaining, working harder and making a personal effort to better your individual circumstances. In both of these suggestions, those with power, such as university management or the privileged in society, do not have to navigate an overwhelming threat to their authority or the mass social pressure protests bring, allowing the status quo to be maintained in the way that the powerful minority would still be able to lord their authority over the masses. This seems to prevent the social change that social issues require. In addition, these suggestions exposed an anxiety about authority and maintaining privileged positions. Further, it seems to support Duncan's (2012b) challenge to Cottle's (2008) argument that protest is becoming a publically acceptable means of raising social issues.

The social value of protest was also discussed in terms of 'protesting styles'. Questions were raised about whether there was more than one way to protest or if a particular way of protesting is more effective or valid than another. Many commentators argued that protest is inherently patriarchal and that women's contributions to protest and historical moments had been continually overlooked. In addition, violence associated with typical protests seemed to stem from its patriarchal nature. This would be very much in line with Duncan's (2016) idea that the dominant narrative surrounding protest in post-apartheid South Africa encourages the idea of protest as inherently violent. In light of this, some suggested that the 2015 Fees Must Fall protests presented a new style of protest that was more effective and more valid than past protests: it was seen as a "women's" protest because women took up leadership roles within it, because their value was recognised and because there was limited violence associated with the protests. Women also took up featured roles in the narration of the event with many accounts offered by women protesters, onlookers and commentators. However, this discussion also exposed some anxieties about the protests as other commentators argued that there was still sexism present in the movement through the image of the male politician that

students and media seemed drawn toward. Thus, a further concern was exposed about whether the movement truly was unique and whether women's contributions really would be recognised as time passed. This exposed the sexism in society in the sense that history has taught women that even when they are instrumental to a moment in history and promised recognition for it, these promises are rarely fulfilled.

This discussion led to a wider debate around the function of violence in protest action. Violence was definitely present in the events of the 2015 campaign but the explanations for the violence were varied and different role players were blamed for it. These explanations and this blame-placement functioned as a means to invalidate or validate the movement. Many vehemently opposed any form of violence in the movement, whether enacted by student protesters or police. This stance suggested that the function of violence in protest is only to invalidate protest as a means of raising social issues; thus violence seems inherent to protest action and so protest itself become inexcusable. Others argued that violence by police and students was justifiable or at least thinkable because it was an outcome of a logical thought progression sparked by a perceived threat or frustration. The justification of violence relates to the theories of Mahmood Mamdani's 'thinkable violence' and Frantz Fanon's view of violence in decolonisation struggles. Mamdani argues that violence cannot always be simply explained, especially when it takes place on a large scale in events such as genocide. Rather, he suggests that by understanding the logical process that led to the violence, the violence can become if not justifiable, at least understandable (2001:8). Fanon argues that violence is a formative component in the colonisation of black beings, particularly in a physiological sense. Fanon therefore argues that colonised natives must then make a choice with regard to violence in that they must choose to continue to accept it or aggressively reject through revolutionary violence. This revolutionary violence may include physical violence but also critical thought and protest action, like that associated with student protesters (1963). Through this, the protests were actually given validity as the violent actions of protesters appeared reasonable and that those on the receiving end of them deserved the violence enacted against them. It also intensifies the value of protest as protest becomes seen as an essential means of affecting tangible change and social justice.

Another question that arose around the idea of violence was what caused the violence. As previously mention, Duncan (2016) suggests that violence in protests is caused by leadership disengagement, police violence and unfair limitations that are placed on protests. This was

certainly the argument taken up by student activists and some public commentators, in turn blasting police for their brutality and unnecessary force. Others defended police, saying that violence on the students' part was a result of their criminal or primitive nature, suggesting a preference for stories of African 'savagery' as a means to support the police's retaliation. This leads to another question about the necessity of force in subduing a protest. While the 2015 protests were often argued to be peaceful, police used force on multiple occasions to subdue or disperse the protesters. This suggests that police force is a necessity to subdue any protest but in another way it could also fit into the common narrative of police being "trigger happy". In addition, if police force is necessary, it is important to question how much force is considered appropriate as water cannons, tasers and stun grenades were often argued to be excessive, even when students became destructive. Here a social concern about safety was exposed as many expressed worry about students being met with unfair retaliation or police having to face hardened criminals.

The protests also opened debate about relevant rights including the right to protest, the right to freedom of speech, the right to movement and the right to education. A tension was also exposed in that acting out your right to something can prevent other individuals from acting upon their own rights. This was best demonstrated in the irony of non-protesters complaining that their right to education was being infringed upon by protesters who were looking to ensure their right to education. This exposes an issue in South African society in that we are all theoretically granted equal rights but some people or some rights seem to be more important than others. Thus a debate was generated about to what extent we can be assured of our rights and how it can be decided whose or what rights are more important than others. A further suggested question interrogates if there is a standard rule of thumb or if it is decided on a situational basis. The protests seem to suggest that those that are underprivileged should be given preference in acting upon their rights. However, it also reveals that those with privilege are often given sympathetic treatment by those in authority, such as government and university management, when they complain about their rights being infringed upon. This exposes a further anxiety in society about our rights being unfairly infringed upon but that no action can be taken as the other party's actions were also within their rights.

Another separate discussion about the right to education took up prominence in the public debate about relevant rights. Section 29 of the Bill of Rights says that South Africans have the right to "basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which

the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible". This clause implies that tertiary education and, further, free education is not an absolute right of South African citizens. While many commented that protesters were ensuring their right to education, others found fault with this in light of their understanding of the Constitution and argued that education, particularly further education, is a privilege that is granted to some but not all on the basis of what the state can afford and what they as students can achieve. However, some rebutted this idea with the argument that the government has for a long time propagated the myth of "education is the key to progress and social mobility". They argued that if education is posed as not just a means but *the* means to overcome inequality, it should be made freely available regardless what phase of education it is. This exposed an anxiety about being left out of possibly owning the means of production because certain citizens lacked access to the necessary tools to ensure their success.

The right to education is closely related to other issues the protest exposed about the state of education in South Africa. The issue that the campaign made most visible was the unaffordability of university fees. Discussion around the difficulty in saving for and paying tertiary education fees was found in finance and opinion sections of newspapers. Many argued that it was simply impossible to find a job (as a parent or a student) that paid sufficiently to cover tuition fees plus the other expenses of being a student, such as textbooks and accommodation. This discussion also exposed the catch-22 situation in which a degree is necessary to secure a job that pays a decent wage but a job that pays a decent wage is needed to obtain a degree. Added to this is the fact that many students explained that their parents held low-paying jobs, such as domestic work, or that their families consisted of non-normative family structures, such as single-parent households, and so their families subsisted off less than the average income, making tertiary education an ironic 'necessary luxury'. Further, this exposed the issue of institutionalised racism and the anxiety that fees were purposefully used to exclude certain students as fee hikes were made with the awareness that only the wealthy could afford them. Here the myth that society believe that social mobility and decent jobs are only secured through prestigious universities (as opposed to internships or technical colleges) was revealed too. This stands in tension with the 'American Dream' myth that many propagated about hard work leading to success. Thus, it can be argued that society superfluously attach value to theoretical knowledge and academic pursuits rather than practical skills that will be of real benefit to workers. In addition, it can be argued that society

does not truly abide by the 'American Dream' myth but only uses it to dismiss the poor's suffering.

The anxiety that fees were used as an exclusion mechanism manifested into new debates about university disengagement, university autonomy, the corporatisation of universities (such as outsourcing workers), and university identity. Students and government argued that universities were disengaged from their students in that the institutions were being run like businesses. These businesses benefitted top management and exploited students. However, government also argued that universities should not rely on government welfare to remain afloat. The tension between whether universities are businesses based on entrepreneurship or a state institution reliant on government grants points to a crisis of identity in South Africa's academic institutions, as it is suggested that they are not allowed to be either side of the binary. This part of the discussion about university identity asked further questions about who should decide fee hikes. Government and university management expressed distrust in each other as both constituencies argued that the other would decide fee increase based on their personal agendas rather than on what would benefit students. This exposed a social anxiety about control and autonomy as those who have authority wish to retain it.

Another aspect of the discussion about university identity focused on the need for universities to reflect a more transformed "African" identity. Even though the University of Al Quaraouiyine in Morocco is considered the oldest institution of higher learning in the world (UNESCO, 2017), the academy in South Africa is seen as a Western construct. This has to do with South Africa's history of colonialism, apartheid and how the university system was structured in South Africa pre-1994 (Nash, 2006). Universities during apartheid South Africa were separated by language (Afrikaans and English) and initially only the University of Fort Hare catered to black South Africans. While there was a restructuring of universities in 2002 as a means to overcome the legacy of apartheid, the change was somewhat superficial, leaving the curricula and practices of universities still in-tact. These curricula and traditions were associated with the West because they were products of the colonial and apartheid era. Thus the public debates about institutional racism and university disengagement exposed the lack of transformation in South African universities as many expressed that they felt like they were not one of their universities' priorities as they did not fit into the universities' ethos.

The exclusion of black South Africans and the unaffordability of fees led into a wider dialogue on the state of the South African economy. An anxiety about economic freedom and the inability to achieve it was brought to light by the student protests. In particular, the debunked American Dream myth and the image of the suffering mother, as discussed previously, revealed further issues of systemic and cyclical disenfranchisement that the poor are trapped in. It was argued that this was the after-effect of apartheid and included not just physical poverty but also other negative experiences of blackness that kept black South Africans (who are the poorest race group in South Africa) excluded from participating in the economy. These experiences of blackness included black tax (in which graduates can never progress financially because their disposable income is used to support their families that remain living in poverty), institutional racism, student loan debt, and the emotional and mental anguish that students of colour must face as they struggle to secure financial aid for fees, accommodation and textbooks. This cyclical disenfranchisement meant that the youth remained as poor as their parents, instead of progressing socially, as the struggles of being black are not limited to tertiary education institutions but rather form part of their daily life. Thus, these struggles are too overwhelming, trapping them in an inescapable state of disenfranchisement and actively preventing these students from succeeding, even when they do have a degree.

This issue opens up debates about social responsibility toward the poor, how we see society and whether welfarism or entrepreneurship is the correct way to address the lack of economic freedom. Because of the nature of democracy and our Constitution, one could argue that each citizen has a social responsibility to uplift the previously disadvantaged. This argument featured in accounts from almost every different constituency and accused particularly the public and private sector of not being committed to their social responsibility. However, by law, society is not required to uplift the poor or, in other words, fulfilling your 'social responsibility' is not mandatory but is rather an ethical, personal decision. Accounts revealed that many felt that those with the means to uplift the poor were not acting ethically because they had decided to ignore the poor's struggles. This argument further interrogated if social responsibility should or could be enforceable and if so, to what it extent and how. Public debate tended to suggest that our social responsibility should come in the form of financial assistance but could not answer to what extent, only that no help was unacceptable. Social responsibility, or the lack thereof, also questions how we see society: is society truly a collective of people working toward one goal or if it is simply a group of individuals

competing to "come out on top" in a competition of "each man for himself"? Accounts suggested that typically South Africans with the means to uplift the poor see society as a set of competing individuals rather than a collective, whereas the poor see society as a collective that assist each other, exposing a lack of social cohesion among citizens.

This debate also consistently linked the dismissal of social responsibility to the white middle to upper classes who also typically own much of the private sector. This trend exposed race-class tensions through the idea of white disengagement and white privilege. Commentators argued that white South Africans were purposefully dismissive of black South African struggles and unwilling to make their abundant resources available to better the suffering of the poor. This is similar to the argument made by Melissa Steyn that white South Africans have a particularly aloof attitude toward other South African citizens because their power has been displaced post-apartheid (2004:169). Thus, they are too arrogantly preoccupied with resisting this removal of authority and reclaiming their identity to act with social responsibility (Steyn, 2004:169). This discussion also exposed to the idea of white privilege in that white South Africans typically have the necessary finances to afford university but, even if they do not, they have other privileges that unfairly place them in a better position than poor students of colour. These privileges include educated parents, extended family that do not require their financial support post-graduation, and connections to businesses that can offer them a decent job.

The discussion about social responsibility also exposed the tension between welfarist and entrepreneurial economic models. The Fees Must Fall campaign was, in general, a demand for more welfare from universities, government and the public. The demand for welfare proved difficult to navigate, even for those demanding it, because it raised questions about who deserves welfare. Society is not simply split into binaries of rich and poor. Rather, an individuals' financial stability can be determined better on a personal scale that takes into consideration a number of things: how many working adults the family has, how many dependents the household has (including children and elders), the rates and taxes they pay, and their monthly expenses. So, the blanket decision that everyone that earns R600 000 per annum or more is considered wealthy is problematic because there may be factors that still prevent these households from paying university fees. Government often argued that welfare was for the "academically-deserving" but, in the same way that a person's financial situation is not binary, the term "academically-deserving" also needs to be determined in context. A

student's academic achievement is not easily determined as there are other factors that may influence their performance including personal ability, learning difficulties, access to resources and stress.

The difficulty in deciding who should get welfare exposed another social anxiety. While some proposed that everyone should get welfare in the spirit of fairness, others argued that this approach would mirror the lack of redistributive justice many experienced at the end of apartheid, thus maintaining the inequality we already have. This reveals a further concern about what the wealthy would do with the money they saved from financial benefits and exposed distrust in the wealthy to invest that money in the needy over using it to become wealthier. In opposition to welfarism, government presented entrepreneurship as a remedy for the students' and universities' demands. The debunking of the American Dream myth suggest that entrepreneurism is not always a success, questioning whether society can and should choose between the two models or if there is another, more balanced option. Further, the government's rejection of welfarism in light of their more communist-leanings questions whether they truly care for the poor or if they are suffering from the impact of welfarism as they are now over-reached providers who too need welfare from the private sector and members of the public.

As stewards of the economy, debate around the state of South Africa's finances and poverty rate linked to a wider debate about state failure. This is not a new discussion as dissatisfaction with government and the president is a concern that has been expressed since becoming a democracy (Booysen, 2015). Part of this debate exposed government disengagement, inefficacy and the ANC's unfulfilled promises. It also questioned the legitimacy of the ANC in that that many found that it no longer adhered to its values of uplifting the poor and education for all. This led to a further questioning of whether the ANC still has solidarity with the poor and black based on the fact that those in power were once poor too and are still black. Discussion seemed to reveal that many citizens believed that the ANC leadership no longer cared about those that support them but that they are rather preoccupied with bettering themselves as individuals with power. Thus, government was also exposed to be maintaining the oppression of South Africans of colour through their lack of redress. One example of this is that many students argued that the moratorium on fee increases was an unsustainable resolution and that government did not display interest in helping the poor with a long-term solution. This presents a further anxiety about government that purposefully make short-lived

solutions to actually maintain the status quo. This is because the continually manipulating the poor's loyalty (through promises of future improvements but continued inequality) seems to guarantee the ANC a longer stay in power.

Government responded to these revelations by arguing that it had inherited a broken state and that transformation is a slow process. This raises several questions and exposes the complexity of overcoming years of forced inequality in a country. While it is impossible to deny that government has inherited a state damaged by the effects of apartheid and that the previous mismanagement of government responsibilities has also added to the dismal circumstances, we must also ask at what point do these excuses become excuses no longer. Even though transformation is a slow process, we must also determine how much time is too much time for the government to argue that transformation is still in the process of being realised. These questions revealed an anxiety about progress in South Africa in that many were concerned that it was happening too slowly or not at all.

The debate about state failure also exposed the failure of Nelson Mandela's "Rainbow Nation". While the myth argues that social fracture can be overcome through embracing our diversity and that South Africans are now all equal, many argued that this is not true. Instead, the public debate around the protests suggested that the movement itself was born out of the continued suffering of the "previously oppressed". Many argued that the status quo had remained the same post-apartheid because while South Africans are all granted political and legal equality, this does not translate to equality in real life. This is because the Rainbow Nation myth is inherently faulty as it did not generate substantial redress at the end of apartheid. Further in this debate, commentators suggested that the myth had been adopted by those with social privilege as seemingly logical (yet unrealistic) means to dismiss genuine suffering. Alternative arguments made about the myth suggested that government was a failure in inspiring South Africans to adhere to this national myth, resulting in a lack of social cohesion among individuals that sat at opposite ends of race, class, gender, and age spectrums.

The overarching discussion about state failure raises anxiety about those in authority and whether they really represent us. Many felt that the government made decisions that were best for them rather than its citizens. This anxiety was also expressed about student leadership and universities. University management seemed to make decisions that suited

them best rather than their students and student leaders seemed to be easily swayed by the promise of a political career in return for promoting party politics in the movement. This also exposed the problematic relationship between national politics and campus politics: because campus politics is a career path for many, campus becomes a site where national political agendas are stealthily pushed upon unsuspecting students rather than allowing students to focus on their own matters. An anxiety about those that represent us demonstrates that South Africans have a tendency toward "us and "them" binaries and that South Africans have a deep mistrust in groups and individuals that do not form part of their "us" group. This exposes a society fractured by the inability to trust and relate to others that do not identify as we do.

The Fees Must Fall movement was not limited to 2015 and it resurfaced around mid-August 2016. While President Zuma had put together a fees commission to investigate the possibility of free tertiary education at the end of 2015, the committee's progress was very slow. This lack of urgency, along with the impending fee hike announcement for 2017, started to panic students. The Council on Higher Education announced on the 12th of August 2016 that free tertiary education was not feasible and thus recommended an inflation-related increase for university fees in 2017. This announcement led to student activists reviving the campaign on the 15th of August. The revival was particularly encouraged by the newly vocal South African Union of Students (SAUS), a group comprised of then-current SRC members from South African universities intending to be "representative of all Student Representative Councils across the country" (South African Union of Students, 2017). Protests broke out around the country again with many universities having to postpone academic programs and exams, with some universities only able to complete their academic curriculums the following year.

The general sense around the 2016 protests, however, was not as positive, triumphant and unified as the 2015 protests. Many members of the public and students felt that the movement had splintered and that there were too many groups attempting to direct the protests. Student political societies, SRCs, student movements (such as Rhodes Must Fall and UPRising), and SAUS were among these groups fighting to lead the protests, leading to a sense of confusion and frustration for many. Anxieties were also expressed about graduating late and the impact on personal and university finances a second year of protests would have. In this way, the movement and the students that so enthusiastically supported it in 2015 seemed to become fractured. Why this is relevant is because it seems to amplify the sense of a fractured society

the commentators of the 2015 Fees Must Fall protests tried to expose. In this way, the lack of social cohesion in South African society seemed to creep into the microcosms of universities and students groups to bolster the tension between South Africans I have highlighted.

The overwhelming amount of public debate surrounding the 2015 Fees Must Fall protests indicates that the movement was a significant event in South African history, if only for the stories that were told about these events and what these stories exposed about South Africa. The issues and questions the public debate raised suggests that South Africa is still not a unified country, even two decades after the end of apartheid. In addition, the issues and questions these stories reveal demonstrate the value of story-telling as a means of sense-making. Stories encode particular social norms and values and by considering these stories, we can see a society's dominant attitudes, assumptions, myths, preoccupations and anxieties as well as the way in which these attitudes, assumptions, myths, preoccupations and anxieties can sometimes differ from or contradict each other. By considering the friction between the stories, we can develop an awareness of the people that tell different stories to the ones we tell. Knowing why people differ from us should hopefully invoke a sense of empathy and an understanding of our shared humanity. This understanding is necessary for now but also the future as we continue in our efforts of 'nation building' and remedying a country damaged by centuries of oppression and segregation.

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