

Violence and wellbeing in the context of FeesMustFall: a rapid photovoice project with student activists from South Africa

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**Trigger
Warning**



- **Some images, captions, and videos in this presentation and related conversations can be provocative and include references to violence.**
- **Persons sensitive to depictions of violence should please heed trigger warnings and turn their monitors off when prompted now.**

Overview: Photovoice Project

“Violence and Wellbeing in the Context of the Student Movement”

- Qualitative research and emancipatory action research
- Understanding the design and method of Photovoice research
- Overview of the “Violence and Wellbeing” project
- Findings of the project (Exhibition)



Photovoice concept and design

Photovoice and qualitative research

- **Chat storm:** What is “Photovoice”?

Some types and methods qualitative research

Types of qualitative research

- Ethnographic and narrative research
- Historical research
- Critical social research (Marxist/post-Marxist, feminist, anti-racist theory, decolonial theory, queer theory)
- Participatory action research
- Case studies
- Grounded theory
- ...
- ...

Methods of qualitative research

- Individual interviews (unstructured, semi-structured, in-depth, online/offline)
- Collective interviews (focus groups, world café, online/offline)
- Observation; participant observation; observing participant
- Documentary research (desktop, archival, etc.)
- Auto-ethnographic research (journal, diary)
- Visual research
-

Key characteristics

- Researcher ↔ participant dynamic
- Researcher as key research instrument
→ Researcher context & positionality
- Meaning of social phenomena (to participants; to analyst)
- Critical interpretation (context!; heuristics; discourse analysis)
- In-depth; multi-method; multi-source; triangulation
- Ethics and trustworthiness
- Uses of research
- ...

What is Photovoice?

“Photovoice is a community-based participatory research approach by which taking and discussing photos supports a process through which people identify and reflect on particular issues relevant to their well-being (Wang & Burris, 1997). In certain instances, it also supports participants in changing their circumstances, with further reflection on the effects of such efforts to initiate change.” (Musoke et al, 2016: 683)

Key characteristics of photovoice research:

- Community-based, participatory
- Taking and discussing photos
- Process through which people identify and reflect on particular issues
- Relevant to well-being, circumstances
- Seeks to initiate change

What is different about Photovoice?

Photovoice

Co-production of knowledge and action
(participation for most of project cycle)

Participants are involved in the problem
definition; research design, data collection,
dissemination and advocacy

Mixed media: Photographs (and short videos),
caption titles, caption stories

Anonymity is difficult; personal investment can
produce authenticity

Many other qualitative methods

Short involvement of participants (only
data collection and verification)

Little or no involvement pre- and post-
data collection

Typically spoken/written word only
(audio, transcripts)

Anonymity can produce authenticity

Rapid photovoice example

The Photovoice project “Violence and Wellbeing” and the AFTERMATH exhibition

AFTERMATH

**VIOLENCE AND WELLBEING IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT**

Problem statement

Violence is a frequent occurrence during student protests in South Africa, whether perpetrated by students or by security personnel and police. The impact that the experience of violence has on student wellbeing is an understudied aspect in higher education research.



The goals of the project (and exhibition) are to:

- ✓ understand and expose the unacceptable, high levels of violence on university campuses during student protests
- ✓ the impact of violence on student wellbeing
- ✓ create awareness in the public, government and among higher education policy makers and university leaders
- ✓ advocate that student grievances are taken seriously without the need for protesting.
- ✓ Advocate for banning riot police and riot security services from university campuses.
- ✓ de-stigmatise student mental health issues at universities
- ✓ expand student counselling and mental health services.



Regular Article

Rapid Photovoice as a Close-Up, Emancipatory Methodology in Student Experience Research: The Case of the Student Movement Violence and Wellbeing Study

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Abstract

In this paper, we critically reflect on our conceptualization and operationalization of “rapid photovoice” as a close-up, emancipatory, action research methodology which has multiple, intersecting social-justice goals; and consider the methodology’s potential for helping to achieve such goals. We first consider photovoice in relation to its typical use in public health research, as well as in prior research into student experiences of higher education. We then consider our pragmatic redesign of the methodology as rapid photovoice (RPV), which we conceptualized in response to the goals, parameters, and constraints inherent in our project, which studied student movement violence and wellbeing. In the third part of the article, we describe and discuss our operationalization of RPV in this study on four university campuses in South Africa. In the fourth section, we reflect on some of the ethical considerations arising from the topic and the methodology. In the final section of the article, we critically assess the interim outcomes of our use of RPV in terms of (1) psychologically empowering students to reflect on traumatic experiences in a safe space and enhancing their self-awareness of wellbeing, wellbeing resources and coping strategies; (2) the politically emancipatory potential of photovoice to represent student experiences authentically and with immediacy to higher education policy role-players, and (3) its ability to co-create artifacts of collective memory that provide authentic empirical material for making trustworthy knowledge claims.

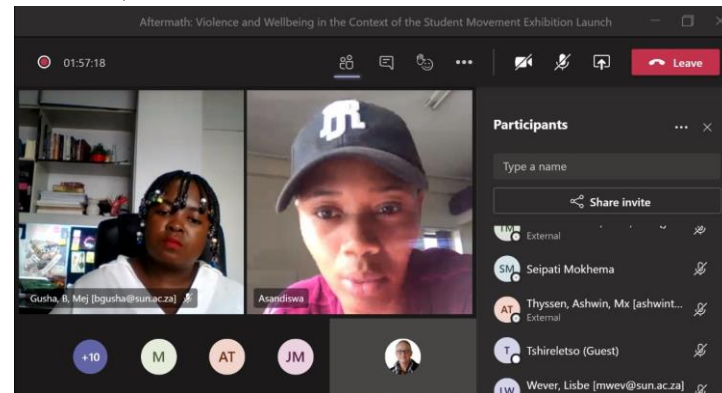
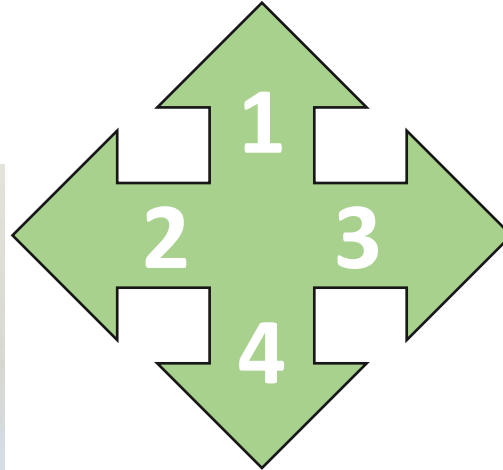
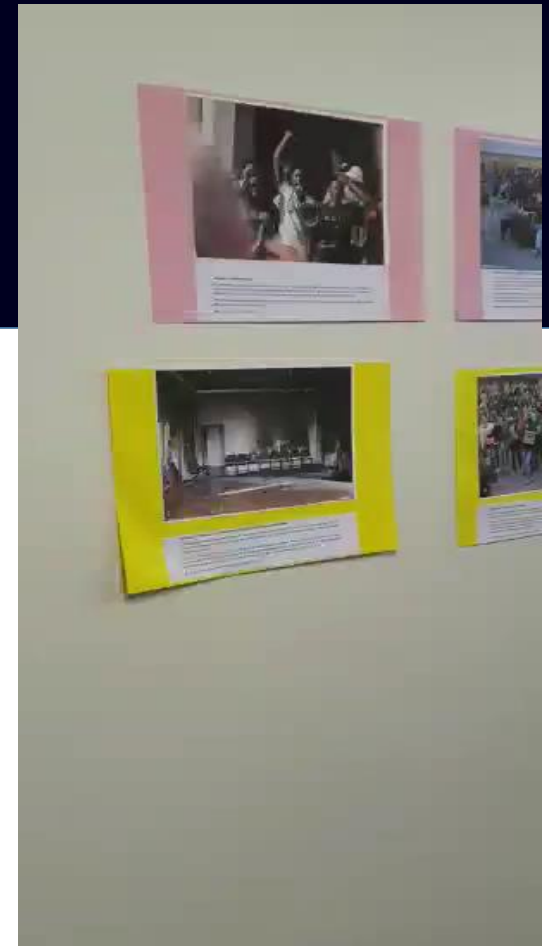
Methodology

- Rapid photovoice (published in *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*)
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/16094069211004124>
- Institution-specific, 3-4 days of photovoice workshops, face-to-face (4), zoom (1)
- 5 universities with 5-10 student participants each: UWC, UFS, Univen, UFH, DUT
- Diverse research team (in terms of demographics, disciplines, institutions)
- 35 student participants: criteria for participation were experience of violence as part of student protests on their campus - whether as observers, victims or perpetrators.
- Issues: research ethics, trustworthiness, emancipatory and advocacy goals

Awareness, advocacy and dissemination

- During RPV workshops: 5 campus-specific exhibitions & world café sessions
- Online national exhibition (SAHO) & travelling exhibition (SU, & planned)
- Advocacy meetings: USAf (HELM), SU SAS & planned; seminars
- Publications: Student affairs manual; scholarly photo book; articles & chapters

Photovoice process



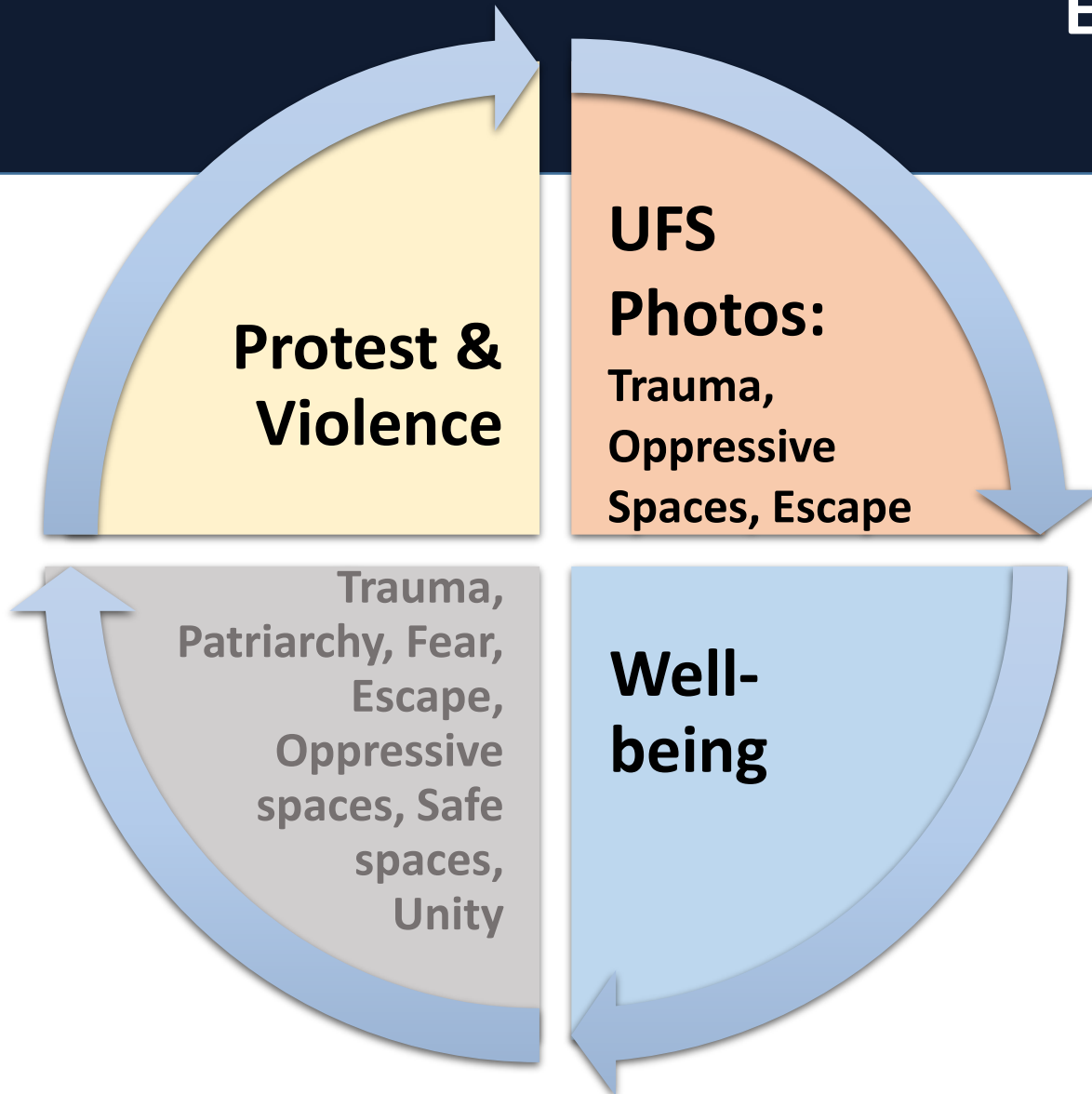


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Virtual walkabout: Exhibition themes



PROTEST AND VIOLENCE



Protest and Violence

THE STATE OF IZWELETHU
SIYASANGA NDWAYI
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

“In the picture, I am in a police truck. I am shouting through the window. We were arrested in Parliament for protesting [along] with pensioners who wanted money from the government [which they had been waiting for since the 1980s]. In the truck, I was with three elders and my close comrade, Zwai Zazi. I’ve titled [this image] The State of Izwelethu due to the fact that it depicts how we are treated in our land and the amount of violence we as young black people [and] our grandparents - are subjected to.”

Image: Wandile Kasibe
Supplied by Siyasanga Ndwai

Protest and Violence



MANDLA TIBANE
BOB SANDILE MASANGO
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

"This is a photo of a late close friend and comrade of mine who was brutally attacked by police. After the brutalising treatment, he was badly injured. The police still detained him for no reason. He was about to register for a PhD but, because universities are anti-black, his life was shortened and he died having a pending case. I remember how we struggled to raise money to pay lawyers after the charges were fabricated against us."

Protest and Violence

OUT OF POWER, BUT NOT OUT OF RESPONSIBILITY
SIPHEPHELO (SHANGE) MTHEMBU
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

“This picture represents victimisation - such as financial and academic exclusion - that comes with being a student activist in an institution of higher learning. It also carries with it a lot of emotion because directing students and trying to assist them in a brutalising system - when I have also been a victim of the system - was not easy. Despite my own challenges, I could not run away from my leadership responsibilities and I had to help lead students in the right direction.”



UFS EXHIBITION: TRAUMA,

OPPRESSIVE SPACES, ESCAPE

SAFE SPACES



Trauma

A VIOLENT RECORD BOKANG FAKO UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

"Here lies the remains of what could have been a brilliant future. The impact of systematic violence is psychological and long-term. We are suffering from collective trauma as black students in this institution. We are sharing space with the same people that violated us at Shimla Park and people who continue to violate us. We have to walk through the same corridors [in which] we were manhandled by the police. We are finding it very difficult to breathe because, at any given time, we might get financially [or] academically excluded, expelled or suspended."

Module	Final Mark	Credits	Result
LPHS1514	76	32	Pass with Distinction
LPHS1514	89	16	Pass with Distinction
LPHS1524	98	16	Pass with Distinction
LPHS1524	92	16	Pass with Distinction
LPHS1514	94	16	Pass with Distinction
LPHS1514	91	16	Pass with Distinction
LPHS1524	78	16	Pass with Distinction
LPHS1512	78	8	Pass with Distinction
LPHS1522	100	8	Pass with Distinction
LPHS1514	87	16	Pass with Distinction
LPHS1524	98	16	Pass with Distinction
UFS 101	65	16	Pass
CRIM2614	45	0	Fail
CRIM2724	0	0	Discontinued
LCON2614	89	16	Pass with Distinction
LCPR2624	79	16	Pass with Distinction
LCRM2614	89	16	Pass with Distinction
LEVD2624	0	0	Incomplete
LLAB2614	73	16	Pass
LLAB2624	70	16	Pass
LPLU2624	82	16	Pass with Distinction
LPRC2514	60	16	Pass
LSAE2624	82	16	Pass with Distinction
LSIN2614	73	16	Pass
CRIM2614	0	0	Incomplete
CRIM2724	0	0	Incomplete
LBEN3714	77	16	Pass with Distinction
LBEN3724	0	0	Incomplete
LCIL3714	0	0	Incomplete

Trauma



**EVEN A TIGHT HUG WILL NEVER SUPPRESS
OR TAKE MY PAIN AWAY**
TSHEPANG MAHLATSI
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

“In this picture, on face value, we note a white lady trying to console a young black student, the leader of a black residence that was raided by the police. The picture also suggests that she is trying to understand the frustration and the anger on his face. What is not seen is the fact that this was the Acting Dean of Students Affairs, who knew that the police were [going] to go raid house Tswelopele. And who was aware that the instruction was given for the police to go [from] room to room and look for ‘perpetrators’ - the forces behind the movement. The frustration, pain and anger on his face says, ‘You can hug me, but you will never take away the feeling of betrayal and pain inflicted on me, my people, my privacy. You knew it, [so] don't tell me how I should react and express my pain.’ He was never the same after this day. He was diagnosed with PTSD, [showed] signs of extreme anxiety [and] was on antidepressants. He had to put his [studies] on hold and pay back his bursary. He should have graduated by now, but he is still here. All this will take more than a hug to heal.”

Image: Lihlumelo Toyana
Supplied by Tshepang Mahlatsi

Escape



TRAUMAREI
BOKANG FAKO
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

"As black people, we are not accustomed to the innately capitalistic and Eurocentric nature of coping mechanisms, such as therapy. We are... incline[d] towards what is easily accessible and affordable - which tends to be alcohol and drugs. Black students found solace and relatability with each other through their pain, struggles and collective trauma. We forgot what it means to be alive. We are constantly surviving."

Safe Spaces

MASS RESCUER
ANYWAY MIKIONI
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

"The name of the photo is inspired by the experiences of students during a strike. This huge garbage bin is used by students as a place to hide during a strike. The resourcefulness of the comrades during a strike - and the means they use just to hide from the police - is amazing. This garbage bin houses the comrades and they do not retire from the strike despite the smells and the [discomfort]... encountered in this big bin. Resilience is depicted in this photo as, [come] what may, the students do not back down until their voices are heard."



WELLBEING

Wellbeing

THE BLACK WHO? BOOKS OF CONSCIOUSNESS KAMOHELO MAPHIKE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

“These books played a very pivotal role in the counter-attack to white epistemic racist ideology. While each book has its own narrative, collectively these books intended to reinforce the pride and dignity of black students, which was constantly denied by police violence and structural violence enforced by university management. These books gave light to the understanding that blacks have always been at the receiving [end] of violence - be [it] physical or structural. These books are [the] true meaning of black resistance to a world that ceases to see our humanity.”



Wellbeing

**UBUHLE BENDODA (THE BEAUTY OF A MAN)
SIPHEPELO (SHANGE) MTHEMBU
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

“As the first son in my family, I have to make sure that the cows are well taken care of because they are passed from generation to generation. After I was suspended, I would take the cattle to the field to make sure they were well fed. It became a coping mechanism [because] I would not overthink about what had transpired at school and my suspension. It is something I had not done since I was young, so it was very refreshing to do. It was also a very useful [distraction].



Wellbeing

STRUCTURED VIOLENCE – A SAFE SPACE
MADODA LUDIDI
UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

“Rugby is a game of structured violence. It is my safe space from the context of structural and institutional violence. In rugby, there are rules of engagement. On the field, there are rules that clearly structure the exertion of violence... Here, as a rugby coach, I am in control of the violence on the field. After encountering protest violence, the rugby field becomes a therapeutic space for me.”



Feedback

- **Chat storm:** What new thing did you learn today?

Re a leboga! Siyabonga! Enkosi! Thank you! Dankie!

Please look out for:

- The Student Affairs Manual *“Restoring Wellbeing after Protests”*
- The Photobook *“In the Aftermath of #FeesMustFall”*
- The travelling exhibition *“Aftermath” (at HECU-10 Lancaster)*
- The online exhibition at South Africa history online:
<https://www.sahistory.org.za/exhibition/aftermath>

Photovoice Team

Presenters:

Thierry M. Luescher (HSRC) & Keamogetse Morwe (Univen)

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Ms Kulani Mlambo, NRF master's scholar - University of Venda

Ms Tshireletso S. Letsoalo, NRF master's scholar - University of Pretoria

Mr Antonio Erasmus, graphic designer and photographer – HSRC

Student leaders and activists who participated in this project:

University of the Western Cape: Azania Simthandile Tyhali, Sphelele Khumalo, Ncedisa Bemnyama, Asandiswa Bomvana, Siyasanga Ndwayi.

University of Venda: Bob Sandile Masango, Abednego Sam Mandhlazi, Mabore Machete, Blessing Mavhuru, Frans Sello Mokwele, Conry H. Chabalala, Tshepo Raseala, Anyway Mikioni, Mulaedza Mashapha, Dimakatso Ngobeni

University of the Free State: Tshepang Mahlatsi, Tshiamo Malatji, Thabo Twala, Sonwabile Dwaba, Anonymous, Kamohelo Maphike, Bokang Fako, Xola Zatu

University of Fort Hare: Madoda Ludidi, Yolokazi Mfuto, Anonymous, Sipehelele Mancobeni, Wandisile Sixoto, Akhona Manyenyeza

Durban University of Technology: Khulekani Ngcobo, Robert Thema, Lesley Ngazire, Sipephelo (Shange) Mthembu, Nomfundo Zakwe, Thalente Hadebe.

Exhibition curators / chaperone: Carl Collison, Aldo Brincat

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