



**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

## **Addressing intersectionality in the #MeToo movement**

- A case study of women's mobilization under the #MeToo movement in the postcolonial context of South Africa

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## **Abstract**

The #MeToo movement united women around the globe in the fight against sexual violence. However, the #MeToo movement has been criticized for solely adopting a gender-based approach by neglecting the intersections of gender, race and class. Moreover there is increasing evidence suggesting that there is an asymmetrical power relation between women of color and white women within digital transnational movements, as demonstrated through the #MeToo movement. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore how the transnational #MeToo movement was adopted by local women's movements in South Africa from a postcolonial intersectional perspective. By doing so, the intention is to explore what opportunities, barriers and dilemmas affect the possibilities for South African women to mobilize under the #MeToo movement. The research is a case study of South Africa and has a qualitative approach. Two sets of actors were interviewed consisting of eight NGO representatives and seven activists from the women's movement. The material has been analyzed in relation to previous research on transnational norm adoption and postcolonial feminism. The findings are mixed. On the one hand, the #MeToo norm mobilized women in South Africa, indicating that the intersections of gender, class and race did not hinder women from mobilizing. On the other hand, the #MeToo norm failed to address the intersections of gender, class and race, hindering women from mobilizing. The aspect that was considered to constitute the main barrier for women's mobilization was class, followed by race. On that account, the partial adoption of the #MeToo norm reveals a division within the women's movement.

**Keywords:** Transnational women's movements, women's mobilization, sexual violence, intersectionality, postcolonial feminism, #MeToo, norms

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**GBV** Gender-based violence

**LGBTQ+** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Other Sexualities

**NGO** Non-governmental organization

**SAHRC** South African Human Rights Commission

**TAN** Transnational Advocacy Networks

**UN** United Nations

**WTO** World Trade Organization

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*“Even in the #MeToo movement there was a strong white woman’s voice that almost neglected the experiences of black women. Black women don’t necessarily have that opportunity, they don’t need to go on social media to validate that they are potential victims or survivors of GBV, it is in their reality. (R10, NGO representative)*

## **1. Introduction**

The #MeToo movement is a transnational movement that was sparked against sexual violence and went viral through the internet under the hashtag “#MeToo” in October 2017. The movement started after the high profile actress Alyssa Milano tweeted “If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote ‘Me too’ as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem”, triggering the global movement which gained enormous attention (Milano 2017). Only 24 hours after the hashtag “#MeToo” was published, it was reused 12 million times and after 48 hours, it was used in 85 countries across the globe. However, the hashtag “#MeToo” was initially coined by the Afro-American activist Tarana Burke in 2006 in order to raise awareness and knowledge about sexual assault. Tarana Burke started the movement as a way of making it easier for victims and survivors of sexual violence to speak out and support each other, without having to explain the details of what they suffered through. Approximately ten years later, the #MeToo movement exploded and encouraged millions of women all over the world to speak up and support each other (Garcia 2017).

Even though there has been a strong transnational response to the #MeToo movement, there is a substantial variation in mobilization in different parts of the world and it has been argued that the attention around it has mostly touched upon Western countries (Ajayi 2018). According to findings from the Pew Research Center (2018), 29% of the #MeToo Twitter posts were written in another language than English, with Afrikaans (7%) making up the largest share of the non-English tweets mentioning the hashtag over five high-usage periods<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The five high-usage periods were selected based on major news events concerning the #MeToo.

The five periods are:

- 1: “Harvey Weinstein resigns from the board of his entertainment company” (Oct. 16-21, 2017)
- 2: “Time Magazine names #MeToo activists as persons of the year” (Dec. 6-13, 2017)
- 3: “Numerous presenters and award recipients discuss sexual misconduct at 75th annual Golden Globes Awards” (Jan. 8-13, 2018)
- 4: “International Women’s Day (March 8)” (March 9-14, 2018)
- 5: “Three members of the Swedish Academy resign their positions, citing allegations against a high-profile figure close to their group” (April 7-12, 2018) (Pew Research Center)

(Anderson and Toor 2018). Thus, even though there is variation in mobilization, the #MeToo movement reached beyond the Western world (Burke 2018: Nunn 2018).

The #MeToo movement revealed that sexual harassment is universal and that there is a shared interest in fighting it. Women with different backgrounds joined the movement, recognizing that misogyny is highly prevalent everywhere. However, whilst the movement exploded onto the media stage, there was criticism from women of color who were disturbed by the fact that the credit for an idea originated by a woman of color was, yet again, received by a white woman. Furthermore, the #MeToo movement is criticized for being concentrated in urban areas for those who are privileged and have the “luxury” to speak out, emphasizing that some women are marginalized not only because of their gender but also due to their race and class background (Onwuachi-Willig 2018). Moreover, some women argue that the #MeToo movement might be considered a claim of colonialism by asserting that the ongoing struggle is an outcome of the “North-American experience”. By doing so, long traditions of struggles in the South are being neglected (Medina 2019). Thus, concerns have been raised regarding the approach of the #MeToo as it exclusively has a gender-based approach, neglecting the intersecting elements of class, race and context that shape the differences in women’s struggles around the world (Garcia 2017: Grady and Oxley 2019: Muhr et al. 2018: Subedar 2018: Vagianos 2017: Zarkov and Davis 2018).

To date, there has been little analysis of the #MeToo movement’s mobilization in “non-western” parts of the world, even though they have a significantly higher prevalence of gender-based violence compared to Western countries (Ajayi 2018). The #MeToo movement gained less attention on the African continent, although it did create a public debate in South Africa. The debate, however, was not only focused on the issue of sexual violence as the focal point of the #MeToo movement. The debate in South Africa was concerned with issues of intersectionality and inclusiveness of the #MeToo movement. According to recent measurements from the World Bank (2018), South Africa is one of the world’s most unequal countries and poverty remains concentrated in the previously disadvantaged areas that were set aside for black South Africans during apartheid (Sulla and Zikhali 2018). In addition, the South African Human Rights Commission particularly emphasized the tremendous gap in



annual incomes between African-headed households and their white counterparts. Additionally, South Africa has extraordinarily high levels of sexual violence against women (Maluleke 2018). Thus, the relevance of race and class is inevitable in the South African society due to the legacy of apartheid. Additionally, racial segregation is vast and differences in opinion between race groups are evident in multiple regards (SAHRC 2017).

Keeping in mind that the implications of gender, race and class are significant in the lives of South Africans, the possibilities for mobilization are not the same for everyone. Much of the criticism against the #MeToo movement and its lack of multidimensional and intersectional approaches to sexual violence against women, can be found in postcolonial feminism. Consequently, this research explores how women mobilized under the #MeToo movement in the postcolonial context of South Africa.

## **1.1 Aim and Research Question**

The aim of this study is to explore how transnational movements and norms are utilized in combating sexual violence against women in local women's movements in South Africa. In order to fulfil this aim, this research will divulge into how the #MeToo movement is understood from a postcolonial intersectional perspective, as well as how it is addressed by women's movements in South Africa. By doing so, the intention is to explore what opportunities, barriers and dilemmas affect the possibilities for South African women to mobilize under the #MeToo movement. Based on this aim, this research contributes to increased knowledge on how transnational movements are utilized in a postcolonial setting, and how intersectionality is addressed in movements combating sexual violence against women.

Against this background, the questions that will guide the study are:

- How do South African women's organizations use the #MeToo movement to mobilize to combat sexual violence against women?
- How does the #MeToo movement address the intersections of gender, class and race in the perspectives of women's organizations in South Africa?

- What are the opportunities, barriers and dilemmas that South African women face in mobilizing under the #MeToo movement?

## **2. Background**

This chapter provides a brief background on the issue of violence against women in South Africa. The first section discusses sexual violence in the postcolonial context of South Africa, a setting in which the historical violence against women has taken different and multiple forms that require intersectional attention. The second section reviews the primary points underpinning colonialism and postcolonialism in order to further illustrate the historical and cultural context of South Africa.

### **2.1 Violence against women in South Africa**

Violence against women is a violation of human rights and a major global concern that is highly relevant to social science and policy research. All forms of violence, including sexual violence, often result in physical and psychological damage for women all over the world creating an immense social problem in all societies which requires severe attention. Sexual assault is defined as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work” (WTO 2002).

Sexual violence is the most common form of violence and South Africa has one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world (Maluleke 2018). Violence against women remains widespread and underreported, creating an immense social and human rights problem. The consequences for sexual violence are minimal, creating a “culture of fear” as rape convictions are extremely low (Vetten 2014). Estimations show that 20 percent of adult women have experienced physical violence (South Africa’s Demographic and Health Survey 2016). Based on the alarming statistics on sexual violence, South Africa is often proclaimed “the rape capital of the world” (Khonje et al 2017). Usually the issue of violence is referred

to as a socioeconomic or health issue. Yet, it is also a more extensive problem prevalent in the areas of development, security, education and the general well-being of women (Khonje et al 2017).

Multiple reports (The Human Rights Council 2016: Khonje et al 2017: Maluleke 2018) have described violence against women in South Africa as “widespread at high level and normalized”. Moreover it is often referred to as a “culture of violence” which is reflected in women’s acceptance of certain degrees and forms of violence due to the fact that it is considered normalized. South Africa’s colonial apartheid legacy is frequently lifted as a contributor to the high levels of violence, including sexual violence in the country. The brutal and violent colonial past is rooted deeply in gender, racial and class discrimination which is believed to have produced an entrenched culture of violence (Khonje et al 2017). South Africa has a long history of sexual violence under colonial conditions where African women were raped, hypersexualized and their sexual violation trivialized. Gqola (2015:44) argues that hierarchy and language of race were enabled through colonization and kept in place through the performance of sexual violence:

Because race was made through rape and sexual difference, there was a constant preoccupation in slave-ordered society with ‘race mixing’. While the rape of slave women was profitable, it also threatened ideas of racial hierarchy and produced anxieties about race-mixing. The institutionalized rape of slave women revealed a frightening possibility of the unspeakable sexual intercourse between white women and slave men. This anxiety was about the loss of control over the bodies of white women, as much as it was about the view of white women becoming unpure.

From the colonized woman’s perspective, rape gave rise to shame, while the colonizers created the “stereotype of the hypersexual African woman, that could not be raped because she was excessively sexual and impossible to satiate” (Gouws 2018:6). Hence, the hypersexualization of the African woman institutionalized rape of slaves and normalized sexual violence of black women, confirming that black and white women were put differently in relation to sexual violence already under colonial times (Gouws 2018).

By assuming women’s dependence on male breadwinners, all women were discriminated under apartheid legislation. However, black women faced the highest degrees of

discrimination based on both race, gender and class. There was a tendency to subsume gender issues under issues of racial equality within the anti-apartheid movement and many black women avoided raising gender issues in public since they feared internal divisions in an already pressured anti-apartheid movement. Yet, women activists did manage to mobilize in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Vocal feminists supported by international resources and feminist theory managed to articulate democratic aspirations in gendered terms, which ultimately led to the inclusion of gender equality in South Africa's new democratic constitution. The charter on gender equality, although general, asserts women's rights in decision-making, law, employment, education, reproduction and it ensures women's rights over their own bodies while demanding for state efforts to end all forms of violence against women (Seidman 1999).

## **2.2 South Africa's postcolonial context**

Colonialism has been widespread and recurrent in human history for centuries and it defines the form of exploitation that developed with the powers of Europe expanding in Africa in the fourteenth century (Loomba 2015). Hence, the European identity has been affirmed in relation to "others" for centuries. Europe's "discovery" of Africa in the fifteenth century implied that the "new" African geographical lands and their populations had to apply the European discourse (Ahluwalia 2012). The primary function of the colonies was their ability to provide raw materials for the prospering economies of the European colonial powers, which became institutionalized. Furthermore, the relation between the colonizer and the colonized was fixed into an uncompromising hierarchy highly resistant to equitable and just exchanges. The ideology of race was the focal point of the construction and normalization of unequal intercultural relations (Ashcroft et al 2014).

Loomba (2015:20) defines colonialism as "[...] 'forming a community' in the new land necessarily meant un-forming or re-forming the communities that existed there already, and involved a wide range of practices including trade, settlement, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, and enslavement". Violence by all means was widely resorted to whenever considered necessary by the colonizer (De Los Reyes and Mulinari 2014). Colonialism was ideologically aligned with patriarchal practices, hence, there was a sexist exclusivity of

feminist discourse. As an effect of these new formations, colonization was presented as a necessary way of “civilizing” an “uncivilized” people by educating them in a paternalistic nurture. Therefore, colonialism developed an ideology based on an obscure justification and its unjust and violent processes became successively difficult to perceive behind the colonizers’ liberal cover of “paternalistic”, “aid” and “development” (Ahluwalia 2012).

The term “postcolonial” implies resistance to colonial power and its remaining discourses that continue to shape various cultures and societies, even though the official ties between the colonizer and the colonized have been overthrown (Ahluwalia 2012; Tyagi 2014). Although many colonies gained their independence from European powers in the nineteenth century, the effects of colonialism are still pervasive and they construct unequal power-relations in the world. The colonial notion of a modern, civilized and rational “West” is linked to the construction of an “irrational” and “undeveloped” “East” which legitimizes a colonial hierarchical development model where the Western culture is superior (De Los Reyes and Mulinari 2014). Loomba (2015) views postcolonialism as the legacies left behind as a consequence of colonialism and the contestation of colonial domination. Such an interpretation allows the inclusion of “the history of anti-colonial resistance with contemporary resistances to imperialism and to dominant Western culture (Loomba 2015:31).

Postcolonial theory represents an important paradigm-shift concerning the theoretization of power and inequality based on colonization, its effects in the periphery and in the rich world. Unlike previous analyses, it does not focus on the actual colonization of countries outside of Europe, the focus is rather on the linkages between colonization processes and the creating of racialized discourses with the goal of constructing a hierarchical world-view, in which the West is put on the forefront (De los Reyes 2014).

### **3. Previous Research and Theoretical Framework**

This chapter involves an outline of previous research, mainly focusing on women’s movements and the definition of key concepts of relevance for this research topic. With this

in mind, the first section introduces transnational advocacy movements and a brief history of women's movements, particularly concentrated on fighting violence against women. The second section presents the concept of intersectionality and postcolonial feminism. Thereafter, related research on the #MeToo movement is discussed followed by the research gap. In the next chapter, the theoretical assumptions are summarized with the purpose of integrating the main theoretical points which are later applied onto the material.

### **3.1 Transnational Advocacy Movements**

Transnational advocacy networks (TANs) are considered to be powerful “norm translators” that may act as “concrete motors of transnational normative change”. Keck and Sikkink (1998) emphasize the capability of transnational advocacy networks to “mobilize information strategically to help create new issues and categories and to persuade, pressure, and gain leverage over much more powerful organisations and governments” (Keck and Sikkink 1998:2). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) often play an essential part in TANs. It is most likely that TANs emerge when civil society claims are blocked by the state and a transnational collaboration is likely to intensify these claims and generate a “boomerang pattern”, as referred to by Keck and Sikkink. Creating credible information and framing it in ways that put pressure on states to act are considered the most effective abilities of TANs. The most successful effects can be achieved by campaigns that target concrete, rather than structural issues, and when it is apparent who is responsible for the problem. Focusing on constellations of TANs and the potential of NGOs is highly relevant for theorizing the reactions to the #MeToo movement in South Africa. Non-governmental actors are considered to have an influential role in domestic norm adaptation (Zwingel 2012). Therefore, examining women's NGOs is highly relevant in this research in order to explore how the #MeToo norm was adopted by women in South Africa.

Human rights, including women's rights as part of human rights, are not unambiguously defined which makes it crucial to comprehend that the human rights framework is evolving. For instance, liberal states emphasize some dimensions of human rights more than their counterparts (Zwingel 2012). Hence, it is inaccurate to cluster states in one group of liberal states that are norm-abiding and another one that consists of authoritarian states that are

deviant. Keeping in mind that most dimensions of the human rights framework are subject to development and interpretation, all countries deviate to a various degree. In the field of women's rights, global discourse is often considered to provide progressive norms that have the ability to "improve backward cultural practices" or traditions that might be discriminatory against women. However, it is more appropriate to conceive domestic and global norm creation as a profoundly contextualized process. Doing so would subvert the dichotomous view of "us" (often proponents of women's rights) and "them" (often tradition-bound misogynists). Therefore, it is crucial to take the domestic context into consideration when assessing norm creations (Zwingel 2012).

Another aspect that has been argued to be important when analyzing women's movements and transnational norm diffusion is pre-existing domestic discourse. Cortell and Davis (2000) underline that salience, as a form of impact, is viewed as developments in the national discourse, the state's policies and the state's institutions in reaction to the norm. The authors emphasize that the "pre-existing domestic discourse provides the context within which the international norm takes in meaning" is the most relevant domestic factor for salience. Also referred to as "cultural match or mismatch" explaining the compatibility of the norm with the material interests of influential groups in the domestic context. Recognition of a global norm might be considered cultural imperialism or colonialism and therefore cause domestic rejection or resistance. The resistance to global norms might be limited to specific groups within the domestic context. Yet, the relationship between international and domestic normative structures is evolving which implies that the cultural match- and mismatches are dynamic (Cortell and Davis 2000).

Levitt and Merry (2009) describe the process of local adoption of globally generated norms, strategies and ideas as "vernacularization". The process of how these norms, strategies and ideas travel connects with the beliefs and ideologies already in place in the particular context, adding new dimensions and perspectives. These events may generate a new kind of discourse but they might also produce dismissal and national resistance. Ideas, norms and strategies that are culturally compatible with the pre-existing values are more likely to be adopted. The complexity of the issue also plays a key role, the easier it is to comprehend and put into

practice, the faster it is adopted. Thus, the circulating package of norms, ideas and strategies is appropriated differently depending on the domestic context in which the adaptation takes place (Levitt and Merry 2009). The #MeToo movement constituted a bundle of norms related to violence against women that were circulated and adapted differently around the world. Hence, this research attempts to examine this process of transnational circulation and adoption of the #MeToo norm in the domestic context of South Africa. The choice of studying NGOs and activists from the women's movement is highly relevant not only because they are considered to have an influential role in domestic norm adaptation as previously stated (Zwingel 2012), but also as these actors are possible vernacularizers (Levitt and Merry 2009).

### **3.2 Women's movements**

Previous research accentuates the necessity of recognizing "women" as a heterogeneous "research category" informed by differences of ethnicity, class, race, generation, religion and nationality (Beckwith 2000: Mohanty 1991: McEwan 2001). Beckwith (2000) argues that this requested intersectionality is the outset for comparative studies of women's movements. More recent scholarship defines "gender in nuanced 'intersectional' terms, in ways that recognize the internal, co-determined connections between gender and racialized identities, between gender and class identities, national identities, multinational strategies". Based on that definition, gender "functions as a dynamic engagement with women's specific locations and histories of struggle" (Beckwith 2000:434). Specifying conditions in which women's activism emerges and unfurls helps to identify "the basis for commonalities across cases, even as those conditions include not only what the action is in which context but also who the actors are" (Beckwith 2000:435). Beckwith considers Mohanty's (1991) argument "what seems to constitute 'women of color' or 'third world women' as a viable oppositional alliance is a common context of struggle rather than color or racial identifications" (Mohanty 1991b: 7), and assumes that "a gendered comparative politics is best constructed on the grounds of context, which can be dynamically specified" (Beckwith 2000:434).

Attempting to conflate women's movements, women's activism and feminism obscures important disentanglements of women's interests from class and race interests. However,



Beckwith (2000) stresses the importance of emphasizing the fact that the explicit composition of women's issues vary depending on cultural contexts, state structures, intersectionality, experiences and other identities. The issue of assuming a "sameness" and failing to recognize the intersectional elements of feminism provoked many "Third World" women and opened up divisions at the UN conferences in Mexico City (1975) and in Copenhagen (1980). The differences between women within regions along political and class lines, as well as across the global divides of North-South and East-West, were highlighted in heated debates during the two UN conferences (McEwan 2001).

Women of color are more exposed to all forms of violence than white women. Still, it is argued that women fail to acknowledge the specific, racialized and gendered experiences of women of color (Subedar 2018; Vagianos 2017). Social movements play an essential role in local, national and international issues, mobilizing a wide spectrum of numerous groups and interests. Assessing who is included and excluded within these movements requires an intersectional lens in order to determine the way in which various and overlapping factors of oppression shape power dynamics within social movements. An intersectional approach enables the identification of the challenges to the accountability, legitimacy and representationality that are resulting from a lack of heterogeneity (McEwan 2001; Crenshaw 1991).

Weldon (2006) discusses how transnational movements manage to unite women with different backgrounds, in spite of their differences. However, the difference in these attributes can also serve as restraints to women's movements and hamper their effectiveness. The cooperation of women across various backgrounds has created tools to conquer violence against women. Furthermore, Weldon argues that this unity has developed "inclusive norms" which acknowledge the differences within women's movements, at the same time as they provide collaboration among the different actors and individuals involved (Weldon 2006). This type of unity and solidarity illustrate a way of achieving successful partnership without ignoring basic disagreements and differences between the members.

### **3.3 Intersectionality**

In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) called attention to the concept of “intersectionality” which evolved into becoming a key “black feminist” term. Historically, women’s mobilization against violence and sexual violence has succeeded to frame formerly “private matters” such as rape and battering, as a systemic and social structure of domination that affects women as a group. This process of framing a social and systemic problem has created a sense of identity politics where women formed a source of community. However, the establishment of such identity politics, has brought a marginalization of certain intra-groups and ignored the differences within the larger overarching group of “women”. The disregard of differences is problematic since most women experience violence shaped by class and race in conjunction with gender-based violence. Crenshaw emphasizes that sexism and racism intersect in people’s everyday lives, yet, the intersection is seldom acknowledged in feminist or anti-racist practices. Thus, women of color are frequently marginalized due to the lack of acknowledgement of the intersections of race and patriarchy. By applying an intersectional perspective, differences among groups can be better understood and the means by which these differences find expression in constructing groups can be negotiated (Crenshaw 1991).

Black women cannot point to a single source of oppression, unlike Western feminists who define patriarchy as their main source of oppression. The interconnection of gender, race and class is ubiquitous which is something that white feminists cannot understand or relate to. The alienation and nonrecognition of black women’s stories, experiences and lives highly affected women in the Women’s Liberation Movement (Carby 1997). Similarly, Crenshaw (1991) emphasizes the neglecting of women’s rights and gender-related issues in colored cultures, as the struggle against racial oppression was more prioritized than gender equality (Crenshaw 1991). The problematic assumptions lie in three concepts which are inapplicable to black women’s lives: “patriarchy”, “reproduction” and “the family” (Carby 1997). When used, the concepts are often placed in the context of a middle-class white woman and become contradictory when applied to the context of black women. What is failed to be recognized is that the family as a unit has been a site of cultural and political resistance to racism and oppression during colonialism and slavery. Thus, the way that the gender of black women is

constructed differs widely from the constructions of white feminists' since it is subject to racism simultaneously.

The definition of intersectionality has been debated amongst scholars as there are several different ideas, approaches and understandings of the concept. However, there are four main elements that capture the essence of intersectionality:

Intersectionality: (1) recognizes differences among women; (2) sees stratifying institutions as inseparable; (3) explicitly references power; (4) acknowledges complexity" (Alexander et al. 2018:79).

Intersectionality emphasizes the importance to recognize the differences within women's groups, as women are not a fixed group. For instance, women of color are often marginalized as their race and class-background are not being taken into account, even though they clearly intersect. When these differences are not acknowledged, the dominant group often is seen as "the" group, implying that white middle-class women are often the ones in focus of the study. Hence, intersectionality advocates for the inclusion of other structures of inequality when studying gender-related issues, as they cannot be seen in isolation (Crenshaw 1991; Carby 1997; Mohanty 1995). The most common elements of intersectionality are gender, class and race. However, other factors such as nation, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, age and ability are also intersections which affect women's empowerment and mobilization. Explicit reference to power is central and recognizes that women have different positions in the social hierarchy. Hence, the focal point is the ways social inequalities are resisted, produced and reproduced. Conclusively, intersectionality is a complex term that considers complex patterns across contexts, groups and time (Alexander et al. 2018).

### **3.4 Postcolonial Feminism**

Postcolonial feminism stresses that mainstream postcolonial theory is a male-centred field that ignores gender issues by misrepresenting women in the nationalist discourses as well as overshadowing their role in the struggle for independence (Carby 1997; McClintock 1995). Thus, postcolonial feminism is concerned with the representation of women in once colonized countries. The theory emphasizes the fact that women of color in fact suffered from

“double colonization” and thereby the double oppression from both patriarchy and colonialism. This form of oppression highlights that women’s male colonized counterparts are no longer seen as accomplices, but as oppressors. Women in colonies have to resist the colonial power as a colonized object but also as a woman (Tyagi 2014). Thus, intersectionality is a central point in postcolonial feminism.

Historically, nationalism has served as a powerful weapon for resisting colonialism and founding a space of a postcolonial identity. Nationalism has supported a sizeable part of the struggle towards women’s emancipation in Africa, Asia and South America. Yet, nationalism and feminism have an antagonistic relationship due to the often conflicting essence of their political and social aims. Feminism aims at empowering a community of women which transcends geographical boundaries as well as cultural characteristics. To the contrary, nationalism exaggerates such cultural and geographical boundaries as a resistance to hegemonic occupation. The role of women in colonies has traditionally been portrayed in more positive terms than justified in reality (Tyagi 2014). McClintock (1995) argues that women’s political agency is conceived in terms of motherhood in African nationalist discourse. Women’s issues were sacrificed and ignored as a way of restoring African self-confidence by capturing women in traditional stereotypes (McClintock 1995).

Furthermore, Oyewumi (2002) argues that Western gender conceptualizations are in fact alien to many African cultures. The Western nuclear family constellation with a two-parent household where the male is conceived as the breadwinner and the female is associated with nurture and home, implies a family unit in which the male is the patriarch and gender is the organizing principle within this type of family constellation. In contrast, hierarchy within the African family unit is organized according to age. Hence, relations and hierarchy are more dynamic where the mother of the family just as well may have the status as the family “patriarch” (Oyewumi 2002). Likewise the term “patriarchy” becomes more complicated in its application to the non-western context. When applied to a post-colonial context, patriarchy is unable to explain why black men have not enjoyed the same benefits of patriarchy as white men have. Colonial and slavery situations have very clear power structures which are patriarchal. Yet, historical forms of racism demand an alteration to patriarchy when applied to

black men. Moreover, black women have been patriarchally inferior to men of different “colors” (Carby 1997). Hence, the intersections of gender and race have been overlooked in mainstream feminism when assessing patriarchy (Carby 1997: Tyagi 2014).

Moreover, colonized women were oppressed by their Western feminist counterparts in the colonizer country. In their attempt to voice concern for their colonized counterparts, they overlook the significance of their cultural, social, political and racial contexts. Consequently, their “white counterparts” are potential aggressors and impose their own models of “white feminism” (Tyagi 2014). Furthermore, Western feminism is criticised for its representation of social practices of other cultures and races as backward, from which these women, often African and Asian, need rescuing. According to De Los Reyes and Mulinari (2014), the fact that colonized women were invisible and inferior to white women must not be seen as a product of coincidence or ignorance. However, it must be seen in accordance with the system of privilege and the exercise of power which is attached to the position of whiteness (De Los Reyes and Mulinari 2014).

Mohanty (1995) detects the so-called “colonialist move”, implying the production of the “Third World” woman as a uniform subject in mainstream Western feminist scholarship. She argues that Western feminist discourse adopts a category of “Third World women” as a coherent grouping with identical experiences interested and goals. Women are defined outside of social relations rather than through social, political and economic structures. Hence, the “typical” Third World woman is often characterized as family-oriented, religious, illiterate and domestic through Western-based standards. Whilst producing the “Third World Other”, white feminists are portraying themselves as being “sexually liberated, free-minded, in control of their own lives (Mohanty 1995).

The relationship between Western feminists and “other” feminisms has often been antagonistic historically mainly for two reasons. Firstly, due to the failure of Western feminists to recognize their power-relationship with women of color which is the product of a legacy of imperialism and colonialism. Secondly, since central concepts within mainstream feminist theory in the West are not applicable in the context of women of color (McEwan

2001). There is a power-relation between white women and black women in which white women stand as oppressors and this has failed to be recognized according to postcolonial feminism. Carby implies that white feminism suffers from an ethnocentric bias presupposing that their solutions for combating their oppression are equally suited to all (Carby 1997).

Hence, the model of power suggested by these Western feminists, often the “classical” notion of men as oppressors and women as oppressed, implies a universal uptake of patriarchy only including the binary “men versus women” problematics (Mohanty 1995). Thus, it is overlooking the ranges of socio-political contexts, depriving women of their political and historical agency. Further criticism is directed towards methodological practices which are claimed to be over-simplified and accused of seeking evidence of powerless women as a way of strengthening the notion of the “Third World” woman as a victim. Therefore the concept of “sisterhood” within feminism is criticised as it implies an inaccurate sense of common goals and experiences as if all women are oppressed by a one-sided patriarchal dominance (Tyagi 2014).

### **3.5 Related Research**

Previous research on South Africa asserts the strength of human rights norms and their translation to the state of South Africa (Risse et al. 1999; Cardenas 2007). In recent times, South Africa has had several local “hashtag movements” fighting against sexual violence, many of which have been student led. Gouws (2018) researched the #EndRapeCulture campaign where female students protested against the normalization of sexual violence in South African universities in 2016. Considering that the #EndRapeCulture movement’s main slogan was “our feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit”, Gouws (2018) discusses how it is quite remarkable of the activists to embrace a feminist identity in the South African context. Older generations of South African women were suspicious of a feminism type that presented white women’s experiences as the norm, even though they embraced the notion of feminism. However, women in this movement were not afraid to embrace feminism from the vantage point of “intersectional, radical African feminism” (Gouws 2018).

Previous studies (Gouws 2018; Williams 2015) show that social media and hashtag campaigns have become an increasingly common site of struggle for black women. Such activism enables an effective way to spur action about black women, a demographic that is often failed and ignored in the media on a national level. Hence, Williams argues that black feminists' use of social media fills the gap in national media coverage of black women's issues, from the way that race and gender affect the wage gap to the disproportionate amount of violence committed against black transgender women" (Williams 2015: 343).

Similarly, Higgs (2015) shows that the digital activism has allowed for women rights advocacy to organise cross-borders despite national and cultural divides. However, by studying the Kenyan #JusticeforLiz campaign, Higgs argues that "The dynamics of affective social media participation articulate with the white (feminist) saviour complex, so that participation in an online campaign is understood by Western Twitter users as a viable tactic to address African problems (see for example, #Kony2012, #BringBackOurGirls)" (Higgs 2015: 345). Within this discourse there is an entrenched "white saviour" complex insisting that white-Western intervention can alleviate the suffering of African women. Hence transnational movements addressing violence against women in African contexts, risk reinforcing harmful stereotypes of the African woman. In such interactions between African activists and Westerners, the "saviour" complex may undermine the efforts of partnership and solidarity. Higgs (2015) concludes with the assertion that there is no such thing as a feminism without "asymmetrical power relations".

In a recent study on the #MeToo movement and the New York Time's media coverage of the movement Evans (2018) examines to what extent media coverage on the #MeToo movement "includes a diverse background of victims of sexual assault and harassment". The results indicate an exclusion of minority representation in media coverage, suggesting that white individuals are the most represented group in media coverage. Even though coloured women are the most at risk of sexual harassment, white women are in the centre of the movement. Hence, the author concludes that there is a detrimental correlation between high-profile cases of sexual harassment and inappropriate coverage, implying a white bias in the portrayal of the #MeToo movement in the media (Evans 2018).

As seen in India, the #MeToo movement has revealed a divide between feminists. Some feminists attach value to due processes and legal redress whereas others require another set of interventions due to the failures of the law to bring justice to victims of sexual assault. Roy (2018) observes a paradox in contemporary feminism and ideas of gender equality. On the one hand, feminism enjoys widespread legitimacy more than ever, on the other hand, fundamental contradictions within feminism have never been as visible as today. The division amongst feminists implies a shift in the tools in fighting sexual violence. The example of such discussion are based on the Indian example, yet there is no such equivalent research on similar discussions in South Africa.

To summarize, studies on previous campaigns and digital movement in South Africa imply that black women often use digital activism to organize and to freely express their struggles in a site that allows for them to be vocal. The digital site has also been used as a way of uniting, regardless of background, in important women's rights issues together with women from other parts of the world (Gouws 2018; Higgs 2015). However, other research indicates that such interactions in digital spaces reveal unequal power relations between and within feminism (Williams 2015; Evans 2018). The #MeToo movement managed to unite women with different backgrounds in the fight against sexual violence by recognizing that sexual harassment is a universal concern. However, concerns regarding the instruments and benefits of the movement are questioned as they seem to be adjusted to the white woman, ignoring women of color.

### **3.5 Research Gap**

As discussed, previous research accentuates the need for an intersectional approach when assessing women's movements and transnational activism. Scholars stress that the intersections of gender, class, race, historical and cultural context are of significant importance when assessing transnational movements combating violence against women, particularly in an African context, as they may be counterproductive by stereotyping the "third world woman" as helpless. Furthermore, postcolonial feminism underscores an ethnocentric bias in the solutions promoted by Western feminists, as they do not address the



perspectives of “other” women (Mohanty 1995; Carby 1997). There is a prevailing assumption that women with different backgrounds mobilize together across borders in order to fight sexual violence against women through the #MeToo movement. However, there is intensifying evidence that there is asymmetrical power relations between black women and white women within digital transnational movements, as demonstrated through the #MeToo movement. Thus, the #MeToo movement has generated an opportunity to assess this puzzle more carefully.

These arguments imply that important feminist insights have been overlooked in the dominant coverage of the movement. Hence, this research explores how women’s movements adopted the #MeToo norm in South Africa. Often referred to as the “rape capital” of the world (Khonje et al 2017), sexual violence against women and gender-based violence is widespread in South Africa. Thus, the relevance of #MeToo norm and its possibilities to mobilize women in the local context of South Africa appear to be probable, particularly since the adoption of human rights norms in South Africa has been shown successful historically. However, this is an area that has not been explored hitherto, leaving an intriguing opening for research on a contemporary movement that has been referred to as “global”. By applying a postcolonial feminist perspective, the intention is to examine how the intersections of gender, race and class affect women’s mobilization under the #MeToo movement in a postcolonial setting.

#### **4. Theory and Expectations**

This chapter presents the most important arguments presented in the previous chapter which, provide the theory that is applied in this research. Thereafter, two possible outcomes are presented based on how these theoretical assumptions are expected to apply to South Africa.

This study applies postcolonial feminism due to South Africa’s particular colonial history. Furthermore, postcolonial feminism is intertwined with the focus of the intersectionality involving women. This research studies the #MeToo movement as a transnational norm. Hence, the aim is to explore how the #MeToo norm was adopted by local women’s

movements in South Africa. In order to fulfil this aim, this research explores how the #MeToo movement is understood along intersectional lines by women's movements in South Africa. Since the meanings of race, class, cultural- and historical context are ubiquitous in the context of South Africa, fulfilling the aim of this research would not have been feasible without an intersectional approach. Hence, this study intends to examine what opportunities, barriers and dilemmas there are for women's mobilization under transnational movements.

Prominent scholars researching postcolonial feminism and intersectionality emphasize that there is an ethnocentric, stereotypical view of "Third World women" (Crenshaw 1991: Mohanty 1995: Carby 1997) that presupposes that their solutions for ending inequality are equally suited for all. These particular scholars criticize Western feminists for encompassing a universal approach towards their main source of inequality being patriarchy. According to postcolonial feminists, the inclusion of intersectional factors such as race, class, cultural and historical aspects are of crucial importance in assessing equality and the rights of women. As opposed to Western feminists, women in postcolonial societies suffer from "double" oppressive factors in patriarchy and racism. Adding to these factors is the issue of class affiliation, women of color suffer from a triple levelled oppression based on gender, race and class (Carby 1997). Hence, the focal point in postcolonial feminist epistemology is patriarchy as "the" source of oppression is insufficient. Therefore, in the studying of oppression towards women, the historical, cultural and economic factors cannot be ignored. This disparity implies the need for a different method in order to end the widespread oppression of women.

According to the literature on norm diffusion, the domestic condition is crucial when assessing possibilities for norm translation from the international to the local level. Zwingel (2012) stresses that contextualization of norm translation is key for norm implementation, which is an open process with multiple actors involved. Similarly, Cortell and Davis (2000) emphasize that pre-existing discourse in a certain context provides the setting in which the transnational norm becomes influential. Cultural match- and mismatching explains how well the international norm is compatible with influential groups in the domestic context. Based on whether there is a match or mismatch, the global norm might face enforcement or rejection (Cortell and Davis 2000). Based on the scholarship on transnational norms, the

#MeToo norm is likely to be adopted by women's movements in South Africa. However, the theoretical assumptions on norms cannot solely answer how the #MeToo movement was adopted and utilized by women's organizations in South Africa, as this requires an understanding of how the #MeToo movement addresses the intersections of gender, class, race and cultural- and historical context.

Based on previous scholarship on norm diffusion and postcolonial feminism, it may be argued that insufficient attention has been devoted to integrating these two approaches. This study integrates these two approaches in order to get an in-depth understanding of how the transnational #MeToo norm was utilized and understood by women's organizations in South Africa. With these two approaches in mind the study of how transnational norms in the fight against sexual violence towards women is understood on the basis of intersectional terms. Thus, there are two antithetical outcomes of this research:

- Women's movements adopted the #MeToo norm, implying that the intersections of gender, class and race in the South African context did not hinder women's mobilization.
- The intersections of gender, class and race create a profoundly different experience of women, which in result hinders women's mobilization under the #MeToo movement. This leads to the rejection of the #MeToo movement as a Western, non-universal norm.

Notwithstanding, apart from the two antithetical outcomes previously mentioned, there is also the possibility for partial adoption of the #MeToo norm.

Applying theoretical perspectives that emphasize the confluence of class, race, cultural- and historical context facilitates the understanding of how transnational movements address intersectionality. Using postcolonial feminism and Mohanty's (1995) intersectionality theory as a lens to analyze how women's movements in South Africa adopt transnational norms, this study initially questions how the #MeToo movement is utilized by South African women's organizations to combat violence against women? It further addresses how South African women's organizations apply the #MeToo movement to the intersection of aspects such as

gender, class and race. In finality, what are the opportunities, barriers and dilemmas facing women in South Africa for mobilizing under the banner of the #MeToo movement? By utilizing class, cultural context, historical context and race as aspects of intersectionality, an analytical framework (see chapter five) is formed in order to guide the analysis.

## **5. Research design**

This chapter presents the methods used to conduct this research, including a motivation for the choice of study and research limitations. The research has a qualitative deductive approach examining South Africa in order to answer the research questions about intersectionality and women's mobilization under the #MeToo movement in South Africa. The aim is to contribute to the existing research field on intersectionality in transnational women's movements. The analysis will mainly be centered from October 15 2017 and onwards, as a way of covering the period during and after which the #MeToo movement initiated. Due to the fact that the #MeToo movement is rather unexplored, two sets of civil society actors from the women's movement have been interviewed in order to conduct the study.

### **5.1. Case Selection**

South African women have always been part of the South African national liberation struggle. However, the issue of gender equality and women's oppression failed to be framed in a sustained and meaningful way. Rather, the issue was always on the periphery since the priority was national liberation whereas the issue of women's liberation was put aside. Women did not demand their equality as they felt that they were betraying the national liberation struggle. Along with the weakening of the apartheid state, tensions in the black community that were previously suppressed, now emerged (Kemp et al 1995). During South Africa's unbanning of liberal organizations in 1990, women's movements surprisingly succeeded to put gender equality on the national agenda by coming together. Hence, the gender consciousness in South Africa grew immensely in the following decade. However, this does not imply the development of a homogenous movement. Rather, increasing figures of women mobilized and organized in issues that affected them by challenging the patriarchal

principles. For instance, black women were able to include a race and class debate in their advocacy. Nevertheless, the unbanning made several women's groups converge in order to gain more advancement in their efforts. The convergence ultimately aggravated the already existing issue of defining the meaning of "women's interests" as there were clashes in interests and perceptions (Kemp et al 1995).

By theorizing a single patriarchy with no regard to the multiplicity of experiences based on privilege, race, class and oppression, mainstream feminism has marginalized black women's resistance. Not only have South African women had to assert themselves against colonial rule but also against the patriarchal structures within their own communities. Kemp et al (1995) argue that there are three key assumptions on which the shaping of South African feminism has been challenged. Firstly, the identities of black women are "shaped by race, class and gender" which have molded the particular experience of gender oppression. Secondly, the struggle as feminists also encompasses the struggle for national liberation from the apartheid rule. Thirdly, black women have had to "challenge and transform black patriarchies even though black men have been their allies in the fight for national liberation" (Kemp et al. 1995). Based on these three assumptions, South African women experienced oppression in a specific context where race, class and gender were clearly intertwined. The struggle of black women against racism and sexism often coincided during the Apartheid-era and reflects the situation for women still today. Western-based feminism has often been dismissed by African women even though their primary battle may be patriarchy. Whereas South African women are fighting a completely different struggle in a country that has not had a tradition of independence and freedom as opposed to their Western feminist counterparts. Nevertheless, South African women often felt obliged to repress their disputes with black men as a strategic way of avoiding exploitation by the white nationalist party state (Kemp et al. 1995). Against this background, one may argue that the intersections of race and gender made it more difficult for women's movements to mobilize in light of the historical struggles.

Thus, the case of South Africa has been chosen due to its long history of marginalizing and its extraordinary high levels of sexual violence against women. Keeping in mind South Africa's colonial history, women were particularly exposed to violence, including sexual

violence. Even though South Africa has an active civil society today, sexual violence is rampant with many perpetrators enjoying impunity (Khonje et al 2017). South Africa is one of the very few African countries in which the #MeToo movement gained traction. Hence, this research aims to explore the #MeToo movement in South Africa from an intersectional lens in order to gain an understanding of what barriers, opportunities and dilemmas women face when mobilizing under the #MeToo movement. By examining these aspects, this research may find indications of whether South African women's mobilization is still highly distinguished by the intersections of race and gender, as it was during the national liberation struggle, or if the pattern has been broken.

## **5.2 Case study**

The research is a case study of South Africa. Since the purpose of this research is to contribute with an understanding of how the #MeToo movement was adopted by local women's movements in South Africa from an intersectional lens, a case study design is the most adequate form. The benefit with case studies is their ability to approach real-life situations and test perspectives instantly in relation to practical phenomena. Furthermore, the distance between a case study researcher and the study objects minimizes arbitrary subjectivism and bias as the interviewees have the possibility of "talking back" and correcting the researcher (Flyvbjerg 2006). When studying "why" or "how" questions, a qualitative case study is a suitable strategy rather than using quantitative approaches which usually intend to answer the question of "how many". Common critiques against case studies often underscore the lack of lucidity that often prevails when the researchers analyze their data or when drawing conclusions without clear systematic procedures (Yin 2007). Such shortcomings will however not constitute a risk in this research since Kvale's (2007) systematic analysis tool will be applied when analyzing the material.

Case studies produce the type of context-dependent knowledge that is shown to be necessary for achieving learning on an expert level. The closeness to real-life situations that a case study entails is favourable since it offers the development of new insights and nuance of reality. These insights cannot be understood at the lower level of learning processes which emphasizes the value of context dependent knowledge. The aim of a case study is not always

proving something but rather learning something. Thus, in the study of human behaviour and social sciences, universals and predictions are not as valuable as context-dependent knowledge (Flyvbjerg 20116). In light of these arguments, the aim of this study is to *learn*, by exploring how the transnational #MeToo norm was adopted by local women's organizations in South Africa, which is most reasonably done through an extensive in-depth insight to the South African context.

The question of generalization is often highlighted by critics since a single rather small population that is studied in the case is not enough to draw general conclusions. However, this critical remark is disproved with the explanation that case studies are generalizable regarding their theoretical hypotheses, even though their populations are not. The overall objective with case studies is developing theories by analytical generalization, rather than statistical generalization (Yin 2007). Formal generalization is one of several ways by which research can accumulate and generate knowledge. However, the claim that knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not imply that it fails to contribute to the cumulative processes of gathering knowledge in a given research field. Flyvbjerg (2006) stresses that generalization on the basis of a single case is possible, even though it is limited. "The force of example" is underestimated in favour of formal generalization, which is often overrated due to the fact that these two methods have different aims. Hence, both qualitative and quantitative methods can be dismissed with the claim that generalizability is not possible, qualitative single case studies since they are missing a breadth, and the quantitative studies since they are lacking a depth. Additionally, single case studies are often criticized of being inferior to multiple-case studies. However this claim is dismissed with the explanation that single case studies can indeed be multiple in numerous research efforts by linking ideas and evidence in different ways (Flyvbjerg 2006).

According to Yin (2007), a case study is defined as an empirical investigation that studies a prevailing phenomenon in its true context since the distinctions between the phenomena and the context are unclear. Moreover, conclusions drawn in previous research on women's movements are movement specific since they are dependant on regime type, state type and on national location. Thus, the findings may not be generalizable. Yet, they may assist the

progress of determining the circumstances under which women's movements appear, develop, act, and succeed by discovering what campaigns and actions are undertaken by women's movements and by thereafter contextualizing the campaigns and actions (Beckwith 2000). In other words, case studies are favourable when the research aims at examining the contextual conditions since they are considered to be relevant for the case. The proximity to the study objects in this research made it possible to get in-depth contacts which was favourable in order to obtain the knowledge by *learning* how the #MeToo movement is understood along intersectional lines by women's movements in South Africa. This would not have been possible using other methods.

### **5.3 Material and sampling**

In order to get different perspectives on the #MeToo movement in South Africa and an understanding of how it has affected civil society organizations, this research relies heavily on interviews. Yet, this study also builds on online sources such as research articles, reports and online newspapers. The primary data is fifteen interviews conducted with fifteen persons during the researcher's visit to Johannesburg, Capetown, Pretoria and Durban in South Africa. The majority of the interviewed actors were NGO representatives that had been in touch with the #MeToo movement. However, activists, researchers and journalists were also interviewed in order to get a wider perspective. The secondary data is used as complements in order to gain a comprehensive insight into the topic of sexual violence in South Africa and how the #MeToo was understood in the context of South Africa.

By conducting interviews with relevant actors within the women's rights movement in South Africa, the aim is to get an understanding of how the #MeToo movement has affected these actors in their work within women's rights. Using interviews as a method offers an in-depth description of certain issues. Furthermore, interviews may provide and uncover information regarding a complicated or complex phenomena that may have been left undiscovered otherwise (Tracy 2012). Additionally, interviewing is beneficial when researching events in the past or in the recent past, which is in the interest of this study. Carrying out structured interviews means that the questions are set prior to the interviews, leaving out the possibility for the interviewee to give further expressions. Structured interviews are favourable when



interviewing a large number of people or when comparing extensive datasets (Kvale 2007), which is not the aim of this study. By contrast, unstructured interviews mean that the interviewer only has a main point of discussion through open-ended questions which enables the interviewee to answer more freely without restrictions. Having the two structures in mind, semi-structured interviews are sufficient for this research aim. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in person at the office of the interviewee, as preferred by them.

The target study objects are civil society organizations working with gender equality within the women's movement. Hence, women's organizations and activist within the women's movements were approached in order to get a nuanced view of the #MeToo movement in South Africa. Actors with different intersectionality backgrounds were selected in order to compare potential differences amongst the interviewees' answers and understandings. The reason for selecting to interview activists and NGO representatives is that these actors are seen as powerful "norm translators" as expressed by Keck and Sikkink (1998), and may thus be expected to mobilize under the #MeToo movement. Furthermore, non-governmental actors are considered to have an influential role in domestic norm adaptation (Zwingel 2012), which makes the selection of study objects relevant for exploring how the #MeToo movement was adopted by women's movements in South Africa. To interview NGO representatives is relevant as they are considered women's rights experts whereas activists are a driving force in women's rights movements.

The interviewees were contacted by e-mail, phone or social media. Some interviewees were more difficult to get in touch with. Hence, the method of snowball-sampling was used in order to access individuals. Snowball-sampling is the process of an individual referring to another individual by recommending their contacts that are believed to be suitable for the research (Denscombe 2018). When using snowball-sampling there is a possibility of limiting the interviewees to a certain group of individuals (Tracy 2012). However, the aim of this research is not to cover a wide selection of different interviewees, it is rather focused on civil society actors, which minimizes the risk of limited representation. Furthermore, the selection was based on certain selection-criterias in order increase the relevance of the participants. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, with the consent of the interviewees.

**Table 1. List of interviewees**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Race</b>
1	NGO representative	White
2	NGO representative	White
3	NGO representative	Colored
4	NGO representative	Black
5	NGO representative	Black
6	NGO representative	Black
7	Activist	White
8	NGO representative	Black
9	Activist	Black
10	Activist	Black
11	Activist	Black
12	Activist	White
13	Activist	Black
14	Activist	White
15	NGO representative	Colored

**Table 2. Compilation of interviews**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Actor</b>
7	Activist
8	NGO representative

The semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix) were used as guidelines during each interview. The average interview lasted 50 minutes.

The interviews were analyzed in accordance with Kvale's (2007) interview analysis tool, including five steps that guide the structuring and understanding of the interviews. Firstly, the interviewees described and elaborated their answers in relation to the interview questions. Secondly, the interviewees formulated and discovered meanings in their own responses, based on their own reflections regarding the topic that was addressed during the interviews. The third step in the interview analysis opens up for interpretation and meaning condensation. Following, "meaning units" (see Appendix for examples) were formulated as a way of condensing the meaning of the responses. Interpretations of the interviewees' answers were done during the interview and on the spot confirmations and disconfirmation of the interpretations were done in order to ensure the correct interpretation. This step minimizes the risk of misinterpretations. In a fourth step, the transcriptions were analyzed in order to get a deeper meaning of the interview answers (Kvale 2007). Themes in the transcriptions were searched for in order to condense the material and make more sense of it. Subsequently, the meaning units were analyzed in accordance with the aim of the research, to explore how transnational norms are adopted by local movements in South Africa and how the intersectional aspects affect women's mobilization under the #MeToo movement.

## **5.4 Limitations**

Firstly, this study was conducted in merely five months, which makes the time to disposal a given constraint. Due to the time limit, all articles and coverage about the #MeToo movement in South Africa were not included in the study. Including more material might have changed the course of analysis. Secondly, the small amount of interviews conducted cannot be enough for generalization. Fifteen interviewees do not represent all non-governmental organizations or all activists in South Africa. However, fifteen interviews is a sufficient amount of participants given the time frame under which this study was conducted. Furthermore, the researcher attempted, and succeeded, to find participants with different backgrounds in order to receive a nuanced perspective on the topic, especially given the relevance of intersectionality in this study. In accordance with Kvale's (2007) tool for analyzing

interviews, the researcher has been systemic in the understanding of the interviews with the aim of minimizing arbitrary interpretations. In addition, the analysis chapter presents several quotes as a way of illustrating the genuine words and expressions of the interviewees. Thirdly, this research is centered from October 15 2017 and onwards as the #MeToo movement was sparked and went “viral” from that date. Therefore a broader time frame would not have added value in this research.

This study’s focus is violence against women. However, it does not concern sexual violence against lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, queers and individuals with other sexualities (LGBTQ+)- this being a topic in its own right.

## **5.5 Ethical Considerations**

Procedural ethics entail doing no harm, obtaining informed consent, safeguarding confidentiality and refraining from deception (Tracy 2012). Thus, all interviewees in this study were assured confidentiality and anonymity. A written participant consent letter was signed by the participant, reassuring that the participant is able to decline from the study or to stop the interview at any time if they feel uncomfortable. Tracy emphasizes the importance of seeing the interview participants as “a whole rather than as just subjects from which to wrench a good story” (Tracy 2012:245). Keeping this in mind, showing respect towards the interviewees as well as valuing their contributions was prioritized.

The researcher is born and raised in Sweden which creates a risk of bias. However, Jotun et al. (2009) stress that “Qualitative studies are prone to a degree of subjectivity because interpretation of the participants’ behaviour and collected data is influenced by the values, beliefs, experience and interest of the researcher” (Jotun et al. 2009:45). Thus, complete impartiality is impossible when conducting research as total detachment from one’s own belief-system is an unrealistic aspiration. Yet, attempts to minimize the risk of such bias in this study were made by making the relationship between the researcher and the interviewees explicit. Self-reflexivity was a part of the entire research process as the researcher constantly reflected over what was being researched and how. Even though these measure were taken,

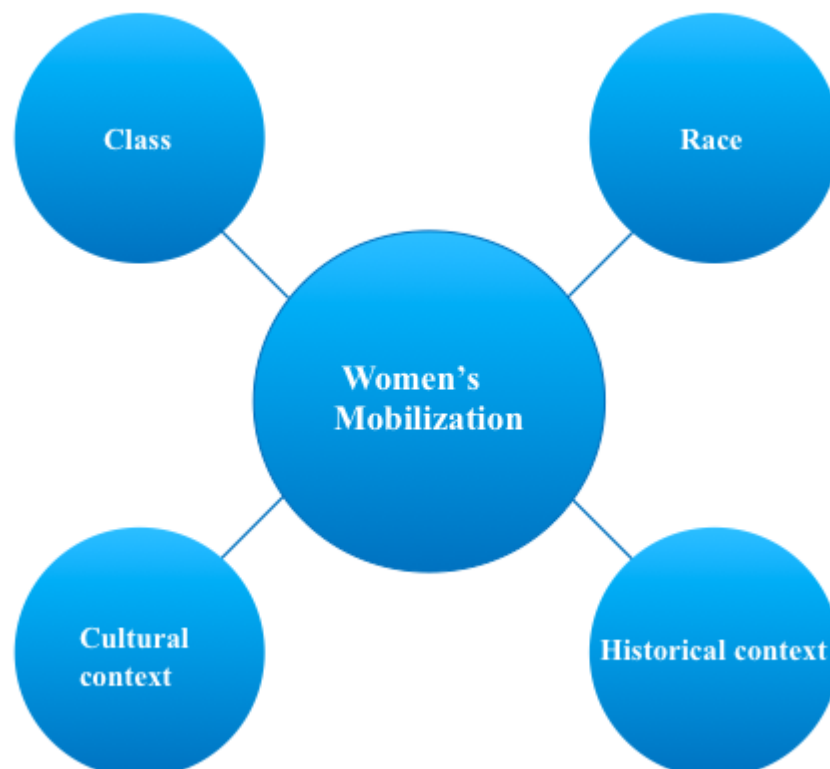
the researcher acknowledges the fact that the researcher's background as a Swedish national and as an academic may affect this research.

## 6. Findings and Analysis

This chapter provides the findings of this research interwoven with an analysis of how women's organizations adopted the #MeToo norm, and how it is understood in intersectional lines by women's movements in South Africa. In order to answer the research questions, an analytical framework (see below) has been developed drawing from previously presented theories of postcolonialism and transnational norms.

### 6.1 Analytical Framework

**Figure 1. Analytical Framework**



As presented in chapter three, there are certain intersectional aspects of postcolonial feminism that may hinder South African women to mobilize under transnational movements, and these guide the analysis. The intersectional aspects are class, cultural context, historical context and race. Below (see table) is an outline of how these characteristics of intersectionality from a postcolonial feminist perspective are applied to the #MeToo movement, a women’s movement with feminist features. The intersectional aspects are derived from the theories presented earlier (see chapter three). Keeping in mind that intersectionality is a broad concept as discussed in chapter two, it is important to emphasize the fact that there are additional aspects that characterize intersectionality such as sexual orientation, disability, nationality and gender identity, among others. However, this research examines the intersections highlighted by postcolonial feminism as they are the most relevant for this research. Even though including more aspects in the analysis would be relevant, it would be beyond the scope of this research.

**Table 3. Intersectional Aspects and the #MeToo**

<b>Class</b>	Is the #MeToo available to women from all classes?
<b>Cultural context</b>	Is the #MeToo considered associated with cultural imperialism?
<b>Historical context</b>	Is there a recognition of historical struggles that may lead to different opportunities and barriers for women to mobilize in the #MeToo?
<b>Race</b>	Is there an ethnocentric bias in the #MeToo movement? Are the messages and solutions equally suited for all women, regardless of race?

## 6.2 Class

There is a common idea that the #MeToo is an “elitist thing” which is considered as an aspect that may determine whether women are able to identify with the movement or not. R3 (NGO representative, colored) believes that the #MeToo movement was adopted by South African

women's movements and that it managed to raise awareness about sexual violence. The possibility that comes with a hashtag was new to the South African context since the traditional South African way of protesting is going out on the streets and dancing. R2 (NGO representative, white) believes that the normalization of sexual violence in South Africa is a reason for why the #MeToo mobilized women. Yet, the possibility of using a hashtag is not accessible to all South Africans, indicating that it is a question of class and privilege. R3 states:

This notion of taking your phone and Tweeting is considered very far from the working class and there's less credibility if you don't have the working class with you. The notion of the #MeToo hashtag is spread, even my own mother who isn't active on social media knows about it, but it's not a platform that people are active in. When using social media as a terrain of struggle you indirectly turn away from somebody else who isn't fighting in the interest of the elite. And part of what we have to do is saying that we're consistently using the platform of the middle-class, to struggle for all of us. But the question is where is the site of struggle for the working class? That's what we lack, so I don't think that we're going to change the world with a hashtag but I do think it's a contributing tool in our arsenal of struggle (R3).

Furthermore, most interviewees emphasized that in regards to the #MeToo being a digital movement, it is not accessible to everyone, especially to the lower class. Data prices are high and everybody does not have a smart phone or internet access which makes the issue of financial capacity highly relevant. R14 (Activist, white) believes that the ones who did respond to the #MeToo are those who are literate with "that kind of thinking" and who adopt a particular version of feminism. R13 (Activist, black) highlights the fact that the women who are engaged in the #MeToo movement are privileged since they are able to leave their "everyday" burdens and go out and engage, which is something many women do not have the privilege of doing. R 13 stresses:

Often, women here are much more busy with surviving, they don't have time to fiddle around in the the media all day and stuff like that. They are often working two or three jobs, so I'm not saying it's a negative thing but that it's not a priority (R13).

R9 (Activist, black) mentioned that the #MeToo movement may not have been as influential in South Africa as it was in the West due to the fact that formal employment is part of the first world. The informal sector is bigger in South Africa which means that the #MeToo was more

influential in the formal sector than in the informal sector implying a divide between people in the different sectors. In that sense, the #MeToo does not speak to the non-western working environment, constituting a reason for not mobilizing.

The #MeToo movement was also seen as something that broke down the stereotype of vulnerable women by revealing that all women suffer from sexual harassment regardless of class, race or gender. R8 (NGO representative, black) expresses:

All our projects are designed based on vulnerability and if you're in a poor community, you're considered vulnerable and in need of help. But the #MeToo broke that down to say that if you're a woman, you're vulnerable. So status and ideology around being a superstar and ideology around vulnerability ceases to exist in this space of sexual offences. And typically, what we define as the face of sexual offences was shattered with that movement. And so for us the impact is that nobody is excluded in women's issues, no matter what position you hold or background you come from, we still need to highlight what we're going through (R8).

Even though mobilization under the #MeToo movement is often seen as a privilege, R15 (NGO representative, colored) emphasizes that it is not to be dismissed because it is considered elitist since it is still a powerful tool that enables mobilization. Using the privileges one has to lift an important message is powerful, even though the channels of advocacy might not be accessible to everyone.

The irony of the #MeToo is that women reject these issues because of the values represented but in the end, they are women just like us experiencing assault just like we do and they used that position of privilege to generate a consciousness. I don't think they care a damn for the rest of us, I think they are fighting for their space in the world. But even in the West, they are a minority, right? And the majority in the West doesn't have access to the world that they live in. So I'm saying the only critique then is that they didn't think of how they used that struggle for poorer women that don't have access to Social Media, who are just a domestic workers for instance. There are limitations to the movement and of using Social Media as a tool in the struggle. So I think when we look back at the #MeToo we will use these moments of mobilization, but not to be delusional thinking that it solves our struggles (R15).

Correspondingly R3 (NGO representative, colored) believes that even if the "mainstream #MeToo supporter" is rich and privileged, it is good that they use their space in favor of the



rest. The fact that sexual harassment is prevalent regardless of one's privilege, is an important outcome of the #MeToo movement which managed to raise awareness of the issue. According to R3, #MeToo resonated in the social justice circles, on Social Media, among students and within the feminist movement. Although, R3 questions whether it reached the "larger" South African community.

### **6.3 Cultural Context**

Several interviewees perceived that the #MeToo movement encouraged victims of sexual assault to name and shame their perpetrators, which they believe was the main "tool" of the movement. However, as pointed out by R8 (NGO representative, black) and R13 (Activist, white), this is far more difficult in the South African context than it is in the West. On the one hand, when women speak out they are putting themselves in the center as victims. Most women in South Africa are victims of sexual assault which makes the act of "speaking out" relatively useless as this is an already acknowledged problem. On the contrary, speaking out makes the victim even more vulnerable since GBV is not taken seriously enough in society. In addition, the "logic" of protecting the image of a community is a barrier for black women to speak out, creating a far more complex way for black women to speak out and join the #MeToo movement (Tambe 2018). Sexual offences are highly underreported and feelings of guilt, shame and responsibility often haunt the victims (Wilhelmsen and Kristiansen 2018). Furthermore there is a fear of the legal process, poor treatment of the police and retaliation by the offender (Vetten 2014). R10 (Activist, black) explains:

A lot of women obviously feel intimidated to go and report rape because what happens in this country when you report abuse? You get re-victimized. What happens when you finally get your case to court? You get revictimized as well by the justice system so we're being failed by so many things (R10).

Thus, women in South Africa are being failed by the system which makes it difficult for them to "seek justice" by stating "#MeToo". This is a sensitive concern which the women's movement "must keep in mind when mobilizing under the #MeToo" (R10, Activist, white). Similarly, R5 (NGO representant, black) believes the #MeToo movement had a huge reach and influence in terms of mobilization but stresses that it did not do much for survivors who

spoke out and are now open for victimization. However, once they expose themselves, nothing is done. Hence, R8 (NGO representative, black) questions the relevance of the #MeToo movement in the South African context, not because the issue itself is irrelevant but since its messages do not add something new to the issue of GBV. Correspondingly, R9 (Activist, black) stressed that the #MeToo movement was not able to translate to the national context of South Africa since it touched upon GBV, but failed to highlight the “bigger” issues making it “too broad”. Yet, the #MeToo was influential in the circles of R9, even though it failed to address the more “relevant” issues.

We have used the #MeToo, it has been part of our dialogue as a way of bringing awareness to the movement as well as raising awareness on GBV. Because I think with us, the bigger issues are rape, kidnapping, human trafficking, and femicide. Things like sexual harassment sort of get a Blackburn and they're not so taken seriously. Almost every woman has experienced it so there's people in worse situations. So it hasn't received as much attention because of the severity of the crisis that we're in currently (R9).

Furthermore, R1(NGO representant, white) asserts that there is a local suspicion of international campaigns that are imposed on South Africans and that there will be resistance if this attempt does not suit their preferences. Although, the interviewee also stresses that this does not apply to the #MeToo as this norm is something that people can identify with and feel is more important than their cultural identity.

There are numerous campaigns, movements and protests that the interviewees believe receive more attention than the #MeToo movement since it is closer to them. The #TotalShutdown movement, the #Menaretrash movement and numerous student movements are mentioned in every interview. Both R2 (NGO representant, white) and R7 (Activist, white) mentioned the sixteen days of activism in November that are dedicated to GBV activism and compared it to the #MeToo movement. Even though South Africa's sixteen days of activism have existed for a longer time, they believed the #MeToo movement had a stronger influence. Both interviewees believed that the #MeToo movement would have a longer lasting impact since internet campaigns sustain longer and they spread easier than isolated events. Unlike the sixteen days of activism that eventually pass, the #MeToo norm is more likely to sustain longer and it is likely to mobilize more women (R2 and R7).

Some organizations used the #MeToo movement directly in their work. R7 (Activist, white) stated that her organization produced short-films to show instances of sexual harassment from different angles by referring to the #MeToo. R1(NGO representative, white) mentioned that there was a “#MiniMeToo” campaign which was founded in the aftermath of the #MeToo highlighting sexual harassment towards children. However, this campaign was local and R1 does not believe it spread beyond the Gauteng province, possibly since it was driven by an NGO rather than a celebrity according to the interviewee.

## **6.4 Historical Context**

Women in the West have a much longer tradition of independence, making it easier for them to speak out against their male counterparts. South African women have long been allies with black men in the fight for independence which makes the notion of speaking out an extra sensitive issue and a much more rare event. Furthermore, R13 (Activist, white) and R4 (NGO representant, black) explain that speaking up is not in black women’s traditional nature as they have been taught to suppress their resistance historically which makes the act of speaking out more radical coming from them than it would be from a Western point of view. Furthermore, women’s rights were set aside in the national liberation struggle as the priority was national liberation. R3 explains:

For a long time feminism was seen as a white people’s business, having a really liberal interpretation of rights and if we showed interest in it we were often questioned for trying to divide the liberation movement. People would say “why are you splitting men and women, we need to be united against the common enemy”. So we learned that this narrative of “let’s focus on this national liberation at first and we’ll take care of women later”, so the later never comes (R3).

Apartheid was an extremely brutal and racialized system that instigated violence in all senses. The history of apartheid is known as a racial discrimination system, but it was profoundly gendered as well. Particularly black women were exposed to high levels of sexual violence. Hence, South Africa’s brutal past has normalized violence to a high degree and several interviewees mention that the colonial past still has influence today. Even though apartheid was discriminatory towards black people, it was in particular violent to black women as they were suppressed and humiliated in all respects. Traces of this still appear today as black

women are the most vulnerable in society and it is hard to mobilize cross-race. To illustrate, R8 (NGO representative, black) discusses how the historical subjugation of the black man and the upheaval of the white man created a normalization of violence along with a constant fear:

I would say that the legacy of Apartheid is one that is violent, on every side. Because for a black man to assert his power to a white policeman he had to throw rocks at him. But for a white policeman to assert his power over him, he had to shoot him. So violence was almost a normalized thing and used as a way of communicating “I don’t like what you’re doing” or “I need you to stop what you’re doing” or “I need you to listen to me”. So all in all, in our society I would say, there’s a very violent premise. And that of course affects women’s likelihood to mobilize, the constant fear of being violated is a major problem (R8).

## **6.5 Race**

Race plays a huge role in the everyday-lives of South Africans which is also partly expressed within the women’s movement. Gender Based Violence (GBV) affects all women, regardless of race or class. Yet, there are continuous discussions and criticisms about the fact that black women are mobilizing together with white women. R9 (Activist, black) asserts that there is a strong demand for black women taking the lead as a way of insisting that the preceding, and current, power-relations between black and white women need to change. Thus, supporters of #MeToo believe that unity between black and white women is vital and they are able to stand together. Yet, some women of color do not feel like they have this particular issue in common since they are exposed far more than their white counterparts. As R1 (NGO representative, white) expressed “there’s very much race-divide here and I think it is mostly rights-related issues that become the kind of “that does not happen in our community so we do not have to partake in it”. R14 (Activist, white) accentuates:

So it’s very difficult to talk about race in isolation of class, but just from those women in the #MeToo. Not because it has only affected white women but because of what Hollywood is. Black women are on the periphery there as well so just by recognition I think if I were white and I saw other white women going through this I think I could identify more easily. And the same for black women, if you’re a sociological minority which black people are on this world then it’s even more challenging when the only people

that are speaking up are mostly white women and a few black women. Then you tend to say “uh, that’s their thing”. Because we live out the tensions everyday of race and this is the fight of the same white women oppressing me in my country so why would I have empathy for them? It takes a bigness to overcome that, the everyday reality and say despite being oppressed by someone who looks like that everyday in my life, I’m now going to find it in my heart and have solidarity with that person. So I do think race matters and the racial profile of the #MeToo movement is a bias (R14).

According to R10 (Activist, Black), an interviewee that self identifies as a “black radical feminist”, the #MeToo movement failed to address the local needs in the South African context. R10 asserts that “the more appropriate hashtag in South Africa would have been #ExceptMe”, implying that GBV is far more normalized in the lives of South African women. Using the #MeToo movement would neglect the experiences of a black woman since GBV is their reality and almost a part of their identity “since black women’s bodies have never been theirs to begin with” (R10). Some of the interviewees (R10, R11, R13) identify themselves as “black radical feminists”. These three interviewees, although they acknowledge the “good” intention behind the #MeToo movement, dismiss the movement since it fails to recognize the range of their multiple struggles. R 10 stresses:

The #MeToo is important like any other hashtag that has kind of spiralled and created a global discourse around pertinent issues. But I think even in the #MeToo movement there was a strong white woman’s voice that almost neglected the experiences of a black woman’s voice. Black women don’t necessarily have the opportunity, they don’t need to go on social media to validate that they are potential victims or survivors of GBV, it is in their reality. So the #MeToo movement is important in exposing how white women have the potential to go out and steal narratives that don’t necessarily fully belong to them, or in the process of them bringing up their own experiences- undermine and almost trivialise experiences of black women (R10).

Hence, within the #MeToo protest, there was a protest. Even though black women realize that sexual harassment is universal and that the #MeToo is an attempt to fight it collectively, they are not interested in engaging since they demanded full recognition of their struggles, not only partial recognition. R10 stresses:

How do I equate my struggle as a black woman to that struggle as a white woman when historically, if we have to compare struggles, not to compete about who is struggling the most but to speak about very lament kind of “in your face conditions”. The white woman’s

biggest struggle has always been climbing the economic ladder, whereas the black woman has had to climb the economic, social, racial and also the gendered ladder, right? Those issues almost kind of disappeared into the background. Where the #MeToo movement failed to identify this, at least it could have put an emphasis on it (R10).

According to L8 (NGO representative, black) the perceptions of GBV perpetrators are racialized. There is a prevailing normative language saying that black men are violent and that “violence in the black community is a culture”. R13 (Activist, black) mentions that the racial divide between black people and white people is obvious in all contexts. Considering the fact that white people still have more power than black people, they do not feel welcome in many regards which might be a reason for a large part of the black community taking a distance to the #MeToo. The fact that an Afro-American woman originally initiated the #MeToo movement is another example of whitewashing of what originated as a black woman’s struggle according to R13. R12 (Activist, white) stresses:

When it became known that an Afro-American woman was actually the one who came up with the hashtag people reacted and were like ‘yeah there they go appropriating our experience again’ (R12).

Similarly, Tambe (2018) points out that mainstream media coverage on the #MeToo movement has mostly centered around white women’s pain which is common from a critical race feminist point of view. Moreover, black women are often pressured by their male counterparts not to speak out publicly about the violence or harassment that they experience. The primary instrument of redress in the #MeToo movement is publicly naming, shaming and criminalizing perpetrators- an issue that is already too familiar for black men. Historically, black men have been criminalized and lynched based on fabricated allegations that white women were sexually violated by them, leading to unjust imprisonment (Tambe 2018).

The media coverage on the #MeToo mostly circulated around the scandals in Hollywood. According to the interviewees (R2, R7, R14, R15) the “R. Kelly scandal<sup>2</sup>” became a hot topic for many people as he is quite famous in South Africa. The case was controversial and many people were against him but there were also those who protected him, implying that

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Kelly is a popular American singer accused of raping several women during the last two decades. The singer denies the allegations (Harris 2019).

American celebrities were in the center of attention in the #MeToo media outlets in South Africa. Whereas R2 (NGO representative, white) and R7 (Activist, white) mention that a couple of months later, a well-known producer in South Africa was accused of rape by several women and the case got a lot of attention in the media in light of the #MeToo. Multiple media outlets report about South Africans with high profiles being ousted in light of the #MeToo (Blignaut and Marshall 2018; Motene 2018; Zama 2018). This was also highlighted by the Film industry which also spoke out about South Africa’s “own Weinstein Culture” by creating an additional hashtag #That’sNotOk as a result of the #MeToo (Masuabi and Maphanga 2018).

## 6.6 Summary of the Aspects and the #MeToo

**Table 4. Summary of the aspects and the #MeToo**

<b>Class</b>	The #MeToo is not available to women from all classes. Many women in South Africa do not have the same possibilities to speak out and to mobilize and they often lack access to Social Media.
<b>Cultural context</b>	South Africa’s violent environment makes it harder for victims to name and shame their perpetrators
<b>Historical context</b>	The reality of being a formerly colonized woman creates profoundly different experiences of women which restrains the ability of the #MeToo norm to be translated.
<b>Race</b>	The messages and solutions promoted through the #MeToo are not equally suited for all women. The #MeToo failed to address the multiple struggles that black and coloured women have to face, making race a fundamental aspect that has been neglected.

A majority of the interviewees believed the #MeToo enforced the already ongoing efforts and movements by providing a sense of solidarity with other women from all over the world by recognizing that patriarchy and sexual harassment affects all women (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R9, R10, R13, R14). Slightly less than half of the interviewees considered the

#MeToo as empowering and encouraging for women to speak out (R2, R3, R4, R7, R9). The racial divide within the women's movement also affected their mobilization under the #MeToo. Clearly, a majority of interviewees embraced it by mobilizing and using the movement. Three interviewees actively dismissed the #MeToo movement since they refuse to disparage their own struggles by equating their experiences to the ones of white women. All interviewees self-identified themselves as "black radical feminists".

To summarize, the issue of class is emphasized as the main barrier for mobilizing women in the #MeToo. All interviewees mentioned lack of internet access as a crucial aspect that hinders women from aligning with the #MeToo. Moreover, being able to mobilize and engage is considered a privilege as most women are unable to leave their conventional jobs which they have to prioritize in order to provide for themselves and their families. Yet, the racial divide in the South African women's movement is evident and some women who declare themselves as "radical" are less likely to mobilize under the #MeToo movement since it fails to address the intersections of gender, race, class, cultural- and historical context.

## **7. Discussion**

In this chapter, the guiding research questions are restated, followed by a discussion of the findings. The findings in the analysis are presented to which the theory (see chapter 3) is applied. Thereafter, some reflections on the potential implications of the opportunities, barriers and dilemmas for women's mobilization in South Africa are revealed based on the aspects explored in the analysis. This study has been guided by the following research questions:

- How do South African women's organizations use the #MeToo movement to mobilize to combat sexual violence against women?
- How does the #MeToo movement address the intersections of gender, class and race in the perspectives of women's organizations in South Africa?
- What are the opportunities, barriers and dilemmas that South African women face in mobilizing under the #MeToo movement?



The findings of indicate that class and race are the aspects that mainly determine how women mobilize under the #MeToo movement in South Africa. However, the aspect that keeps coming back in all interviews is the issue of class. All women realize that the #MeToo was started before it was used by Hollywood actress Alyssa Milano which makes them wonder whether the #MeToo would have been so powerful if it was not for the status of a famous person. Hence, the issue of class creates a hard limit to whom the movement intends to reach. However, this concern does not only apply to South Africa, as speaking out about sexual assault is not easy anywhere in the world. However, it is considered that having the amount of privilege that comes with wealth and high status, which the majority of women do not have, makes it more probable that women from the middle and high-class have a safety-net to rely on. Such a security guarantee is not accessible to most women of the lower class in South Africa. Thus, the messages and solutions promoted in the #MeToo movement were not equally suited for all women.

Due to the fact that white women were clearly in the center in the coverage of the #MeToo movement, there is a racial bias in the voices of the #MeToo. Moreover, the ways of stating “#MeToo” are not as suitable for the South African context partly since speaking out is a more sensitive act, especially for black women, and partly because the social media field in which the #MeToo is most often used is not accessible to all South Africans due to high data prices and lack of internet facilities. This finding is congruent with Carby’s (1997) argument about an ethnocentric bias that presupposes that all solutions are equally suited to all. Class matters in a way that is not expressed in the #MeToo. The atypical practice of voicing one’s resistance to violence resembles the arguments from McEwan (2001) and Kemp et al. (1995) who emphasize that black women feel solidarity with black men. Therefore, they do not advocate separatism since they are aligned with their male counterparts in the struggle against racism and previously, against colonialism (McEwan 2001; Kemp et al. 1995).

According to the majority of the interviewees that self-identify as black women, the #MeToo movement failed to recognize their full struggles due to their multiple forms of oppression. This is in line with McEwan’s (2001) assertion of marginalized women tending to resist representation by privileged and elite women within their own cultures. Black women are implying a “tiredness” of having “other” women interpreting and sympathizing on behalf of

them when they are able to do it themselves. Hence, they reject the #MeToo movement. Notwithstanding, it could also be argued that the #MeToo was perceived as a movement that provided solidarity. The fact that white, famous women also experience sexual harassment manifested a collective struggle. However, Donegan (2018) argues that all women's experiences are not treated the same and by calling for women to unite may risk to overlook the conflicts between them. When referring to "women" as a category, there is a risk of disregarding the meaning of inequality, privilege and injustice by ignoring essential differences. There are numerous gaps that separate women from one another and some are enforced by other women (Donegan 2018).

Thus, the sense of a "common" struggle rather remained on the surface and once the aspects of race and class are brought into the analysis, the #MeToo norm fades away. In terms of historical and cultural context, it is clear that South Africa has an active civil society and that there are numerous efforts in the struggle against GBV and inequality. This pre-existing setting provides a foundation of values, norms and strategies that might increase the possibility of the #MeToo norm's influence which may be seen as the kind of "match" that is mentioned by Cortell and Davis (2001). Yet, the postcolonial setting requires a particular approach in which there is sensitivity in the issue of inclusion and exclusion. The cultural context also implies that there is variation in the "tradition" of speaking out, as it is a more sensitive act for women of color due to their historical marginalization and suppression of their voice.

Hence, the intersections of class, race and gender were unequivocal and it was clear that all the interviewees believe that not all women in South Africa feel empowered or encouraged by the #MeToo movement, as they do not have the privilege to speak out and mobilize. Thus, it is vital to emphasize that the #MeToo mobilized women to various degrees according to class and racial backgrounds in South Africa. Therefore, is not necessarily to be dismissed due to the fact that it does not speak to everyone. Moreover, it is important not to overlook the ongoing efforts and other movements that are taking place outside of the digital sphere. However, it is crucial to highlight that all interviewees underlined the fact that the #MeToo movement did not provide an actual "toolkit", which makes them question how much it can do in practice. Based on the interviewees' responses, the #MeToo was mostly influential

among NGOs who embraced the #MeToo movement as a link to a larger transnational community that is advocating against sexual violence. Yet, the #MeToo also spoke to more privileged women who have the access and time needed to mobilize. The #MeToo movement added to the pre-existing struggles in the South African women's movement and added new tools of ousting perpetrators.

## **7.1 Opportunities**

All interviewees considered the #MeToo movement to have an important message about sexual assault that deserves attention both locally in the South African context as well as globally. R7 (Activist, white) implies that the #MeToo allowed for women to speak out in a more sensitized environment where people are paying attention. Several interviewees (R1, R2, R4, R5, R6, R7, R14, R15) believed that the #MeToo movement provided a sense of solidarity with women from other parts of the world in the battle against violence against women. The interviewees also considered that their previous efforts and work were enforced by the #MeToo movement, implying an opportunity to mobilize.

In addition, several interviewees believed that it often takes a celebrity or someone that stands out in order to raise awareness of a problem (R1, R2, R3, R6). R5 mentions that her organization used the #MeToo movement together with other hashtags in their work as a way of expressing global solidarity while emphasizing that other work is being done locally as well. R1 and R7 mentioned follow-up hashtags such as the “#MiniMeToo”. One might argue that these follow-ups imply that the #MeToo norm was adopted in the local context of South Africa through vernacularization. The #MiniMeToo added the issue of sexual violence against children as a new dimension to the struggle against sexual violence.

## **7.2 Barriers**

From a class perspective, the #MeToo failed to be adopted as a norm in South Africa, as its solutions were not considered suitable for South African women. As the #MeToo movement is a media-based movement, this creates a barrier that hinders many South Africans to utilize internet and social media as an arena to speak out and engage. Furthermore, the #MeToo

failed to address the multiple struggles that black and coloured women have to face, making race a fundamental aspect that has been neglected.

In general, there was more resistance to the #MeToo among the black interviewees. Even though they believed it was influential, it also brought a discussion on exclusion and inclusion implying that it was not attentive to the “stronger” struggles of black women. As underlined by Cortell and Davis (2000) a global norm can be seen as cultural imperialism or colonialism which may cause a resistance to the norm. These claims are also expressed in regards to the #MeToo movement by women in Latin America rejecting the #MeToo movement as it neglects the previous ongoing struggles of women against sexual violence (Medina 2018). Thus, one may argue that postcolonial societies are more prone to rejecting the #MeToo movement as it may be viewed as a “colonialist” move that ignores Third World women's already ongoing struggles. Hence, the historical and cultural aspects are significant to women’s mobilization under the #MeToo.

### **7.3 Dilemmas**

On the one hand, the findings indicate that the #MeToo movement mobilized women’s movements in South Africa by creating a space in which women feel more encouraged to speak out as the awareness around the issue has increased. On the other hand, the findings imply that the #MeToo norm failed to address the intersections of gender, class, race, in the postcolonial context of South Africa. Particularly black women and women of color feel neglected and they reject a movement which fails to recognize their double or triple oppression. On that account, the #MeToo norm reveals a division within the women’s movement in South Africa. Hence, there is variation in mobilization within the women’s movement due to the aspects of class, race and gender. One may argue that historical pattern of black women refraining to mobilize in women’s rights advocacy since they feel solidarity with their male counterparts has been broken to a certain degree. Although, the effects of colonialism still affect the way women of color choose to mobilize today.

## 8. Conclusion

Informed by a postcolonial feminist perspective, the purpose of this study was to illuminate how the intersectional factors of gender, class and race together with the postcolonial context of South Africa, influenced mobilization under the #MeToo movement. Therefore, this research contributes with recent exploration of the transnational #MeToo norm and its adoption in the context of South Africa.

In order to explore how the #MeToo movement addresses the intersections of gender, class, race, cultural and historical background, an analysis according to previous related research has been done. The two expectations (see chapter three) are both rejected as women partially adopted the #MeToo norm. With conclusions being founded that class, race, cultural and historical factors have significant implications in the way women mobilize and are influenced by the #MeToo movement. The most prevalent issue being class which undeniably is affecting women's abilities to mobilize in South Africa. Additionally, the conditions of oppression suffered more specifically by women of color have been grossly overlooked by the #MeToo movement.

These findings imply that the #MeToo movement possibly entails an ad hoc approach to patriarchy which has created a division between supporters and opponents. On the one hand, its supporters acknowledge that the movement is based on the assumption that misogyny is structural and that there is a shared interest in fighting it among women. On contrary, the #MeToo movement's opponents reject its validity since they feel it overlooks pain and conflict between women. The ignoring of vital differences such as privilege, inequality and injustice exacerbates conflicts between women and are prone to building further tensions. The movement has sparked the debate about power structures and sexual assault within institutional spaces but also in the discussion of victim shaming within feminism. This can also be seen in other countries with high levels of violence against women such as India where the generational divide amongst feminists who are combating sexual violence and those who seek to promote "traditional legal procedures" is vast (Roy 2018).

This research has found that the previously described intersections are not addressed by the #MeToo movement particularly from the South African perspective which directly affects South African women's ability to mobilize under the #MeToo structure. A secondary argument is made that the #MeToo movement released the tensions that were already bubbling beneath the surface of popular culture. This movement was used by South African women's organizations but not in isolation from previous efforts, hashtags, campaigns and movements that foundationally propped up the MeToo movement to exist in South Africa. Discussions on gender based violence have unravelled in South Africa and civil society has done most of the talking about this issue.

Due to the short length of time that has transpired from October 2017 through this research (January-May 2019) future research into the sustainability of the #MeToo movement in South Africa would be pertinent. Moreover, research in the future might consider the perspectives of women that "came out" in the light of the #MeToo movement and what benefits it has brought.

All in all, the #MeToo as a norm was partly adopted by local women's organizations in the South African context. South Africa's active civil society provides a solid ground for transnational gender norms to have influence. Thus, there is a "match" between the pre-existing setting and the norm in question. However, the intersection of being a formerly colonized woman creates a profoundly different experience of women which hindered the ability of the #MeToo norm to be fully adopted. This has led to the partial rejection of the #MeToo movement as a Western, non-universal norm, implying that the intersections of gender, race, class and cultural- and historical factors hindered women's movements to mobilize in South Africa. There is variation in mobilization under the #MeToo within the women's movement due to the country's historical and cultural context as well as the aspects of class and race. Even though the transnational #MeToo movement managed to mobilize women in "non-western" parts of the world, this research emphasizes the opportunities, barriers and dilemmas women face in mobilization under the #MeToo movement.

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## Appendix

### Interview Guide

#### *General introduction*

- When did you start engaging in women's rights?
- What made you engage in the issue of sexual violence against women?
- For how long have you been engaged in the issue?
- According to you, why is it important to highlight the issue of sexual violence?
- What change do you think is necessary in order to end sexual violence against women in South Africa and on a global level?

#### *Moving to the topic*

- How has the #MeToo movement been received and used in South Africa by civil society?
- Why do you think this has been the response?
- How has the #MeToo movement been received (and/or) used in South Africa by the government and politicians?
- Why do you think this has been the response?
- Has there been a backlash to the #MeToo movement in South Africa?
- In what way (if any) has your organization paid attention to the #MeToo movement in South Africa?
- If yes, would you say that this work has been successful in achieving the aim with the work?
- Did the #Metoo movement trigger any other reactions in South Africa, such as additional hashtags, events, movements, petitions signed by thousands of women etc?

- If yes; do you believe that these have been more suitable and relevant in the South African context?
- To what extent do you agree with the claim that the #MeToo movement is a global movement?
- Do you think that the #MeToo movement is based on a Western perspective?
- In what way?
- In your opinion, can South African women identify with this movement?
- Have there been different reactions by different demographic groups?
- Considering South Africa's brutal apartheid history, do you believe that this legacy has affected the level of sexual violence in the country?
- In what ways has this affected the rise of a woman's movement and mobilization against sexual violence?
- Do you think that this may have created a form of "fragmented" space between different groups in society, affecting women's mobilisation?
- In relation to other previous movements against sexual violence against women, has the #MeToo movement been used more or less?

#### *About feminism*

- Would you call yourself a feminist?
- Do you find the concept of feminism to be controversial?
- Do you find the concept of feminism to be (too) western-based?

#### *Final reflections*

- What is your overall impression of #MeToo?
- Is there anything you would like to add?

**Table 4. Examples of Meaning Units**

<p><b>Class</b></p>	<p>“Only women of privilege who can afford are able to engage, it’s always an issue about how much time you can devote to these things. Only privileged people can do so, unless you work at an NGO. Others are busy surviving”.</p>
<p><b>Cultural context</b></p>	<p>“I think a lot of women saw the #MeToo as a name and shame campaign which is what we really would like to see in our country. But we’re always told about the laws and as ordinary women or activists who are volunteering to the women in Hollywood and white women, the privilege of you being able to name and shame is not really how we should do it cause we’d probably end up in jail.”</p>
<p><b>Historical context</b></p>	<p>“Historically, the white woman’s biggest struggle has always been climbing the economic ladder, whereas the black woman has had to climb the economic, social, racial and also the gendered ladder, right? Those issues almost kind of disappeared into the background. Where the #MeToo movement failed to identify this, at least it could have put an emphasis on it.”</p>
<p><b>Race</b></p>	<p>“Definitely, race still plays a huge role. Even as there was a huge criticism like why are we mobilizing with white women? GBV touches everybody, it doesn’t have race, but there was quite a strong criticism that it should be a black woman led struggle.”</p>