



ARTICLE

'My body not your crime scene': Mutuality, power and solidarity in South Africa's feminist movement – the case of #TheTotalShutdown

Shannon Leslie Whitaker^a

Available online 17 December 2025



ABSTRACT

This research investigates the complex leadership dynamics within South Africa's feminist movement, with a focus on the transformative potential – and limitations – of collective feminist leadership. While using a process-based leadership approach, this study explores the case of #TheTotalShutdown (TTS) – a feminist movement that brought national attention to the issues of gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide – through an African-feminist and ubuntu-informed lens. The study explores the relationships between three core elements: the quality of mutuality between leaders and followers; the interplay of structural and social power; and the transformative potential of collective-feminist leadership. At the same time, it interrogates the internalised undercurrents of structural violence that undermine this form of collective action. In doing so, the research contributes to scholarship on feminist leadership and social movements in African contexts, offering insights into the conditions necessary for building and sustaining feminist organising and advancing gender justice.

Keywords: South Africa; Feminist Leadership; Gender-based violence; African feminisms; Ubuntu feminism

1. INTRODUCTION

'For every great feminist leader we can think of from anywhere in the world, past and present, has one thing in common: she led by challenging and disturbing the status quo. Feminist leadership must make waves.'¹

'The familiar call 'Wathinta abafazi' [You strike a woman] went out, and as we responded 'wathint' imbokodo!' [you strike a rock], a group of young Black womxn alongside us responded by shouting (in English), 'We are not rocks!' This response

^a Shannon Leslie Whitaker (previously Arnold) is a political scientist whose work bridges research and practice in Southern African governance and security. Email: shannon.whitaker@gcro.ac.za

¹ Batliwala, Srilatha (2010) *Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud*, Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA). Available at <https://creaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/feminist-leadership-clearing-conceptual-cloud-srilatha-batliwala.pdf> [Accessed 16 April 2025].

became louder and louder, and became a chant, 'We are not rocks! We are not rocks!'²

Together, these quotes frame the analysis to come. In the first, Srilatha Batliwala asserts that for a leadership practice to be considered feminist, it must be transformational – feminist leadership is rooted in efforts to transform social, economic and political power structures in the pursuit of gender justice. In the second, Jude Clark, Shula Mafokoane and Talent Nyathi tell a story of inter-generational rupture, representing the emergence of the South African feminist movement and its divergence from the women's movement of old, which cut its teeth in the anti-apartheid struggle and organising for gender equality under the new democratic dispensation.

On 1 August 2018, women and members of the LGBTQIA³ community, community, under the collective banner of the #TheTotalShutdown (TTS) movement, led the largest coordinated protest in South African history by these groups, with approximately 40,000 participants.⁴ TTS, mobilised across the country demanding state accountability for the gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide crisis. Indeed, the call to action was taken up transnationally, with the participation of organisers from other African states, namely Botswana and Kenya.⁵ A new generation of feminist leaders emerged committed to advancing the still-unfulfilled promises of democracy, often in tension with those who came before them.

On this day, TTS leaders handed over a set of 24 Demands to President Cyril Ramaphosa at the Union Buildings, the executive seat of national government in the nation's capital city, Tshwane (formerly Pretoria). What followed was the first National Summit for GBV and Femicide in the country's history, where civil society, government and various national and international actors began the difficult work of developing multi-stakeholder solutions to the crisis. The Declaration⁶ emanating from the summit set out the roadmap for the development of the *National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Gender-Based Violence and Femicide*, adopted in 2020.⁷

A coalition body called the End-GBV and Femicide (End-GBVF) Collective was formed to coordinate civil society's contributions to the plan and to sustain advocacy for its full implementation. The NSP is celebrated as a 'feminist document'⁸ that tables a long-term, holistic and intersectional approach for addressing GBV in South Africa; however, it has not been fully implemented and funded.⁹ Notably, a second Presidential National Summit was held in November 2022 to 'accelerate the implementation' of the NSP,¹⁰ especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which redirected political attention and

² Clark, Jude, Mafokoane, Shula, and Nyathi, Talent N. (2019) 'Rocking the Rock': A Conversation on the Slogan 'Wathinta Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo!', *Intergenerational Feminisms and the Implications for Womxn's Leadership*, *Agenda* 33 (1), pp. 67-73, Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2019.1598775> [Accessed 16 April 2025].

³ I use the inclusive acronym LGBTQIA, encompassing various communities characterised by a wide range of sexual orientations and gender identities, including individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual.

⁴ Vermuë (2021), pp. 243-259.

⁵ Le Roux, Nicky (2022) *Ending Gender-Based Violence in South Africa, One March at a Time*, Ford Foundation. Available at: <https://www.fordfoundation.org/news-and-stories/stories/ending-gender-based-violence-in-south-africa-one-march-at-a-time/> [Accessed 20 April 2025].

⁶ The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa (2018) *Presidential Summit Declaration Against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide*. Available at: <https://www.justice.gov.za/vg/gbv/201903-GBV-SummitDeclarationBooklet.pdf> [Accessed 20 April 2025].

⁷ Republic of South Africa (2020) Policy Document: *National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide: Human Dignity and Healing, Safety, Freedom and Equality in Our Lifetime*. Available at: <https://www.justice.gov.za/vg/gbv/nsp-gbvf-final-doc-04-05.pdf> [Accessed 20 April 2025].

⁸ Yolanda

⁹ End-GBVF Collective (2022) *Report: Reflective Report on the Implementation of the South African National Strategic Plan on GBVF*. Available at: <https://gbvf.org.za/files/2024/05/Reflective-Report-on-the-Implementation-of-the-South-African-National-Strategic-Plan-on-GBVF-29-10-22.pdf> [Accessed 20 April 2025].

¹⁰ The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa (2022) *Report: Report of the Presidential Summit Against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide II*. Available at: https://gbvf.org.za/files/2024/05/Report-of-the-Presidential-Summit-against-GBVF-II_1-2-November_27-09-2023.pdf [Accessed 20 April 2025].

funding away from the GBV crisis,¹¹ even in the face of a staggering increase in reported GBV crimes.¹²

This study explores the leadership process within TTS to shed light on what enables feminist collective leadership to have transformational effects, as well as what negates this potential. There is a dearth of empirical and theoretical scholarship that deals with feminist leadership in Africa. This research aims to address this gap through TTS illustrative case study, and in doing so, seeks to offer new avenues for thinking about feminist collective leadership from an African-feminist and ubuntu-informed point of view.

I argue that the transformative potential of feminist collective leadership lies in the continuous, contentious cultivation of mutuality, ubuntu-informed ethics of care and deliberate solidarity. Through the case of TTS, I find that while the movement powerfully mobilised collective feminist action through inclusive and collaborative leadership, its capacity to sustain itself was undermined by internalised structural violence – revealing the enduring need for deliberate practices of intersectional solidarity grounded in caring for all others.

In the following section, I outline the background to the study. In section 3, I situate the study within feminist-leadership literature. Following which, in section 4, I develop a conceptual framework based on mutuality, power and solidarity and outline the methodology for the research. In section 5, I trace the movement's emergence, leadership structure and power dynamics. In section 6, I offer an analysis of the interplay between collective leadership and internalised structural power, and reflect on TTS's impact, challenges and implications for feminist leadership.

2. BACKGROUND

The women's movement in South Africa has a long history as part of the broader struggle against apartheid. The Federation of South African Women organised a multi-racial march of 20,000 women at the Union Buildings in Pretoria on 9 August 1956 against the government's pass laws. Following in their footsteps, the Women's National Coalition emerged in 1992 to advocate for women's full participation in the Constitution-making process. After playing a critical role in the anti-apartheid struggle, prominent leaders of the South African women's movement were absorbed into the state as technocrats or as legislators in Parliament, often representing the governing party, the African National Congress (ANC).¹³ The critical mass of women in representative institutions facilitated the advancement of gendered rights in the early years of democracy. However, after entering the elite political class, many of these leaders became disconnected from the lives of ordinary South African women – realities shaped by rising levels of GBV and femicide, which persist at rates among the highest in the world.

According to the South African Human Sciences Research Council, a striking 36% of South African women report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime.¹⁴ Alarming, the rate at which women are killed by their intimate partners in the country is five times higher than the global average.¹⁵ GBV affects the full spectrum of South African society; LGBTQIA people are especially vulnerable to specific forms of violence, for example, black lesbians are particularly vulnerable to 'corrective rape'.¹⁶ Gendered violence is deeply entrenched in patriarchal norms rooted in the country's history of colonialism and apartheid, which maintain

¹¹ HSRC (2023), A pandemic within a pandemic: Policy Responses to Gender-Based Violence, *Human Sciences Research Council*. Available at:

<https://hsrc.ac.za/news/latest-news/a-pandemic-within-a-pandemic-policy-responses-to-gender-based-violence-gbv/> [Accessed 20 April 2025].

¹² Amaechi, KE, Thobejane, TD, and Rasalokwane, R (2021) Feminist Reflections on the Impact of the South African National COVID-19 Lockdown on the Upsurge of Gender-Based Violence in Mahwelereng Township of Limpopo Province, South Africa, *Gender & Behaviour* 19(1), pp. 1718-1723. Available at:

https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/ejc-genbeh_v19_n1_a8 [Accessed 20 April 2025].

¹³ Abu Sharkh, Miriam (1999) Is the South African Women's Movement an Easy Rider?: Interdependencies, Foci, and Strategies of Social Movements in the Third World, *Sociologus* 49(2), pp. 207-46; Lemon, Jennifer (2001) Reflections on the Women's Movement in South Africa:

Historical and Theoretical Perspectives, *Safundi* 2(3), pp.1-14.

¹⁴ Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2024) Research Report: The First South African National Gender-Based Violence Study: A Baseline Survey on Victimisation and Perpetration, Cape Town. Available at:

<https://hsrc.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Executive-Summary-Final-16-November-2024-1.pdf> [Accessed 12 March 2025].

¹⁵ Govender, Indiran (2023) Gender-Based Violence – An Increasing Epidemic in South Africa, *South African Family Practice* 65(1). Available at:

<https://doi.org/10.4102/safp.v65i1.5729> [Accessed 12 March 2025].

¹⁶ Gaitho, Waruguru (2022) Curing Corrective Rape: Socio-Legal Perspectives on Sexual Violence against Black Lesbians in South Africa, *William & Mary Journal of Race, Gender, and Social Justice*, 28(2), pp. 329-362.

women's subordinate position in society and fuel a competitive hierarchy among men, often resulting in male-on-male violence. While men are the primary perpetrators of GBV, it is crucial to recognise that they too are victims of gendered and sexual violence and are more likely than women to experience physical violence over their lifetime.¹⁷ Furthermore, research also shows that women are also perpetrators of abuse in intimate relationships.¹⁸ Nevertheless, as Hannah Britton puts it, 'No matter which study or figure is used, the message is clear: sexual violence is shockingly widespread in South Africa'.¹⁹

Amanda Gouws argues that the South African state's willingness to address GBV through legislation and policy tends to depend on the existence of a strong women's movement.²⁰ Three decades into democracy, the notable representation of women in political leadership – with 47% of parliamentary seats held by women following the 2024 national elections – often fails to reflect, and at times even contradicts, the vital grassroots efforts of women's organising.²¹ The increased political representation of women has not led to the full realisation of a holistic and transformational gendered legislative agenda.²² As time has passed, the Gender Machineries – government institutions established in the early years of South African democracy to advance gender equality – have become hollowed-out structures lacking strong leadership and political support.²³

¹⁷ Brankovic, Jasmina (2019) Research Brief: What Drives Violence in South Africa, *Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation*, Johannesburg. Available at: <https://csvr.org.za/pdf/What-Drives-Violence-in-South-Africa.pdf> [Accessed: 24 February 2025].

¹⁸ Thobejane, Tsoaledi Daniel and Luthada, Victor (2019) An Investigation into the Trend of Domestic Violence on Men: The Case of South Africa. *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 12(03), pp.11-18. Available at: <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-Journal-Sustainable-Dev.html> [Accessed 23 September 2025].

¹⁹ Britton, Hannah E. (2020) *Ending Gender-Based Violence: Justice and Community in South Africa* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press).

²⁰ Gouws, Amanda (2021) Feminist Institutionalism, Women's Representation and State Capture: The Case of South Africa, in *Gendered Institutions and Women's Political Representation in Africa*, ed. Diana Madsen, (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2021), pp. 21-44.

²¹ Shangare, Ashleigh, and Wielenga, Cori (2022) Repositioning African Women in Politics: From Critical Mass to Critical Acts, *Agenda* 36(3), pp. 77-89. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2022.2107941> [Accessed 16 April 2025].

²² Gouws, Amanda (2016) Women's Activism around Gender-Based Violence in South Africa: Recognition,

Thus, Britton asserts that 'leadership matters' in the struggle to end GBV in South Africa.²⁴ Reckoning with this reality, feminist scholars have called for the resurgence of feminist advocacy.²⁵ Over the past decade, different feminist movements have answered this call, representing a shift from the women's movement of old. These movements were different in character, utilising old and new repertoires of contention, such as, organising online through social media platforms and digital activism, while combining these activities with in-person marches, vigils, sit-ins and protests.²⁶ Yet, the turning point for feminist leadership in the country was the emergence of TTS movement, which represented the reawakening of the South African women's movement, and its reformation into a feminist movement with a renewed vision for a just future.

3. 'REDEEMING LEADERSHIP'²⁷: GENDER, LEADERSHIP AND MOVEMENTS

Feminist scholarship on leadership has developed along two interrelated trajectories. The first addresses the masculine bias of conventional Leadership Studies by documenting gendered differences in leadership styles and experiences with the aim of making women's leadership visible within existing paradigms. The second takes a more critical approach, reimagining leadership through a gendered lens that centres the

Redistribution and Representation, *Review of African Political Economy* 43(149), pp. 400-415. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2016.1217838> [Accessed 21 April 2025].

²³ Gouws, Amanda (2014) Recognition and Redistribution: State of the Women's Movement in South Africa 20 Years after Democratic Transition, *Agenda* 28(2), pp. 19-32.

²⁴ Britton (2020), pp. 72.

²⁵ Gouws, Amanda (2017) Feminist Intersectionality and the Matrix of Domination in South Africa, *Agenda* 31(1), pp. 19-27; Gqola, Pumla D. (2021) *Female Fear Factory: Gender and Patriarchy under Racial Capitalism* (Cape Town: Melinda Ferguson Books); Beall, Jo, Hassim, Shireen, and Todes, Alison (2011) We Are All Radical Feminists Now: Reflections on 'A Bit on the Side', *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 75(1), pp. 95-106.

²⁶ Gouws, Amanda (2018) #EndRapeCulture Campaign in South Africa: Resisting Sexual Violence Through Protest and the Politics of Experience, *Politikon* 45(1), pp. 3-15; Vermuë, Paula (2021) 'We Have Nothing to Celebrate!': Fighting Gender-Based Violence in Cape Town, South Africa, *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, 24(3/4), pp. 243-259.

²⁷ Liu, Helena (2020), *Redeeming Leadership: An Anti-Racist Feminist Intervention* (Bristol: Bristol University Press), pp. 8.

leadership of women as a means of transforming inequality. In this section, I engage with these bodies of literature to situate my study within broader feminist debates on leadership and collective action.

3.1 *What's the fuss about women's leadership?*

Grint characterises Leadership Studies as 'irredeemably masculine, heroic, individualist and normative in orientation and nature'.²⁸ Feminist-leadership research stems from the need to correct this bias by developing theoretical and empirical work on women's leadership styles and experiences.²⁹ This literature uses women's subjectivities as the starting point for analysis, a point of departure that is both politically and analytically significant because women's lives are valuable sites for redefining and challenging taken-for-granted patriarchal norms, meanings and principles.

Feminists maintain that there is a difference between sex and gender.³⁰ Gender is understood as a set of socially constructed ideas related to those characteristics associated with men and women that hold symbolic meaning. These ideas are made real through discursive power arrangements and related structural hierarchies that contour both our place in and view of the world.³¹ How we experience gender depends on its entanglement with the other factors of our political, economic and cultural situation.³² As

gender is relational, it exists along a spectrum; it encompasses diverging notions of femininity and masculinity and gender non-conforming (GNC) identities across society.³³ Further, feminist scholars argue that our understandings of sex and gender are intertwined, how we conceptualise sex and sexuality is filtered through the man/woman gendered binary and privileges heteronormativity.³⁴

Alice Eagly, among other liberal-feminist scholars, use a gendered lens to explore how women's leadership differs from men's.³⁵ Pertinent to this project is research on 'women's leadership'³⁶ – a term used to evaluate observable socialised differences between men's and women's leadership experiences. Studies reveal that women's leadership styles are 'less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, and more oriented to enhancing others' self-worth'.³⁷ Additionally, women's leadership is more likely to be associated with transformational processes, as women leaders tend to be more progressive in their values and supportive of diversity and gender equality.³⁸

Sinclair observes that alongside the rise of liberal, second-wave feminism came an impetus to document women's experiences of organising and influencing the public sphere through social movements.³⁹ Not only do women participate widely in social movements, but they also play crucial roles in leading movement-

²⁸ Grint, Keith (2011) A History of Leadership, in *The Sage Handbook of Leadership*, eds. Alan Bryman, Keith Grint and David Collinson (London: Sage), pp. 8.

²⁹ Stead, Valerie, and Elliot, Carole (2009) *Women's Leadership* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).

³⁰ Butler, Judith (1986) Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*, *Yale French Studies* 72, pp. 35-49.

³¹ Bucholtz, Mary (2003) Theories of Discourse as Theories of Gender: Discourse Analysis in Language and Gender Studies, in *The Handbook of Language and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), eds. Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff, pp. 43-68.

³² Medie, Peace A and Kang, Alice J (2018) Power, Knowledge and the Politics of Gender in the Global South, *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 1(1-2), pp. 37-54.

³³ Ackerly, Brooke A, and True, Jaqui (2020) *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science* (London: Bloomsburg Publishing).

³⁴ Sjoberg, Laura (2009) *Gender and International Security: Feminist Perspectives* (London: Routledge).

³⁵ Eagly, Alice H., and Johnson, Blair T. (1990) Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-Analysis, *Psychological Bulletin* (108)2, pp. 233-256; Eagly, Alice H., and Karau, Steven J. (2002) Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice toward Female

Leaders, *Psychological Review* 109(3), pp. 573-58; Eagly, Alice H., and Wood, Wendy (2012) Social Role Theory, *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology* 2, pp. 458-476.

³⁶ Poltera, Jacqui (2019) Exploring Examples of Women's Leadership in African Contexts, *Agenda* 33(1), pp. 3-8.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2019.1602977> [Accessed 20 April 2025].

³⁷ Eagly, Alice H., Johannesen-Schmidt, Mary C., and Van Engen, Marloes L. (2003) Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Women and Men. *Psychological bulletin*, 129(4), pp. 569-591.

³⁸ Bass, Bernard M., and Avolio, Bruce J. (1994) Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture, *The International Journal of Public Administration* 17(3-3), pp. 541-54; Gouws, Amanda, and Kotzé, Hennie (2007) Women in Leadership Positions in South Africa: The Role of Values, *Politikon* 34(2), pp. 165-85.

³⁹ Sinclair, Amanda (2014) A Feminist Case for Leadership, in *Diversity in Leadership*, eds. Joy Damousi, Kim Rubenstein, and Mary Tomsic, *Australian Women, Past and Present* (Canberra; ANU Press), pp. 17-36.

related activities and outcomes from the bottom-up.⁴⁰ Robnett's work on 'bridge leaders' in the American civil rights movement reveals how black women exercised informal leadership roles in the intermediate layer of the movement – these women acted as foot soldiers, connecting communities and new, potential leaders to the movement.⁴¹ Similarly, Bahati Kuumba highlights the bridge leadership of South African women in the anti-apartheid struggle.⁴² Further research shows that women's leadership in social movements is characterised as networked, distributive and collaborative. For instance, Brown argues that feminist principles which promote equality and oppose hierarchy have led to ongoing attempts in women's movements to encourage collective action where all participants develop their leadership abilities.⁴³

Scholarship on African women's movements in the 20th century highlights how movement leaders took advantage of opportunities that opened in moments of political transition, by leveraging alliances with male-led liberation movements.⁴⁴ This body of research explores how African women leaders organised for the realisation of gender equality through the establishment of gendered national and international policy agencies, regional bodies, national ministries and machineries, government departments and legislative committees.⁴⁵ Women's increased political visibility in African countries has led to the reformation of discriminatory social practices, and resulted in gender equality gains, such as access to the formal economy, rights to property and increased educational

opportunities. Further, this research makes the case for the association between women's leadership and democratic outcomes, less inter-personal violence and more stable, longer-lasting peace in post-conflict societies.⁴⁶

However, critical-feminist scholars argue that this research glosses over two important dimensions of African women's leadership.⁴⁷ The first is related to the shift from strategic goals rooted in women's daily on-the-ground struggles to ones that are focused on women's representation in institutions.⁴⁸ The second is the feminist leadership of ordinary people who mobilise and challenge the political establishment of the women's movement for substantive gendered ends.⁴⁹ Further, it is important to resist essentialisations that represent African women's leadership as something that is always transformational. This is significant because these leaders also possess the capacity to enact violence against others from positions of power within deeply unequal societies.

3.2 *Leading from the margins through ubuntu-feminist ethics of care*

This analysis will proceed through a critical-feminist lens informed by African feminisms. African feminists use anti-colonial frameworks to explore how the oppression of women in Africa is related to the imposition of heterosexual patriarchy through

⁴⁰ Herda-Rapp, Ann (1998) *The Power of Informal Leadership: Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement*, *Sociological Focus* 31(4), pp. 341-55.

⁴¹ Robnett, Belinda (1996) *African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization*, *American Journal of Sociology* 101(6), pp. 1661-93.

⁴² Kuumba, Bahati M. (2002) 'You've Struck a Rock' Comparing Gender, Social Movements, and Transformation in the United States and South Africa, *Gender & Society* 16(4), pp. 504-23.

⁴³ Brown, Helen M. (1989) *Organizing Activity in the Women's Movement: An Example of Distributed Leadership*, *International Social Movement Research* 2, pp. 225-240.

⁴⁴ Salo, Elain (2017) *A History of Feminist Movements: The South African Women's Movement, 1950-2014*, in *Women's Movements in the Global Era: The Power of Local Feminisms*, ed. Amrita Basu, second edition (Boulder: Westview Press), pp. 65-94; Tripp, Aili Marie (2017) *Women's Movements in Africa*, in *Women's Movements in the Global Era: The Power of*

Local Feminisms, ed. Amrita Basu, second edition (Boulder: Westview Press), pp. 37-64.

⁴⁵ Bauer, Gretchen (2012) 'Let There Be a Balance': Women in African Parliaments', *Political Studies Review* 10(3), pp. 370-84; Tripp, Aili Marie, and Kang, Alice (2008) *The Global Impact of Quotas: On the Fast Track to Increased Female Legislative Representation*, *Comparative Political Studies* 41(3), pp. 338-61.

⁴⁶ Krause, Jana, Krause, Werner, and Bränfors, Piia (2018) *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace*, *International Interactions* 44(6), pp. 985-1016; Caprioli, Mary (2005) *Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict*, *International Studies Quarterly* 49(2), pp. 161-178.

⁴⁷ Shangare, Ashleigh, and Wielenga, Cori (2022) *Repositioning African Women in Politics: From Critical Mass to Critical Acts*, *Agenda* 36(3), pp. 77-89.

⁴⁸ Gouws (2018), pp. 3-15.

⁴⁹ Poltera, Jacqui, and Schreiner, Jenny (2019) *Problematising Women's Leadership in the African Context*, *Agenda* 33(1), pp. 9-20.

European slavery, imperialism and colonialism.⁵⁰ Although patriarchy existed in many precolonial African societies, it is well documented that women held significant social, political and economic power in ways that complemented male authority.⁵¹ The imposition of colonial governance, religious institutions and capitalist economic structures concretised complementary gender roles into rigid gendered binaries – erasing GNC people from social life and further relegating women to the private sphere, thereby diminishing their value to society in relation to men.⁵² Although there are different branches of African feminisms, there are some common roots. By highlighting these, I am not categorising all African feminisms under one roof; I do so to tease out the key ideas that resonate across the multifarious racial, socio-cultural, ethnic, political and historical norms that shape power relations and inform the ways in which African women lead in different contexts.

African-feminist scholars explore the in/formal leadership of African women to develop a holistic understanding of how women lead, both within and against local and global manifestations of patriarchy.⁵³ These scholars argue that women-led community networks in Africa are catalysts for collective action.⁵⁴ Ifi Amadiume calls these ‘anti-power movements’, as these women leaders ‘simply seek to defend and maintain their autonomy’ by asserting ‘their right

against domination and violation’.⁵⁵ Therefore, the normative goals of African women's collective leadership go beyond what Tamale identifies as the ‘narrow quantitative conceptualisation of equality’.⁵⁶ Rather, African women lead from the margins in ways that promote ‘a more qualitative, participatory notion’ of equity that aims to address systemic injustice and affirms the human dignity of the marginalised.⁵⁷ The aim of feminist anti-power movements is to realise gender justice in African communities. In this instance, equal power relations, dignity and the substantive freedom (the real ability to make meaningful choices about one's life) for people of all genders is seen as the fundamental for building a ‘just’ society.⁵⁸

While resisting oppression, African feminists strive to ‘revise and retain African traditions’⁵⁹ to tackle gender injustice. One such example is ubuntu, which is captured by the Nguni dictum, *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, that translates to: ‘A person is a person through other persons’.⁶⁰ Ubuntu is an African philosophy/practice/worldview where one does not become human through birth (alone), but through a progressive process of integration into society by practicing social obligations which affirm the human dignity of all others.⁶¹

⁵⁰ Makama, Refiloe, Helman, Rebecca, Titi, Neziswa, and Day, Sarah (2019) The Danger of a Single Feminist Narrative: African-Centred Decolonial Feminism for Black Men, *Agenda* 33(3), pp. 61-69; Nkenkana, Akhona (2015) No African Futures without the Liberation of Women: A Decolonial Feminist Perspective, *Africa Development* 40(3), pp. 41-57; Nkomo, Stella M., and Ngambi, Hellicy (2009) African Women in Leadership: Current Knowledge and a Framework for Future Studies, *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity* 4(1), pp. 49-68; Simphiwe, Sesanti (2016) African Philosophy for African Women's Leadership: An Urgent Project for the African Renaissance, *Journal of Pan African Studies* 9(9), pp. 94-107.

⁵¹ Christopher, Isike and Uzodike, Ufo Okeke (2011) Towards an Indigenous Model of Conflict Resolution: Reinventing Women's Roles as Traditional Peacebuilders in Neo-Colonial Africa, *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 11(2), pp. 32-58.

⁵² Msila, Vuyisile, and Netshitangani, Tshilidzi (2016) Women and Leadership: Learning from an African philosophy, *Africanising the Curriculum: Indigenous Perspectives and Theories Vuyisile Msila* 2(1), pp. 83-95; Gwara, Joyline, and Matinhira, Beullah (2024) The Ethics of Ubuntu and Gender Justice Among African Women Theologians, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Ubuntu, Inequality and Sustainable Development*, eds. Ezra Chitando, Beatrice

Okyere-Manu, Sophia Chirongoma and Musa W. Dube, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 767-781.

⁵³ Muthuki, Janet (2006) Challenging Patriarchal Structures: Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, *Agenda* 20(69), pp. 83-91.

⁵⁴ Masoga, Mogomme Alpheus, and Shokane, Allucia Lulu (2019) Sebata-Kgomo Basadi! Emerging Indigenised Women Leadership Patterns: Selected Narratives from Local Rural Women's Stokvels in Ga-Sekororo, South Africa, *Agenda* 33(1), pp. 38-47. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2019.1598777> [Accessed 21 April 2025].

⁵⁵ Amadiume, Ifi (1995) Gender, Political Systems and Social Movements: A West African Experience, in *African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy*, eds. Mahmood Mamdani and Ernest Wamda-dia-Wamba, CODESRIA Book Series (Dakar: CODESRIA), pp. 65.

⁵⁶ Tamale, Sylvia (2020) *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism* (Ottawa: Daraja Press), pp. 211.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*

⁵⁸ Chisale, Sinenhlanhla S. (2018) Ubuntu as Care: Deconstructing the Gendered Ubuntu. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 39(1), pp.1-8.

⁵⁹ Chigwedere, Yuleth (2010) The African Womanist Vision in Vera's Works, *JLS/TLW* 26(1), pp. 24.

⁶⁰ Chisale (2018), pp. 2.

⁶¹ Mbiti, John S. (1969) *African Religions & Philosophy* (New York: Praeger), pp. 108-9.

Manyonganise warns against romanticising ubuntu through essentialist distortions.⁶² Gouws and van Zyl show how ubuntu in patriarchal and gerontocratic hierarchies denies women and LGBTQIA people their full humanity.⁶³ Practices like female genital mutilation and marital rape, affirmed as community-sustaining, are imposed on African women and girls as markers of social competency.⁶⁴ While acknowledging the relationship between ubuntu practices and violence, African feminists argue that ubuntu is frequently misread as inherently patriarchal.⁶⁵ Magadla and Chitando argue that, as a living tradition, ubuntu is dynamic and contested, and this complexity allows it to be owned by perpetrators of gendered violence as well as advocates of gendered justice.⁶⁶ According to them, despite its 'patriarchal baggage', the emancipatory potential of ubuntu lies in entrenched values of caring for the collective.⁶⁷

Ubuntu-feminist care ethics are inherently intersectional, as these ethics recognise that personhood is relational and shaped by power hierarchies. This ethical framework examines how intersecting oppressions – such as race, class, gender and sexuality – influence who is seen as fully human, while also resisting essentialist notions of identity. Drawing on Hill Collins, I understand intersectionality both as an analytic strategy and a form of critical political practice.⁶⁸ This study situates its use of intersectionality in the site (the lived experience) and praxis (the political practice of feminist ethics) of African women's leadership.

Studies reveal that African women leaders adhere to ubuntu-feminist ethics through their power-sharing approach, which in turn empowers others to sustain all levels of life, the family, the community and the broader society through acts of care.⁶⁹ Practising

feminist collective leadership through ubuntu, therefore, aims to resist gender injustice and facilitate collective empowerment.⁷⁰ This aligns with what Batliwala calls transformational-feminist leadership, defined as:

'Women with a feminist perspective and vision of social justice, individually and collectively transforming themselves to use their power, resources and skills in non-oppressive, inclusive structures and processes to mobilise others – especially other women – around a shared agenda of social, cultural, economic and political transformation for equality and the realisation of human rights for all.'⁷¹

Thus, from this perspective, leadership is something that happens in the space between individuals or groups who work across feminist anti-power coalitions. These actors examine their own relationship to and practice of power in order to realise feminist goals that advance gender justice.

4. MUTUALITY, POWER AND SOLIDARITY IN THE FEMINIST LEADERSHIP PROCESS

While drawing on the perspectives outlined above, in this section I will lean on Funmi Olonisakin's work on the leadership process to develop a conceptual framework for the analysis of TTS case study.⁷² Leadership is a relational social phenomenon that is imbued with power, wherein the relations between leaders and followers are mediated through power and the medium of this give-and-take is influence. The leadership process, therefore, is when influence is exchanged between leaders and followers in response to a particular situation and context across different

⁶² Manyonganise, Molly (2015) 'Oppressive and Liberative: A Zimbabwean Woman's Reflections on Ubuntu', *VERBUM et Ecclesia* 36, no. 2, pp.1-7

⁶³ Gouws, Amanda, and Van Zyl, Mikki (2015) Towards a Feminist Ethics of Ubuntu: Bridging Rights and Ubuntu, in *Care Ethics and Political Theory*, eds. Daniel Engster and Maurice Hamington (Oxford: Oxford University Press) pp.165-186.

⁶⁴ Gwara and Beullah (2024), pp. 774.

⁶⁵ Shumbahini, Mercy, and Chirongoma, Sophia (2024) Ubuntu, Gender Equality and Sustainable Development in Africa, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Ubuntu, Inequality and Sustainable Development*, eds. Ezra Chitando, Beatrice Okyere-Manu, Sophia Chirongoma and Musa W. Dube, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 781-798.

⁶⁶ Magadla, Siphokazi, and Chitando, Ezra (2014) The Self become God: Ubuntu and the 'Scandal of Manhood', in *Ubuntu, Curating the Archive*, eds. Leonhard Praeg and

Siphokazi Magadla, (Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press), pp. 176-192.

⁶⁷ Magadla and Chitando (2014), pp. 187.

⁶⁸ Hill Collins, Patricia (2015) Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas, *Annual Review of Sociology* 41(1), pp. 1-20.

⁶⁹ Ngunjiri, Faith Wambura (2016) 'I Am Because We Are': Exploring Women's Leadership Under Ubuntu Worldview, *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 18(2), pp. 223-42;

Msila, Vuyisile, (2021) Indigenous Feminism and Black Women Leadership, *Sociology and Anthropology* 9, pp. 42-51.

⁷⁰ Mama, Amina (2020) 'We Will Not Be Pacified': From Freedom Fighters to Feminists, *European Journal of Women's Studies* 27(4), pp. 362-80.

⁷¹ Batliwala (2010), pp. 29.

⁷² Olonisakin, Funmi (2017) Towards Re-Conceptualising Leadership for Sustainable Peace, *Leadership and Developing Societies* 2(1), pp. 1-30.

domains and levels. The study considers what propels/hinders collective feminist leadership, while focusing on teasing out the relationships between three concepts: mutuality, power and solidarity. Further, this section outlines the methodological approach employed in the study.

4.1 Mutuality

Northouse argues that leadership requires a mutual purpose between leaders and followers.⁷³ Mutuality encourages cooperation between followers and leaders – it is the extent, character and quality of followers' cooperation with leaders and vice versa.⁷⁴ High mutuality reflects a stronger and deeper collective will, while low mutuality signals weaker, more superficial cooperation across the movement. This study focuses on two dimensions of mutuality relevant to collective action: first, volume, or how broadly mutual purpose is shared across the movement; and second, degree, or the intensity of this shared purpose.

Cornell describes mutuality as existing along a spectrum from buy-in to ownership.⁷⁵ How influence is exchanged between leaders and followers determines where on this spectrum mutuality falls. Ownership occurs when leaders enable followers to co-create the group's vision, whereas buy-in implies followers accept a leader-imposed vision due to limited alternatives. Over time, buy-in erodes trust and collectiveness. Sustaining strong mutuality through widespread ownership of the collective vision requires continuous engagement across all levels. However, members social movements challenging powerful actors, such as elites and state authorities, are often confronted by violence, which

weakens participants' ability and/or willingness to own the movement's vision over time.

4.2 Power

This study draws from Donati's assertion that a collective defines itself through a set of power relationships.⁷⁶ Power is what determines how collective identity is formed; more specifically, the process of cultivating collective identity is filtered through the ways in which influence is exchanged between leaders and followers, and how these exchanges influence the power structures they are situated within (and against). I am concerned with two forms of power, social power (*power-to*) which emerges from different bases of power actors draw on to influence one another on an interpersonal level, and the interaction between social power and structural power (*power-over*).

French and Raven define social power as a change in belief, attitude or behaviour resulting from another's actions.⁷⁷ Social power, then, is the potential for this influence, which leaders exercise by drawing on various qualitative resources or 'bases of power'.⁷⁸ French and Raven originally identified six such bases: reward, coercion, legitimacy, expertise, referent and information.⁷⁹ Subsequent work has refined this typology further.⁸⁰ While all six bases of power can be observed in social movements, this study focuses on informational and legitimate power.

Informational power arises from logic or evidence presented by an influencing agent. Raven notes that once internalised, this influence persists even without the agent's presence.⁸¹ However, in collectives where meaning is co-produced, informational power is interdependent and constantly reproduced. It is this paper's contention that from an African-feminist and ubuntu-inspired perspective, influence exchanges

⁷³ Northouse, Peter G. (2022) *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 9th ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications).

⁷⁴ Thomas, Grace Elizabeth (2020) Re-Imagining the Framework for Leadership Analysis, *Leadership and Developing Societies* 5(1), pp. 73-77.

⁷⁵ Cornell, Michael Anthony (2018) Mutuality on a Spectrum: Ownership and Buy-In', *Leadership and Developing Societies* 3(1), pp. 1-7.

⁷⁶ Donati, Paolo R. (1984) Organization between movement and institution, *Social Science Information*, 23(4-5), pp. 837-859. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901884023004009> [Accessed 21 April 2025].

⁷⁷ French, John R. P., and Raven, Bertram (1959) The Bases of Social Power, *Classics of Organization Theory* 7, pp. 259-269.

⁷⁸ French and Raven (1959), pp. 151.

⁷⁹ Raven, Bertram (2008) The Bases of Power and the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence, *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 8(1), pp. 1-22. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2008.00159.x> [Accessed 22 April 2025].

⁸⁰ Raven, Bertram H (1992) A Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence: French and Raven Thirty Years Later, *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, pp. 217-244.

⁸¹ Raven, Bertram H (1965) Social Influence and Power, in *Current Studies in Social Psychology*, eds. I. D. Steiner and F. Martin (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston).

rooted in interdependent informational power generate a compulsion to act in ways that sustain the collective.

According to Raven, legitimate power draws on three social norms: reciprocity (returning favours), equity (repaying debts) and dependence (a duty to help).⁸² However, these norms are contextually shaped; thus, this study will advance an understanding of these informed by African-feminist ubuntu ethics of care. Reciprocity is then not transactional, but a web of obligations that sustain the community. Similarly, equity reflects participation in sustaining the community from one's position within the collective, shaped by their socio-economic location. Finally, the norm of dependency becomes the power of interdependence, which safeguards dignity and prevents dehumanisation. Influence exchanges based in these three norms enable feminist leaders to practice collaborative leadership and generate collective power by empowering others to act in solidarity and mutual care.⁸³ This is the *power-to* act collectively, or *power-with*, through 'solidarity, mutual support systems [and] safety nets'.⁸⁴

However, when leaders invoke these norms without enacting feminist ethics of care, *power-with* erodes, reducing followers' willingness to consent to the influence attempts made by movement leaders, which in turn undermines the degree and volume of mutuality felt across the movement. The legitimacy of the movement leadership then falters, making it increasingly difficult for leaders to navigate *power-under* – a concept developed by Steven Wineman to describe the manifestation of internalised *power-over* by the oppressed, often expressed as 'powerless rage'.⁸⁵ When the 'deep structures'⁸⁶ of *power-under* remain unexamined, feminist movements risk reproducing the very forms of domination they seek to dismantle, ultimately sabotaging their transformative aims. In contrast, when *power-under* is acknowledged openly and constructively addressed, this can foster dialogue,

rebuild trust and strengthen mutuality; if ignored, it undermines trust, weakens mutuality and limits the movement's transformative potential.

4.3 Solidarity

For Chandra Mohanty, feminist solidarity is grounded in 'mutuality, accountability and the recognition of common interests' among diverse communities.⁸⁷ It entails building cross-border coalitions to act in concert against colonial legacies and global capitalist violence.⁸⁸ Such solidarity 'foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together'.⁸⁹ Leading feminist coalitions, therefore, requires navigating difference, challenging systems that shape unequal life chances for intersectional subjects, and resisting universal, single-axis strategies.⁹⁰ This demands decentring dominant worldviews and centring the lived realities of marginalised subjects at the intersections of multiple oppressions, cultivating what Leinius calls an evolving 'unmapped common ground' or shared political consciousness.⁹¹ Transformational feminist collective action relies on building strong mutuality across the volume of a movement through a leadership process based in the power of reciprocity, equity and interdependence. However, navigating *power-under* necessitates that leaders engage in processes driven by feminist solidarity to fully harness the emancipatory potential of *power-with*.

4.4 Methodology

This study is informed by feminist research ethics, which are a set of methodological commitments and practices that demand the researcher be attentive toward 'the power of epistemology, boundaries, relationships and the multiple dimensions of the researcher's own location throughout the research process'.⁹² This study is shaped by my social location as a white, middle-class South African woman born in the post-apartheid, 'born free' generation. As a member of

⁸² Raven (2008), pp. 4.

⁸³ Thakhathi, Andani, and Netshitangani, T.G. (2020) Ubuntu-as-Unity: Indigenous African Proverbs as a 'Re-Educating' Tool for Embodied Social Cohesion and Sustainable Development, *African Identities* 18(4), pp. 407-20.

⁸⁴ Batliwala (2011), pp. 38.

⁸⁵ Wineman, Steven (2003) *Power-under: Trauma and Nonviolent Social Change*, pp. 25. Available at https://www.traumaandnonviolence.com/files/Power_Under.pdf [Accessed 30 April 2025].

⁸⁶ Batliwala (2011), pp. 42.

⁸⁷ Mohanty, Chandra Talpade (2005) *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (New Delhi: Zubaan), pp. 6.

⁸⁸ Leinius, Johanna (2020) Constructing Solidarity Across Difference in Feminist Encounters, *Open Gender Journal* 4, pp. 1-20. Available at https://www.genderopen.de/bitstream/handle/25595/1944/Leinius_Solidarity_2020.pdf [Accessed 21 April 2025].

⁸⁹ Mohanty (2005), pp. 7.

⁹⁰ Cho, Sumi, Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams, and McCall, Leslie (2013) Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38(4), pp. 785-810.

⁹¹ Leinius (2020), pp. 1.

⁹² Ackerly and True (2020), pp. 2.

TTS and an organiser of the marches held in the Free State Province, South Africa, I am an activist-scholar and hold an insider-outsider position.⁹³ Although the participants expressed feeling willing, comfortable and safe to engage with me, most were wary of my intentions with this research. The research was dialogical, with participants expressing appreciation for the opportunity to reflect and share their experiences.

Data production was both primary and secondary. Primary data involved semi-structured online interviews with seven feminist leaders of TTS, conducted via Microsoft Teams. Participants' names are used with their consent; pseudonyms have been assigned where anonymity was requested. Secondary sources included news articles, public Facebook posts, grey literature, policy documents and scholarly work on TTS and South African women's organising. While I recognise the role of followers in leadership is vital, the study focuses on those who led the movement in provincial or national task teams.

In terms of analysis, the study employed a feminist interpretative phenomenological approach for critically engaging the interview transcripts.⁹⁴ This approach focuses on a detailed interpretation of the shared lived experiences of a small group of participants. This first involved transcribing the recorded interviews while making notes to gain familiarity with the transcripts.⁹⁵ From there, I employed an inductive process while reading the transcripts, which involved forming theoretical abstractions based on common elements identified from the data to identify shared patterns of meaning. I then used a feminist heuristic to reflexively engage with the words of the participants. This involved paying attention to difference, my own social location and the role of power.

Following King et al. the patterns, themes and meanings that were identified in the data were linked to an established theoretical sensitivity, which used prior theoretical understandings (related to African-feminist perspectives) to identify insights in the material and to frame the findings.⁹⁶ Finally, I then engaged in another round of reading, this time to gain an understanding of the leadership process. Here, I aimed to link my insights from reading for meaning and power to the leadership process approach. Multiple rounds of reflexive reading informed the development of the conceptual framework of mutuality, power and solidarity. In what follows, I will apply the conceptual framework outlined above to TTS case study.

5. THE EMERGENCE OF TTS

In the early stages of building movements, participants exchange stories, construct social meaning and explore new ideas.⁹⁷ Social media platforms provide space for actors to exchange ideas and express dissent, and in doing so, these actors build virtual communities defined by a shared sense of being in and experience of the world.⁹⁸ Hill refers to these online critical networks as digital counterpublics, which he defines as,

'Any virtual, online, or otherwise digitally networked community in which members actively resist hegemonic power, contest majoritarian narratives, engage in critical dialogues or negotiate oppositional identities.'⁹⁹

Okech applies the term to TTS and argues that transnational African-feminist digital counterpublics act as springboards for the rebirth of feminist movements on the continent.¹⁰⁰ South African feminist counterpublics facilitate the coordination of advocacy efforts, especially in terms of sharing resources and

⁹³ Britton, Hannah, and Fish, Jennifer (2008) Engendering Civil Society in Democratic South Africa, in *Women's Activism in South Africa: Working across Divides*, eds. Hannah Britton, Jennifer Fish and Sheila Meintjes (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal Press), pp. 1-42; Jabiri, Afaf (2023) The Continuity of Othering in Feminist Methodology: Activist-Scholar and the Insider/Outsider Dynamics, *Third World Quarterly*, pp. 1-16; Gouws, Amanda (2012) Reflections on Being a Feminist Academic/Academic Feminism in South Africa, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 31(5/6), pp. 526-541.

⁹⁴ Fisher, Linda (2000) Feminist phenomenology, in *Feminist phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands), pp. 1-15.

⁹⁵ Pringle, Jan, Drummond, John, McLafferty, Ella, and Hendry, Charles (2011) Interpretative phenomenological

analysis: A discussion and critique. *Nurse researcher*, 18(3), pp. 20-24.

⁹⁶ King, Julie, Edwards, Nicole and Watling, Hanna (2023) Leadership for Change: Pathways to Activism for African Women with Disability, *Disability & Society* 38(7), pp. 1164-1185.

⁹⁷ Tarrow, Sidney (2022) *Power in Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁹⁸ Maluleke, Gavaza, and Moyer, Eileen, (2020), 'We Have to Ask for Permission to Become': Young Women's Voices, Violence, and Mediated Space in South Africa, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 45(4), pp. 871-902.

⁹⁹ Hill, Marc Lamont (2018) 'Thank You, Black Twitter': State Violence, Digital Counterpublics, and Pedagogies of Resistance, *Urban Education* 53(2), pp. 287.

¹⁰⁰ Okech (2021), pp. 1013-1033.

providing legal and psycho-social support services for survivors of GBV.¹⁰¹

TTS emerged from one such counterpublic. This core community was the driving force behind mobilising, coordinating and leading the movement. It is thus necessary to consider how actors from the margins of society transformed from individual advocates working in their 'own corners'¹⁰² connected (for the most part) online, into collective leaders orchestrating nationwide in-person marches. The research participants were asked to share the story of TTS from their point of view. The narrative of those who were part of this core counterpublic were personally different but there was a pattern of high notes, each representing key moments in time and decisions that propelled the movement forward. In the next section, I trace these high notes to paint the picture of how mutuality was forged across the movement, leading from the initial call to action in May to the day of the marches in August.

5.1 Building a feminist counterpublic

Four research participants, Loyiso, Yolanda, Gaopalelwe and Shayna, reflected on the development of TTS from the core community. This core counterpublic was built by Black (the word is capitalised to represent women classified as non-white), intersectional and queer feminists who came to know one another online by engaging with their posts on feminist issues. This facilitated the transformation of the core community from a disparate group loosely tied in a collective web of understanding, ideas and experiences into a connected, virtual anti-hegemonic social structure, defined by a critical consciousness and terms of engagement based on its members' standpoints.¹⁰³ Gaopalelwe describes this as follows:

[We were a] collective voice of people who were, you know, doing this feminist work on social media to begin with. You know, just friending each other online and talking about these issues, tagging each other on posts and posting about it, because people often think feminism is just in books and journals, but then that [referring to their work online] is also feminism in itself. [...] And I think that led to us feeling so strongly about the work that we do, in our separate ways. And also, as a collective, we felt we could come together.'

The extract illustrates how dialogic exchanges in virtual space facilitated the development of a collective understanding of the problem they faced and a sense of collective power. By engaging repeatedly, actors created a sense of social order through what Weick describes as assemblage, where movement actors assemble 'ongoing interdependent actions into sensible sequences that generate sensible outcomes'.¹⁰⁴ This was then incorporated into how they perceived their own social and political identities at the time. In this way, the core group generated a shared understanding of their individual experiences as part of a broader collective reality informed by their marginalised political, economic and social location in society. Shayna captures this idea:

'Social media reinvented the way in which we perceived [ourselves], albeit on this abstract level, because you would log off and life as we knew it and experienced it would continue. However, that little bit of empowerment on social media platforms really did help [...] So, this 'community,' as I view it now, it was really a niche space created for us to forge a sense of belonging and to forge a sense of power, because it did come with a lot of power - imagined or otherwise.'

Importantly, the process was steeped in exchanges based in informational power. To forge a collective vision, actors in the core counterpublic continuously re-engaged and negotiated meaning. This network of social power was, thus, socially interdependent, rather than socially independent. This mode of exchange was steeped in a practice of affirmation that served to connect the personal to the political. Members of the core counterpublic negotiated the terms for the use of influence and its acceptance, which determined how they engaged in future discussions with respect to those values and principles. They forged mutual relations through cooperation and shared meaning-making, as influence was exchanged in ways that affirmed one's humanity as a function of the collective. This built and rebuilt a sense of reciprocal influence, which in turn, fostered the development of mutuality and trust, and a sense of collective power-to.

Through frame-making activities members of the core counterpublic generated a social structure that was inclined toward acting in concert. Yolanda, Loyiso and

¹⁰¹ Gouws (2018), pp. 3-15.

¹⁰² Gaopalelwe

¹⁰³ Gumede, Vusi (2017) *Leadership for Africa's Development: Revisiting Indigenous African Leadership*

and *Setting the Agenda for Political Leadership*, *Journal of Black Studies* 48(1), pp. 74-90.

¹⁰⁴ Weick, Karl E. (2015) *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, *Management* 18(2) 3, pp. 189-193.

Shayna recall feeling anger and exasperation at the number of reported and publicised cases of femicide and GBV at the time. Yolanda in particular cited two stories that garnered media attention in May 2018, the deaths of Zolile Khumalo¹⁰⁵ and Karabo Mokoena,¹⁰⁶ both young students murdered by their ex-boyfriends. She recalls feeling that there was 'this moment where there [was] an influx of stories about women being murdered'. She qualifies by saying that this was not 'something new', but that their exchanges with one another through social media 'played a role in exposing to us a reality that is woven into the very fabric of South African societies'. There was, therefore, a shift which involved using informational power collectively to frame personal experiences of violence as a political call for action.

Four participants recounted the moment when they decided to mobilise, this stemmed from a Facebook post written by Loyiso after her friend 'was found, deceased and burned to death in Johannesburg downtown'. She describes feeling exasperated and writing a post in which she called out to the core community, 'I tagged them and said, "Listen, please can we shut this country down?"'. Loyiso's call to action resonated with the core counterpublic, which spurred engagement with the original post, and the reiteration of the same call to action in subsequent posts published to Facebook by other activists.

The core members describe the realisation that the level of engagement indicated the potential of this 'moment in time'.¹⁰⁷ Previously, these trigger points did not lead to larger-scale countrywide and transnational mobilisation. This point is important because the publicization of gruesome cases of femicide and GBV and the felt reality of this violence has been a constant feature of the South African social landscape since the early years of democracy. What made this instance different was the leadership process of discursive framing. Shayna describes this as 'marketing femicide' noting:

'We were literally fighting for our lives. So, I came up with the slogan for the campaign that would become the movement: #MyBodyNotYourCrimeScene [...] We were

now marketing femicide as a means of mobilisation. We were using our lived experience as a means of mobilisation and that in a nutshell, is how TTS came to life.'

Due to the response, Loyiso and Shayna acted by inviting different feminists into a Facebook Messenger group to begin coordinating their activities. This group brought together individual feminists, with different skills and expertise, different intersecting identities and feminist ideologies. Those who were part of the Messenger group became part of the National Steering Committee for the organisation and coordination of mobilisation across the country. They set up a private Facebook group, which became a hub for exchange, or what Northouse calls a 'holding environment',¹⁰⁸ where actors at all levels feel comfortable to engage in tackling difficult problems and building relationships. A holding space is crucial for building the kind of relationships that are necessary for maintaining attention on a collective's problem for the long-term. In this way, the Facebook group allowed for the development of ownership over TTS's vision.

5.2 Scaling a movement: Conflict, collective ownership and interdependent informational power

The reception of Loyiso's original post and the discursive framing to 'shut down' the country reverberated from the Facebook group and echoed across different online networks. This led to rapid growth in the membership of the private group; Yolanda notes that 'in about six weeks, we had 100,000 women in the private Facebook group.' From the outset, the mutuality around the collective vision of the marches was of a high quality, because the message of the movement was collectively developed and owned by all those that participated in online discussions and shared stories of their personal experiences of violence.

Jean-Pierre argues that the ongoing group exchange in TTS facilitated the development of a critical consciousness, which raised awareness about the political roots and systemic dimensions of their

¹⁰⁵ Masuku, Sne (2023) MUT Student Zolile Khumalo's Ex-Boyfriend Found Guilty of Her Murder, IOL Daily News. Available at <https://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/mut-student-zolile-khumalos-ex-boyfriend-found-guilty-of-her-murder-44101307> [Accessed 5 May 2025].

¹⁰⁶ News24 (2022) Man Who Killed Karabo Mokoena Now Faces Fraud Charges for Allegedly Scamming Govt

Officials, News24. Available at <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/man-who-killed-karabo-mokoena-now-faces-fraud-charges-for-allegedly-scamming-govt-officials-20220823> [Accessed 05 May 2025].

¹⁰⁷ Gaopalelwe

¹⁰⁸ Northouse (2022), pp. 293.

personal, individual experiences of power-over.¹⁰⁹ In calling out and desiring recognition for their pain and experiences of violence, others in the group both affirmed and expressed willingness to help with resources, reporting, legal advice and support services.

This coalitional work was ridden with conflict stemming from the challenge of building an intersectional movement. Movement leaders disagreed on what this should look like and how it should be achieved. These challenges were rooted in differences over feminist ideologies, class, sexuality and inter-generational dynamics. The following extracts exhibit these dynamics:

‘So, there was a lot of robust engagement on who our movement really represents, for example, some of the things we really sat around and debated and even fought about, were really on whether our movement [...] included queer people, for example, because a lot of the emphasis was on GBV against women. [...] So that was really a big challenge for TTS in terms of putting that into perspective, and I think it was a challenge until the end.’¹¹⁰

‘Our levels of understanding sexuality are not the same, right? Our levels of understanding how this space should be safe for that intersectionality was not the same. So, there were clashes, especially amongst the older generation of women who were part of that leadership, because they obviously did not really understand entirely what this is.’¹¹¹

The conflict surrounding intersectionality was both difficult and productive. By engaging in discussion, movement leaders exchanged influence through interdependent informational power, which facilitated a process where discussion carved pathways for collectively owning the ethics that informed the movement.

Many of the participants used the 24 Demands as an example to illustrate this process. The Demands were developed over three months, wherein the movement organisers ‘crowdsourced’¹¹² solutions from

participants via an open-access Google Document in which women and LGBTQIA folk articulated their needs and solutions. After cultivating ‘almost 800 pages of contributions from across the country,’¹¹³ the national leaders cleaned the document by holding workshops and enlisting feminist legal and policy experts to refine the contributions into a set of goals. The 24 Demands were then taken back to the Facebook group for further consultation, and once the final list was accepted by the counterpublic, the document was translated into South Africa's 12 official languages.

This process facilitated ownership over the collective vision of the movement. Crucially, exchanging influence through interdependent informational power allowed the movement leaders to engage one another on the importance of practicing intersectionality for the purpose of realising the holistic goals of the movement. Drafting the demands was critical for generating a strong degree of mutuality across the volume of the movement. This was a conflict-ridden process, yet it was also productive because it enabled all movement participants to imagine their struggle as a collective one through shared dialogue and negotiation.

There are links between generating interdependent informational power and building relationships that have the capacity to spur collective action materially, whether that be through physically mobilising as bodies on the ground or gathering financial and other resources. This process is facilitated through discourse and power. Discourse is the power of symbols to reproduce our material reality. Discursive power operates through inclusion and exclusion, determining which narratives gain legitimacy while silencing alternative ways of understanding the world. This translates into mechanisms of structural inclusion and exclusion, determining life chances and exposing marginalised groups to various forms of violence.

Similarly, interdependent informational power transfers from the cognitive/symbolic world to the digital and physical world. However, the symbolic power of discourse does not need to be violent to have effect, it can also be generative of those relations that build coalitions across differences.¹¹⁴ As such, when interdependent informational power is reified through relations that affirm the dignity of others, this propagates social norms that affirm the individual as a

¹⁰⁹ Jean-Pierre, Tracy (2022) #SAYHISNAME: Social Media and Feminist Advocacy – a Case Study, *Agenda* 36(3), pp. 11-21.

¹¹⁰ Gaopalelwe

¹¹¹ Yolanda

¹¹² Loyiso

¹¹³ Loyiso

¹¹⁴ Hudson, Heidi (2021) It Matters How You ‘Do’ Gender in Peacebuilding: African Approaches and Challenges, *Insight on Africa* 13(2), pp. 142-59. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0975087820987154> [Accessed 21 April 2025].

part of a collective, which is generative of power-with. Importantly, this process works both ways, informational power and legitimate power are intertwined. The dialectics between the exchange of influence across the depth of the movement through interdependent informational power then become practised in and through exchanges of influence based on legitimate power of reciprocity, equity and interdependence, which foster and sustain mutuality.

6. POWER-TO AND POWER-WITH: LEADING FEMINIST COLLECTIVE ACTION

As the core team began to organise, they formed a leadership structure at the centre of the movement, the National Steering Committee (NSC). A theme that became evident in the interviews was that authority was not hierarchical. Shayna offered a useful analogy of a 'spiderweb' to describe the development of this leadership structure. The NSC was the epicentre of this web, which was connected to different provincial task teams and bridge leaders through a complex exchange of influence that reverberated outwards and downwards, inwards and upwards across different (online and in-person) feminist networks.

The movement was organised through different tiers of leadership. The NSC consisted of those actors who originally engaged in the frame-making process and formed the Facebook holding space. Each member of NSC worked with bridge leaders in their respective provinces, acting as a point person for guidance, monitoring and distribution of resources for mobilisation. The bridge leaders formed provincial task teams that organised the marches in local towns and/or cities. This division of authority and labour is not an unusual pattern in movements.¹¹⁵ Although there was a leadership structure, the participants echoed the notion that all who participated in TTS were leaders of the movement:

'All the people who were part of TTS were leaders from their corners; everyone was a leader. Taking a decision to be part of such a movement, it means that you are a leader, you are going to go and represent other people who cannot speak for themselves and stand up for themselves.'¹¹⁶

In both the core and provincial teams, the participants described the practice of distributed leadership through a 'flat structure'.¹¹⁷ Pinky explains that 'you volunteered on whatever needed to be done in advancing the cause, [...] there were no roles or titles.' Similarly, Yolanda describes: 'Where I leave off, someone else picks up and carries it on.' This distribution of authority was not always easy or successful; nevertheless, participants felt compelled to act in concert, which was connected to a sense of responsibility to contribute, despite many logistical, resourced-based and personal challenges.

6.1 *The legitimate social powers of reciprocity, equity and interdependence*

Underlying this was a pattern of influence exchange based in the legitimate social power of reciprocity – the influence based in the social norm of obligations. Here, individuals contribute to sustaining and caring for the community because, in doing so, they sustain themselves. The social norm of reciprocity was tied to the collective knowledge that they could not tackle 'this beast'¹¹⁸ alone. Their lives, their sense of safety and future, rested on sustaining the movement.

Influence exchange based in reciprocity generated an intrinsic sense of collectivity, which is represented in the participants' feeling connected emotionally and spiritually by caring for one another. For instance, Pinky stated that TTS showed her, 'Feminism is love, really, it's fairness.' Similarly, Candice explains, 'I view the work [...] as a song that was planted in my heart, and I know that it's not only planted in my heart.' An extract that encapsulated this idea is Yolanda's description of her experience of the Tshwane march after a moment of silence for the victims of femicide:

'So, it was at one moment very noisy, and then the next moment it was pure silence. Everyone was sitting down. And that one minute felt like a lifetime, just because of the silence. [...] After that minute, everybody broke out in tears. People were crying. And people were hugging each other. And I think that moment just describes the sisterhood, you know? About I'll hold you, even when it's difficult I will hold you.'

The legitimate power of reciprocity generated an intrinsic sense of connection through caring for others. Reciprocity was undergirded by influence exchanges based in the social power of equity, wherein there was

¹¹⁵ Robnett (1996), pp. 1661-1693.

¹¹⁶ Siyamthanda

¹¹⁷ Candice

¹¹⁸ Shayna

a deep-seated awareness that not all can contribute to this web of obligations in the same way, and that all contribute what they can from their social-economic, political and cultural location. This is reflected in the participants' commitment to 'leaving no one behind'.¹¹⁹ The participants expressed awareness that reciprocity and equity rested on interdependence, in the sense that they needed to prioritise the interests of those who are 'marginalised within a marginalised community'.¹²⁰ This came about through political intersectionality in the representation of othered subjectivities, such as transwomen, disabled women, GNC people and women from the working class in the NSC and provincial task teams. Yet, the participants stressed that this was not enough, their interdependence required them to engage in a practice of deliberate solidarity, which involved making the movement 'safe'¹²¹ for all to lead without fear of reprisal.

Recognising that the dehumanisation of others, dehumanises the self, and that violence begets violence, the participants linked their understanding of political intersectionality to their practice of deliberate solidarity across difference; these sentiments are illuminated by Shayna:

'I'd like to believe that my understanding of solidarity includes the notion of oneness despite differences, whether perceived or actual [...] So, solidarity is, it is intended, it's an intention of union despite differences.'

Thus, critical for sustaining power-with is the deliberate practice of intersectional solidarity. However, the capacity of leaders to continue to act through these ethics was undermined by power-under.

6.2 *Negotiating power-under: when solidarity weakens, movements die*

TTS leaders did not agree on the vision for the movement beyond the marches and the first summit. The participants explain how the process of working with the state fractured the feminist movement, echoing the collapse of the women's movement in the early years of democracy.

Some participants recalled their experience of the summit with optimism, they felt that this moment signalled the government's recognition of their experiences:

'What the summit was for me, I felt that it was something which we all needed. And where we took out all our pain and struggles as woman. We expressed that pain to the government, so that they could hear it from the horse's mouth.'¹²²

The leaders that were optimistic wanted to work collaboratively with government to reform the state's approach to GBV and femicide; others wanted to do this collaborative work while continuing to agitate for the implementation of the 24 Demands. While some moved forward because they had financial capacity to sustain their participation in volunteer bodies like the End-GBVF Collective, others 'resigned',¹²³ 'fell away'¹²⁴ or 'removed'¹²⁵ themselves due to the demand of needing to put food on the table, emotional exhaustion, or feeling disillusioned by the idea of working with the state to realise gender justice.

TTS leaders participating in the End-GBVF Collective struggled to facilitate exchanges in online and in-person holding spaces. Consequently, the collective was not engaged in interdependent exchanges of influence based on informational power, and the vision moving forward was not owned by the volume of the movement. This was partly because the will to engage in collective influence based in reciprocity, equity and dependence had been undermined by power-under. The leaders described how violence became personalized within the movement; individual experiences of abuse and violence (in various forms) narrowed people's perspective, making it difficult for them to look beyond their own trauma toward the broader political project. This led to conflict and the limited participation of different movement members, often from those more marginalised constituents in the collective, noting the following:

'There was a lot of tension because people joined the movement for their own reasons. And a lot of times, it's difficult for people, especially survivors of GBV to separate their own story from the bigger movement, as much as we wanted to allow everybody's experience to be part of it, and as much as their experience is part of it, it doesn't take away from the feminist principles we have to also adhere to [...] It caused strenuous relationships. I think some people, you

¹¹⁹ Gaopalelwe

¹²⁰ Shayna

¹²¹ Loyiso

¹²² Siyamthanda

¹²³ Gaopalelwe

¹²⁴ Shayna

¹²⁵ Candice

know, are still not okay with each other [...] It caused a lot of trauma.¹²⁶

Loyiso reflects on the 'missed opportunity' to re-engage in the TTS holding space after the first summit. She expresses they needed to 'sit down and really truly debrief about how everything unfolded [...] and acknowledge our collective shortfalls to understand what we could have done better and go back to the comrades that we lost along the way'. In a similar vein, Yolanda asserts 'if we aren't having those conversations, [...] then it crumbles, it really crumbles.' Thus, power-under weakens the degree of mutuality because it prevents actors from re-engaging in the holding space via influence based in interdependent informational power.

In order to overcome power-under, Wineman asserts that this deep structure must be recognised.¹²⁷ Leaders of collective resistance to oppression have the double task of naming power-over, while also naming the ways in which power-under undermines their efforts to transform violent systems. This requires surfacing the politics of powerlessness into the room. Some TTS leaders struggled to re-engage because of the breakdown of relationships, which undermined their capacity to cultivate collective ownership of the vision for and the intersectional ethics of the movement going forward.

This has had negative effects on the implementation of the NSP. Amid internal fractures within the movement, the government delayed the passing of key legislation – most notably the National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Act. Although this bill is intended to coordinate a multi-level government response to GBV and femicide, it was only signed into law on 24 May 2024 – almost 6 years after the marches. In addition, while three key laws been passed related to domestic violence, the legislative goals of the NSP geared toward protecting marginal communities, such as the decriminalisation of sex work, have not been realised.

Nonetheless, the relationship between power-with and power-under is fluid. It is clear that the potential for rebuilding collective power still exists, but that it can only be fostered through exchanges of influence based in ubuntu-informed legitimate power and deliberate acts of solidarity. Feminist leadership comes into being through a collective leadership process – this idea is encapsulated by Shayna who says, 'I'm no longer afraid that if I die, feminism will die with me.' This points to

Batliwala's argument that feminist leaders challenge and disturb the status quo, and in doing so, they 'create waves' of transformation.¹²⁸ The participants highlighted two successes of TTS which generated waves that empowered others.

The first is social and cognitive, which refers to the ways in which TTS movement brought feminism to life for South Africans by discursively framing feminist calls for gender justice. Shayna describes how, 'TTS almost promoted feminism. Feminism was on a plateau. Then, TTS happened, and feminism got a lift – it grew wings'. Similarly, Pinky asserted that, 'we have never been in an era where there is general acceptance, that GBV exists. We now are in a phase where we even have men that are saying they stand against GBV'. The second is that the movement opened a new pathway for feminists and civil society to coordinate their work, share resources and knowledge, and work collaboratively. Gaopalelwe observes that:

'We saw the importance of collaboration and not working in silos, so that our work is structured [...] I now don't 'feminist' on my own, because feminism can be so isolating and lonely. And you can often feel like there's nobody there. But what TTS has done [for me] is that it has created a solidarity of feminists and women who I know in many ways and respect will always have my back.'

Collective feminist leadership has the potential to transform society, but this is a continuous and imperfect process. Feminist leaders 'make waves' by practising leadership through collaboration, cooperation and coalitions – based in the social power of legitimate reciprocity, equity and interdependence. This requires building a strong sense of mutuality, that is both deep and wide across the collective. Sustaining that mutuality through collective forms of power-to, or power-with, in resistance to power-over requires discussion and engagement in inclusive holding spaces so as to cultivate interdependent informational power and unearth the negative effects of power-under.

7. CONCLUSION

This research has demonstrated that the transformative potential of collective feminist leadership lies in its capacity to continuously cultivate mutuality through interdependent informational power and ubuntu-informed legitimate power. The discursive foundation for the social norms that inform power-with is built on

¹²⁶ Gaopalelwe

¹²⁷ Wineman (2006), pp. 108.

¹²⁸ Batliwala (2011), pp. 74.

exchanges of informational influence in holding spaces. Thus, the potential to generate feminist-led transformative collective action depends on the movement collectively defining and owning its vision.

In the illustrative case study of TTS movement, the transformative potential of the ubuntu-informed legitimate power of reciprocity, equity and interdependence was facilitated through the practice of intersectional solidarity. However, this potential was simultaneously undermined by the presence of power-under – the internalised, reproduced violences that fracture trust. The failure to sustain inclusive practices of solidarity and open dialogue to unearth and negotiate power-under after the first National Summit, weakened mutuality and led to the movement's fragmentation.

The research reveals that power-with and power-under exist in a dynamic relationship. Although power-with may fade, the social and discursive shifts it leaves behind continue to inspire future waves of resistance. However, unless leaders intentionally engage with the difficult work of unearthing and addressing internalised and reproduced violences – especially those that undermine solidarity across lines of difference – the struggle for gender justice remains incomplete. It is in the ebb and flow of these forces that the ongoing project of realising gender justice resides. To move closer to an alternative future, feminist leadership must commit not only to resisting external domination, but also to healing internal wounds. This is not a linear journey, but a continuous, iterative process of building toward an alternative, more just gendered future.

This study has several limitations that could inform future research. First, it focuses primarily on the experiences of the movement leaders, offering limited insight into how mutuality, power and solidarity are experienced and reproduced by TTS followers. Second, the small sample of leaders – though diverse in their roles and social and geographic location – limits the holistic perspective. Future research could use mixed methods approaches to trace these dynamics across the virtual holding space of online feminist counterpublics to address this limitation, such as through digital ethnography or a social network analysis. Third, the conceptual framework developed here remains preliminary and would benefit from further refinement. Future research can strengthen the framework by applying it to other African women's

movements and different African-feminist contentious politics contexts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abu Sharkh, Miriam (1999) Is the South African Women's Movement an Easy Rider?: Interdependencies, Foci, and Strategies of Social Movements in the Third World, *Sociologus* 49(2), pp. 207-46.
- Ackerly, Brooke A., and True, Jaqui (2020) *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science* (London: Bloomsburg Publishing).
- Amadiume, Ifi (1995) Gender, Political Systems and Social Movements: A West African Experience, in *African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy*, eds. Mahmood Mamdani and Ernest Wamda-dia-Wamba, CODESRIA Book Series (Dakar: CODESRIA).
- Amaechi, K.E., Thobejane, T.D., and Rasalokwane, R. (2021) Feminist Reflections on the Impact of the South African National COVID-19 Lockdown on the Upsurge of Gender-Based Violence in Mahwelereng Township of Limpopo Province, South Africa, *Gender & Behaviour* 19(1), pp. 1718-1723. Available at: https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/ejc-genbeh_v19_n1_a8 [Accessed 20 April 2025].
- Bass, Bernard M., and Avolio, Bruce J. (1994) Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture, *The International Journal of Public Administration* 17(3-3), pp. 541-554.
- Batliwala, Srilatha, (2010), *Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud*, Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA). Available at <https://creaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/feminist-leadership-clearing-conceptual-cloud-srilatha-batliwala.pdf> [Accessed 16 April 2025].
- Bauer, Gretchen (2012) 'Let There Be a Balance': Women in African Parliaments, *Political Studies Review* 10(3), pp. 370-384.
- Beall, Jo, Hassim, Shireen, and Todes, Alison (2011) We Are All Radical Feminists Now: Reflections on 'A Bit on the Side', *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 75(1), pp. 95-106.
- Brankovic, Jasmina, (2019), Research Brief: What Drives Violence in South Africa, *Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation*, Johannesburg. Available at: <https://csvr.org.za/pdf/What-Drives-Violence-in-South-Africa.pdf> [Accessed: 24 February 2025].

- Britton, Hannah E. (2020) *Ending Gender-Based Violence: Justice and Community in South Africa* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press).
- Britton, Hannah, and Fish, Jennifer (2008) Engendering Civil Society in Democratic South Africa, in *Women's Activism in South Africa: Working across Divides*, eds. Hannah Britton, Jennifer Fish and Sheila Meintjes (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal Press), pp. 1-42.
- Brown, Helen M. (1989) Organizing Activity in the Women's Movement: An Example of Distributed Leadership, *International Social Movement Research* 2, pp. 225-240.
- Bucholtz, Mary (2003) Theories of Discourse as Theories of Gender: Discourse Analysis in Language and Gender Studies, in *The Handbook of Language and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), eds Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff, pp. 43-68.
- Butler, Judith (1986) Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*, *Yale French Studies* 72, pp. 35-49.
- Caprioli, Mary (2005) Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict, *International Studies Quarterly* 49(2), pp. 161-178.
- Chigwedere, Yuleth (2010) The African Womanist Vision in Vera's Works, *JLS/TLW* 26(1), pp. 24.
- Chisale, Sinenhlanhla S. (2018) Ubuntu as care: Deconstructing the Gendered Ubuntu. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 39(1), pp.1-8.
- Cho, Sumi, Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams, and McCall, Leslie (2013) Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38(4), pp. 785-810.
- Christopher, Isike and Uzodike, Ufo Okeke (2011) Towards an Indigenous Model of Conflict Resolution: Reinventing Women's Roles as Traditional Peacebuilders in Neo-Colonial Africa, *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 11(2), pp. 32-58.
- Clark, Jude, Mafokoane, Shula and Nyathi, Talent N. (2019), 'Rocking the Rock': A Conversation on the Slogan 'Wathinta Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo!', Intergenerational Feminisms and the Implications for Womxn's Leadership', *Agenda* 33 (1), pp. 67-73, Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2019.1598775> [Accessed 16 April 2025].
- Cornell, Michael Anthony (2018) Mutuality on a Spectrum: Ownership and Buy-In, *Leadership and Developing Societies* 3(1), pp. 1-7.
- Donati, Paolo R. (1984) Organization between Movement and Institution, *Social Science Information*, 23(4-5), pp. 837-859. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901884023004009> [Accessed 21 April 2025].
- Eagly, Alice H., and Johnson, Blair T. (1990) Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-Analysis, *Psychological Bulletin* (108)2, pp. 233-256.
- Eagly, Alice H., and Karau, Steven J. (2002) Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice toward Female Leaders, *Psychological Review* 109(3), pp. 573-558.
- Eagly, Alice H., and Wood, Wendy (2012) Social Role Theory, *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology* 2, pp. 458-476.
- Eagly, Alice H., Johannesen-Schmidt, Mary C., and Van Engen, Marloes L. (2003) Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Women and Men. *Psychological bulletin*, 129(4), pp. 569-591.
- End-GBVF Collective (2022) Report: Reflective Report on the Implementation of the South African National Strategic Plan on GBVF. Available at: <https://gbvf.org.za/files/2024/05/Reflective-Report-on-the-Implementation-of-the-South-African-National-Strategic-Plan-on-GBVF-29-10-22.pdf> [Accessed 20 April 2025].
- Fisher, Linda (2000) Feminist phenomenology, in *Feminist Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands), pp. 1-15.
- French, John R. P., and Raven, Bertram (1959) The Bases of Social Power, *Classics of Organization Theory* 7, pp. 259-269.
- Gaitho, Waruguru (2022) Curing Corrective Rape: Socio-Legal Perspectives on Sexual Violence against Black Lesbians in South Africa, *William & Mary Journal of Race, Gender, and Social Justice*, 28(2), pp. 329-362.
- Gouws, Amanda (2012) Reflections on Being a Feminist Academic/ Academic Feminism in South Africa, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 31(5/6), pp. 526-541.
- Gouws, Amanda, and Kotzé, Hennie (2007) Women in Leadership Positions in South Africa: The Role of Values, *Politikon* 34(2), pp. 165-85.

- Gouws, Amanda (2014), Recognition and Redistribution: State of the Women's Movement in South Africa 20 Years after Democratic Transition, *Agenda* 28(2), pp. 19-32.
- Gouws, Amanda (2016), Women's Activism around Gender-Based Violence in South Africa: Recognition, Redistribution and Representation, *Review of African Political Economy* 43(149), pp. 400-415. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2016.1217838> [Accessed 21 April 2025].
- Gouws, Amanda (2017) Feminist Intersectionality and the Matrix of Domination in South Africa, *Agenda* 31(1), pp. 19-27.
- Gouws, Amanda (2018) #EndRapeCulture Campaign in South Africa: Resisting Sexual Violence Through Protest and the Politics of Experience, *Politikon* 45(1), pp. 3-15.
- Gouws, Amanda, (2021), Feminist Institutionalism, Women's Representation and State Capture: The Case of South Africa, in *Gendered Institutions and Women's Political Representation in Africa*, ed. Diana Madsen (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2021), pp. 21-44.
- Gouws, Amanda, and Van Zyl, Mikki (2015) Towards a feminist ethics of ubuntu: Bridging rights and ubuntu, in *Care ethics and political theory*, eds. Daniel Engster and Maurice Hamington (Oxford: Oxford University Press) pp.165-186.
- Govender, Indiran (2023) Gender-Based Violence – An Increasing Epidemic in South Africa, *South African Family Practice* 65(1). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4102/safp.v65i1.5729> [Accessed 12 March 2025].
- Gqola, Pumla D., (2021), *Female Fear Factory: Gender and Patriarchy under Racial Capitalism* (Cape Town: Melinda Ferguson Books).
- Grint, Keith (2011) A History of Leadership, in *The Sage Handbook of Leadership*, ed. Alan Bryman, Keith Grint and David Collinson (London: Sage).
- Gumede, Vusi (2017) Leadership for Africa's Development: Revisiting Indigenous African Leadership and Setting the Agenda for Political Leadership, *Journal of Black Studies* 48(1), pp. 74-90.
- Gwara, Joyline, and Matinhira, Beullah (2024) The Ethics of Ubuntu and Gender Justice Among African Women Theologians, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Ubuntu, Inequality and Sustainable Development*, eds. Ezra Chitando, Beatrice Okyere-Manu, Sophia Chirongoma and Musa W. Dube, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 767-781.
- Herda-Rapp, Ann (1998) The Power of Informal Leadership: Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, *Sociological Focus* 31(4), pp. 341-55.
- Hill, Marc Lamont (2018) 'Thank You, Black Twitter': State Violence, Digital Counterpublics, and Pedagogies of Resistance, *Urban Education* 53(2), pp. 286-302.
- Hill Collins, Patricia (2015) Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas, *Annual Review of Sociology* 41(1), pp. 1-20.
- Hudson, Heidi (2021) It Matters How You 'Do' Gender in Peacebuilding: African Approaches and Challenges, *Insight on Africa* 13(2), pp. 142-59. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0975087820987154> [Accessed 21 April 2025].
- Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), (2024), Research Report: The First South African National Gender-Based Violence Study: A Baseline Survey on Victimization and Perpetration, Cape Town. Available at: <https://hsrc.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Executive-Summary-Final-16-November-2024-1.pdf> [Accessed 12 March 2025].
- HSRC (2023), A Pandemic within a Pandemic: Policy Responses to Gender-Based Violence, *Human Sciences Research Council*. Available at: <https://hsrc.ac.za/news/latest-news/a-pandemic-within-a-pandemic-policy-responses-to-gender-based-violence-gbv/> [Accessed 20 April 2025].
- Jabiri, Afaf (2023) The Continuity of Othering in Feminist Methodology: Activist-Scholar and the Insider/Outsider Dynamics, *Third World Quarterly*, pp. 1-16.
- Jean-Pierre, Tracy (2022) #SAYHISNAME: Social Media and Feminist Advocacy – a Case Study, *Agenda* 36(3), pp. 11-21.
- King, Julie, Edwards, Nicole, and Watling, Hanna (2023) Leadership for Change: Pathways to Activism for African Women with Disability, *Disability & Society* 38(7), pp. 1164-1185.
- Krause, Jana, Krause, Werner, and Bränfors, Piia (2018) Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace, *International Interactions* 44(6), pp. 985-1016.
- Kuumba, Bahati M. (2002) 'You've Struck a Rock' Comparing Gender, Social Movements, and

- Transformation in the United States and South Africa, *Gender & Society* 16(4), pp. 504-523.
- Le Roux, Nicky (2022) Ending Gender-Based Violence in South Africa, One March at a Time, Ford Foundation. Available at: <https://www.fordfoundation.org/news-and-stories/stories/ending-gender-based-violence-in-south-africa-one-march-at-a-time/> [Accessed 20 April 2025].
- Leinius, Johanna (2020) Constructing Solidarity Across Difference in Feminist Encounters, *Open Gender Journal* 4, pp. 1-20. Available at https://www.genderopen.de/bitstream/handle/25595/1944/Leinius_Solidarity_2020.pdf [Accessed 21 April 2025].
- Lemon, Jennifer (2001) Reflections on the Women's Movement in South Africa: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives, *Safundi* 2(3), pp. 1-14.
- Liu, Helena (2020) *Redeeming Leadership: An Anti-Racist Feminist Intervention* (Bristol: Bristol University Press).
- Magadla, Siphokazi, and Chitando, Ezra (2014) The Self become God: Ubuntu and the 'Scandal of Manhood', in *Ubuntu, Curating the Archive*, eds. Leonhard Praeg and Siphokazi Magadla, (Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press), pp. 176-192.
- Makama, Refiloe, Helman, Rebecca, Titi, Neziswa, and Day, Sarah (2019) The Danger of a Single Feminist Narrative: African-Centred Decolonial Feminism for Black Men, *Agenda* 33(3), pp. 61-69.
- Maluleke, Gavaza, and Moyer, Eileen (2020) 'We Have to Ask for Permission to Become': Young Women's Voices, Violence, and Mediated Space in South Africa, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 45(4), pp. 871-902.
- Masoga, Mogomme Alpheus, and Shokane, Allucia Lulu (2019) Sebata-Kgomo Basadi! Emerging Indigenised Women Leadership Patterns: Selected Narratives from Local Rural Women's Stokvels in Ga-Sekororo, South Africa, *Agenda* 33(1), pp. 38-47. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2019.1598777> [Accessed 21 April 2025].
- Masuku, Sne (2023) MUT Student Zolile Khumalo's Ex-Boyfriend Found Guilty of Her Murder, IOL Daily News. Available at <https://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/mut-student-zolile-khumalos-ex-boyfriend-found-guilty-of-her-murder-44101307> [Accessed 5 May 2025].
- Mbiti, John S. (1969) *African Religions & Philosophy* (New York: Praeger).
- Medie, Peace A. and Kang, Alice J. (2018) Power, Knowledge and the Politics of Gender in the Global South, *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 1(1-2), pp. 37-54.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade (2005) *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (New Dheli: Zubaan).
- Molyneux, Maxine, Dey, Adrija, Gatto, Malu A.C., and Rowden, Holly (2021) New Feminist Activism, Waves and Generations, *UN Women Discussion Paper*. Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Discussion-paper-New-feminist-activism-waves-and-generations-en.pdf> [Accessed 20 April 2025].
- Msila, Vuyisile, (2021) Indigenous Feminism and Black Women Leadership, *Sociology and Anthropology* 9, pp. 42-51.
- Msila, Vuyisile, and Netshitangani, Tshildizi (2016) Women and Leadership: Learning from an African philosophy, *Africanising the Curriculum: Indigenous Perspectives and Theories Vuyisile Msila* 2(1), pp. 83-95.
- Muthuki, Janet (2006) Challenging Patriarchal Structures: Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, *Agenda* 20(69), pp. 83-91.
- News24 (2022) Man Who Killed Karabo Mokoena Now Faces Fraud Charges for Allegedly Scamming Govt Officials, News24. Available at <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/man-who-killed-karabo-mokoena-now-faces-fraud-charges-for-allegedly-scamming-govt-officials-20220823> [Accessed 05 May 2025].
- Ngunjiri, Faith Wambura (2016) 'I Am Because We Are': Exploring Women's Leadership Under Ubuntu Worldview, *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 18(2), pp. 223-242.
- Nkenkana, Akhona (2015) No African Futures without the Liberation of Women: A Decolonial Feminist Perspective, *Africa Development* 40(3), pp. 41-57.
- Nkomo, Stella M., and Ngambi, Helicy (2009) African Women in Leadership: Current Knowledge and a Framework for Future Studies, *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity* 4(1), pp. 49-68.

- Northouse, Peter G. (2022) *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 9th ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications).
- Olonisakin, Funmi (2017) Towards Re-Conceptualising Leadership for Sustainable Peace, *Leadership and Developing Societies* 2(1), pp. 1-30.
- Poltera, Jacqui (2019) Exploring Examples of Women's Leadership in African Contexts, *Agenda* 33(1), pp. 3-8. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2019.1602977> [Accessed 20 April 2025].
- Poltera, Jacqui, and Schreiner, Jenny (2019) Problematising Women's Leadership in the African Context, *Agenda* 33(1), pp. 9-20.
- Pringle, Jan, Drummond, John, McLafferty, Ella, and Hendry, Charles (2011) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: A Discussion and Critique. *Nurse researcher*, 18(3), pp. 20-24.
- Raven, Bertram (2008) The Bases of Power and the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence, *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 8(1), pp. 1-22. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2008.00159.x> [Accessed 22 April 2025].
- Raven, Bertram H (1965) Social Influence and Power, in *Current Studies in Social Psychology*, eds. I. D. Steiner and F. Martin (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston).
- Raven, Bertram H (1992) A Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence: French and Raven Thirty Years Later, *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, 217-244.
- Republic of South Africa (2020) Policy Document: National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide: Human Dignity and Healing, Safety, Freedom and Equality in Our Lifetime. Available at: <https://www.justice.gov.za/vg/gbv/nsp-gbv-final-doc-04-05.pdf> [Accessed 20 April 2025].
- Robnett, Belinda (1996) African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization, *American Journal of Sociology* 101(6), pp. 1661-1693.
- Salo, Elaine (2017) A History of Feminist Movements: The South African Women's Movement, 1950-2014, in *Women's Movements in the Global Era: The Power of Local Feminisms*, ed. Amrita Basu, second edition (Boulder: Westview Press), pp. 65-94.
- Shangare, Ashleigh, and Wielenga, Cori (2022) Repositioning African women in politics: From critical mass to critical acts, *Agenda* 36(3), pp. 77-89.
- Shangare, Ashleigh, and Wielenga, Cori, (2022) Repositioning African Women in Politics: From Critical Mass to Critical Acts, *Agenda* 36(3), pp. 77-89. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2022.2107941> [Accessed 16 April 2025].
- Shumbamhini, Mercy, and Chirongoma, Sophia (2024) Ubuntu, Gender Equality and Sustainable Development in Africa, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Ubuntu, Inequality and Sustainable Development*, eds. Ezra Chitando, Beatrice Okyere-Manu, Sophia Chirongoma and Musa W. Dube, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 781-798.
- Simphiwe, Sesanti (2016) African Philosophy for African Women's Leadership: An Urgent Project for the African Renaissance, *Journal of Pan African Studies* 9(9), pp. 94-107.
- Sinclair, Amanda (2014) A Feminist Case for Leadership, in *Diversity in Leadership*, ed. Joy Damousi, Kim Rubenstein and Mary Tomsic, *Australian Women, Past and Present* (Canberra: ANU Press), 17-36.
- Sjoberg, Laura (2009) *Gender and International Security: Feminist Perspectives* (London: Routledge).
- Stead, Valerie, and Elliot, Carole (2009) *Women's Leadership* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Tamale, Sylvia (2020) *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism* (Ottawa: Daraja Press).
- Tarrow, Sidney (2022) *Power in Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Thakhathi, Andani, and Netshitangani, T.G. (2020) Ubuntu-as-Unity: Indigenous African Proverbs as a 'Re-Educating' Tool for Embodied Social Cohesion and Sustainable Development, *African Identities* 18(4), pp. 407-20.
- The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa (2018) Presidential Summit Declaration Against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide. Available at: <https://www.justice.gov.za/vg/gbv/201903-GBV-SummitDeclarationBooklet.pdf> [Accessed 20 April 2025].
- The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa (2022) Report: Report of the Presidential Summit Against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide II. Available at: https://gbvf.org.za/files/2024/05/Report-of-the-Presidential-Summit-against-GBVF-II_1-2-November_27-09-2023.pdf [Accessed 20 April 2025].

Thomas, Grace Elizabeth (2020) Re-Imagining the Framework for Leadership Analysis, *Leadership and Developing Societies* 5(1), pp. 73-77.

Tripp, Aili Mari, and Kang, Alice (2008) The Global Impact of Quotas: On the Fast Track to Increased Female Legislative Representation, *Comparative Political Studies* 41(3), pp. 338-61.

Tripp, Aili Marie (2017) Women's Movements in Africa, in *Women's Movements in the Global Era: The Power of Local Feminisms*, ed. Amrita Basu, second edition (Boulder: Westview Press), pp. 37-64.

Vermuë, Paula, (2021) 'We Have Nothing to Celebrate!': Fighting Gender-Based Violence in Cape Town, South Africa, *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, 24(3/4), pp. 243-259.

Weick, Karl E. (2015) The Social Psychology of Organizing, second edition, *Management* 18(2) 3, pp. 189-193.

Wineman, Steven (2003) *Power-under: Trauma and Nonviolent Social Change*. Available at https://www.traumaandnonviolence.com/files/Power_Under.pdf [Accessed 30 April 2025].