*AN ISSUE OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SALIENCE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF HOW SOUTH AFRICAN NEWSPAPERS REPORT ON ‘CORRECTIVE RAPE’*

**ABSTRACT**

“cor▪rec▪tive: intended to make something better” – The word has positive connotations as scientists and activists across disciplines spend their lives finding and developing remedies to problems which plague the planet. However, when coupled with sexual violence against especially black lesbians living in depressed communities, to describe a tool used to ‘rectify’ their personal identity, ‘corrective rape’ becomes an ironic misnomer as it is a term used to describe an act of sexual assault in an attempt to ‘rectify’ deviant lesbian or homosexual behaviour. ‘Corrective rape’ cases are growing and the reasoning varies from a misogynistic culture rooted in traditional perceptions of women faced with a new and emancipatory democracy, to alcoholism and homophobia. This study will include a discussion on ‘corrective rape’, which necessitates a description of rape and the power relationships which enable its subsistence; the saturation and desensitisation of South African media and citizenry resulting in apathy is argued. The aim of this study is to investigate whether South African media reports on the issue of ‘corrective rape’ and if they report on it, how those reports are framed in an attempt to understand the linear communication and relationship of media-issue-audience. Agenda setting theory as well as Framing and Representation is presented as part of a critical paradigm and then applied in this study to understand the media’s representation of the issue of ‘corrective rape’.

**Key words: ‘Corrective rape’, ‘curative rape’, rape, newspaper, Agenda-setting Theory, Framing and Representation Theory, salience**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

South Africa is referred to as *the rainbow nation* because of the diversity of its citizens. For its hard-fought freedoms, equality of these groups is an important theme in South Africa. The day-to-day reality and implementation of the liberal sentiments of its constitutional is often merely a paperbound document. Vulnerable groups, including women, Africans and homosexuals (especially lesbians) continue to be abused by a system which is founded on prejudice, myth and segregation.

When the Dutch landed on the shores of the Cape in the 17th century and mapped the Republic of Zuid Afrika, they instituted Roman Dutch law. The law prohibited sexual acts between men, women, bestiality, masturbation and heterosexual sodomy. The law even made stipulations concerning intercourse between Christians and Jews. These acts were punishable by death as these were considered a misuse of reproductive organs to procreate. After two hundred years of Dutch law, the occupied South Africa in 1806. The British added the already exiting Dutch law that:

*“any male person who in public or private aids or is a party to the commission by any male person of any act of gross indecency with another male, shall be guilty of an offence.”*

Women were only later included in these proscriptions. In the early 1990’s the courts took a lighter approach to sentencing same-sex sexual conduct and viewed it as a disease and disorder (IOL, 2016).

According to Massoud (2010), action from civil society and Non-governmental Organisations (NGO’s), especially the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, between 1994 and 1998, successfully litigated against the apartheid regime’s anti-gay and sodomy laws.

The media in South Africa also has a prominent, rich and complex relationship regarding the rights and position of lesbians. From the very beginning, South African media was organised in terms of language and race, when the Nationalist government who came into power in 1948, implemented policies to further Afrikaner ideologies. During this time, the media was used by the government to quash the rising aspirations of Africans. During the apartheid era, any editorial independence to introduce or discuss topics was considered taboo, such as issues of black consciousness, feminism or homosexuality. After 1994, the democratisation of the country called for a media that is diverse and establishing a meaningful regulatory broadcasting environment (Fourie, 2007).

This study described how the newspaper media in South Africa does not confer status to the issue of ‘corrective rape’ in a way that would create salience. Duffy and Turow (2009) argue that the social standing, knowledge and advocacy of an issue are raised when these receive attention in the media. One of the goals of the research was to understand the relationship between media, their reporting process and ‘corrective rape’ by investigating whether newspapers write about the issue of ‘corrective rape’ and how those newspapers report on it (Mouton, 1996).

**II. ‘CORRECTIVE RAPE’: HISTORY AND PRESENT**

In South Africa a woman is raped approximately every 17 seconds (You and rape, 2012). According to the Medical Research Council, in a survey conducted in Soweto, 25% of men admitted to raping a woman, while 50% of those admitted to raping someone more than once (50 Shades of Black Friday, 2013). As part of these statistics, there are rapes occurring with the intention to “correct”, what rapists believe to be, behaviour unbecoming of a woman. According to Middleton (2011), lesbian women are raped by men, sometimes under the supervision of- or mandate by members of their family, as a means of curing them of their gayness, boy-like behaviour or homosexuality.

In 2008/9, the police recorded 54 126 cases of rape. This increased to 55 097 in 2009/10 and increased again in 2010/11 to 56 126 reported cases of rape, showing a 2.1% increase from the previous year (STATSSA, 2011). Note that most rape incidences are not reported, and of those reported (shown here from 2008 – 2011), approximately one in four rapes are reported, while 14% of those reported cases lead to a conviction by the South African courts (Geisler, 2004). It is difficult to establish whether the statistics show a growing trend of rape in South Africa or an improvement in the reporting of incidences. Regardless, in a society where rape occur, there should be priority attached. The South African Justiciary does not recognise ‘corrective rape’ as rape used to punish an LGBTI minority group, which could carry harsher sentencing. ‘Corrective rape’ also knows as ‘curative rape’ is unique to other categories of rape as it refers to the sexual assault on lesbians meant to humiliate and punish them. The rapist believes that they can “cure” a lesbian by raping them (Bryson, 2011). Men who rape lesbians in South Africa seem to do so because of a sense of preserving community values – where lesbianism is seen as unnatural (Rape, 2012). For these men, lesbians threaten the idea that a woman *belongs* to a man, which is a perpetual feature of masculinity in South Africa and gives rise to feelings of anger (which is sometimes expressed through verbal abuse and physical acts of violence). It is because of their economic, social and cultural discrimination that lesbian women are one of the highest at-risk groups for violence (Kinama, 2011). Another reason why lesbianism is seen as unnatural by patriarical communities, is the idea of progeny – that a lesbian, not fulfilling her duty to procreate, cuts off a man’s lifeline to genealogical immortality (Warren, 1996). According to *Triangle*, a Non-profit Organisation based in Cape Town, the South African administrative capital, state that support groups are dealing with 10 new ‘corrective rape’ cases every week and the number is increasing (Martin, Kelly, Turquet & Ross, 2009). Charity organisation *Luleki Sizwe*, confirms this figure and adds that in the three years, 2010 – 2013, nine cases of gender-based murders have been recorded (Beaty, 2013).

As of the end of the study, in 86 United Nation (UN) member states, it is illegal to be gay, while seven of those countries impose the death penalty for convicted acts of homosexuality. South Africa’s constitution protects the rights of its LGBTI citizens, however in order for equal rights to prevail, it is important for the media-, public- and political agenda to reflect the same recognition of the threat to those rights (Martin *et al*, 2009). Lesbians, in a homophobic climate where violence is often a popular weapon, are often rejected by their communities and are vulnerable to sexual, psychological and physical assault (Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy and Moletsane, 2010). This study is an investigation of how selected newspapers reported on sexual assault by comparing how rape was framed differently to ‘corrective rape’. The intention was, through rigorous in investigation, to better understand whether or not the media was setting the agenda for the issue of ‘corrective rape’ and also how it was framed in the South African media by looking at selected newspapers (*Mail & Guardian*, *The Sunday Independent* and the *Sunday Times*)within a 12 month period. A culture of rape is being passed to a younger generation as there are a growing number of ‘corrective rape’ cases in schools across South Africa (Rape crisis, 2012).

The term “corrective rape” was first used and originated in South Africa after the cases of Eudy Simelane and Zoliswa Nkonyana became news. Nkonyana was a 19-year-old openly lesbian teenager who was gang raped and murdered in 2006. There have been reports of ‘corrective rape’ in Zimbabwe, Ecuador and Canada where gay men have also been victimised (Hawthorne, 2005). Other, well-known, cases of ‘corrective rape include Sikalele Sigasa, a gay rights activist, who, with her partner Salome Massoa, were tortured, raped and murdered. There are also the cases of Millecent Gaika, whose attacker kept saying: “You think you are a man, but I’m going to show you that you are a woman”, and Zukiswa Gaca who was raped by an acquaintance in 2009 (Wesley, 2012). The latest case where two lesbians were raped, tortured and murdered, is that of Mooinooi couple Joey and Anisha van Niekerk, where seven suspects are implicated in their killing (Mambaonline, 2018).

Even though there are several journal articles about the topic of ‘corrective rape’, information to support the research on the agenda-setting and framing and representation as well as newsworthiness of the issue to newspapers, is limited. Also, the South African Constitution does little to protect against ‘corrective rape’. It may be a liberal document, however the legislation described in the Sexual Offences Act does not include ‘corrective rape’ as a category of rape with aggravated circumstances, which results in blanket sentencing. One of the concerns relating to the Act is that most of the measures proposed by the South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC) report that was intended to support and protect survivors in court, have been removed. It is therefore unlikely that the South African Sexual Offences Bill will have a significant impact on the trauma experienced by complainants in court (Department of Justice, 2015). South African courts also do not recognise ‘corrective rape’ in so far setting up preventative measures allowing the use of magistrates courts as equality courts to address many harassment, discrimination or hate speech cases, nor do they consult with LGBTI human rights groups on sentencing for hate crimes (which includes ‘corrective rape’). According to Hawthorne (2005) ‘corrective rape’ is also not recognised by the South African Government as a hate crime, where there needs to understanding around LGBTI human rights violation cases in the Service Charter for victims of ‘corrective rape’ as well as sensitivity training of South African police officers, the Justice Ministry and the National Prosecuting Offices (Joffe-Walt, 2011) – this would necessitate the formal acknowledgement of the South African government that ‘corrective rape’ is a reality. In a *Special Assignment* (SABC3, 2015) report it was described that there are currently no forms for the SAPS officers to identify crimes specifically perpetrated against the LGBTI community (including ‘corrective rape’). Another demand made by LGBTI and other Human Rights groups is for the training of female police officers on all aspects of rape, who would be on duty at all police stations all the time and a minimum of 25-years-to-life imprisonment if an accused is prosecuted and found guilty of ‘corrective rape’. There also needs to be a clampdown on bribery and corruption at police stations as dockets are often lost (LaVictoire, 2012).

What made this study unique is that it investigated the reporting behaviour of South African media concerning ‘corrective rape’ to provide information on whether the same attention was given to ‘corrective rape’ as was given to incidences of rape (to compare as a way to highlight a difference, while also providing important data for future studies). Also the study compared the media reports on international rape cases to those of domestic ones as well as how ‘corrective rape’ is reported on (through a content analysis). The issue highlighted in these studies are that the narrative concerning ‘corrective rape’ in South Africa originates from social sources outside of the country where the credibility and motivation of those sources are in question. This could lead to misunderstanding and misinformation when trying to resolve the issue.

If South African newspapers do not set the agenda for ‘corrective rape’, the public could remain unaware of it and would then not form part of its agenda.

**III. THEORETICAL FRAMES AND LITERATURE APPLIED TO THE STUDY OF ‘CORRECTIVE RAPE’ IN MEDIA**

It is not as easy as determining whether the media establishes importance to an issue such as ‘corrective rape’ by just observing a few publications and hypothesising findings in a cursive way. Theoretical frames and literature reviews are important steps in a rigorous investigation to a topic as it presents an explanation of the phenomenon being observed, while existing literature guides the researcher to identify the fissure between what is known and unknown to be addressed concerning the same phenomenon.

The study was based on the critical realist paradigm in its way of analysing how newspapers in South Africa appraise the issue of ‘corrective rape’. Critical realism, also known as *transcendental realism*, describes how laws and nature have to be analysed according to its underlying power structures (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al*, 2014). To guide the research in utilising the most appropriate theories, critical realists conduct research to try and explain, rather than predict, by maintaining that social scientists have a responsibility to understand social relationships whereby the main aim is to contribute to the conscientisation of society, the emancipation of marginalised groups and empowerment od those groups by exposing myths. The epistemological position of critical realism is that knowledge should aim to spark action from audiences and should therefore have practical value. Critical realists argue that power relationships are based on distortions and illusions about how society operates. Therefore, the methodological assumption for the paradigm propose that research starts with a critical analysis of the issue, believing that knowledge in itself should be questioned to further investigate the structural relationships that exist (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Theory should then frame the phenomenon in such a way that it uncovers and explain power relationships. For the study, framing and representation as well as newsworthiness was used for this purpose.

According to Entman (2006) framing involves two basic elements, namely *salience* and *selection*. When an issue is reported on, the media selects an aspect of the perceived reality to make the issue more salient in communication texts, such as newspapers. Fiske and Taylor (1991) explain how human beings are natural cognitive misers who utilise *frames* to process information rather than investigate an issue to uncover its truth. Price and Tewksbury (1997, cited in Zelizer, 2004) describe framing and representation as the ability of media reports to alter the kinds of consideration people use in forming their opinions. Venter (2007) explains that angles are the interpretive and ideological frameworks from which journalists report about an issue and the contextualisation of news reports within a specific framework. The media may choose to report on an issue in a certain way – the results are that audiences, being confronted by the ways in which the media choose to report on an issue, have similar perceptions of the issue. In the research themes such as ‘type’, ‘victimology’, ‘outcomes’ and ‘axiomatic reality versus stereotypical representation’ will be used to investigate the way in which the selected newspapers frame and represent the issue of ‘corrective rape’. Framing asks how issues (such as ‘corrective rape’) are represented and packaged to audiences who may interpret the message in a variety of ways (Altheide 1997). For Gitlin, framing offered a way to understand the systematic and predetermined organisation of news reports into types facilitated by emphasis, presentation and pattern selection. This means that framing is a way to organise the world both for journalists who report on issues and the audience who rely on a journalist’s report. The reference to framing and representation in the research of South African newspapers’ coverage of the ‘corrective rape’ issue is based on the works of Gitlin, Claes De Vreese and Chong and Druckman as these offer the most descriptive work relevant to the study.

The findings of Falkheim’s research contribute to the study of how the selected South African newspapers report on ‘corrective rape’ by supporting the idea that media frames an issue. How the media frames the issue needs to be investigated and explained to uncover underlying power relationships. Thus, frames and emerging frames and how it relates to an issue is also important to understand. Frames have become a parameter for discussing a particular event as frames focus on what will be discussed, how it will be presented and even how it will not be represented (Altheide, 1997). An exam is treating ‘corrective rape’ as a “public health and social awareness issue” as opposed to a “criminal justice issue.” These are two different frames that present a way of discussing the issue, or the kind of discourse that will follow (Falkheimer, 2015). To further understand the possible framing function of the media to create an ‘othering’ perspective when it comes to ‘corrective rape’ and its relationship with homosexuality and possible power relationships which motivate if and how the issue is reported on, a study by Athanasia Batziou can reveal some insight. In the article exploring photojournalistic practices of framing immigrants as ‘others’ in newspapers in Spain and Greece (2011). The research on how newspapers frame the issue of ‘corrective rape’ does not describe the effect or impact of media on audiences. The study rather focusses on the application of framing and representation and will focus on frame building as the research merely investigate and explore which frames are created and adopted by journalists (Chong and Druckheim, 2007). Thus, the research addresses the criticism of media effects on passive audiences, by excluding frame setting – that is, how frames influence audiences – to only exploring how media build and issue (such as ‘corrective rape’).

Staurt Hall, a theorist in the culturalism perspective (and not agenda setting or framing), described many of the key concepts used in the research such as representation, which he defined as a process whereby items, issues (such as ‘corrective rape’), events and people are arbitrarily correlated with a set of mental representations; therefore how language (thus, the words, phrases, sentences, et cetera) is used to encode a message becomes a system of how they are represented (Hall, 2013). Even though Hall refers to why culture is sometimes defined in terms of shared meaning or shared conceptual maps, it becomes relevant to the research aim to explore and describe the angles used in reports of ‘corrective rape’.

Erving Goffman (1974) notes that in frame analysis for a qualitative investigation (thus, excluding holistic, reductionist and computer-assisted) involves inductive frame construction analysing a small number of reports. This allows for a qualitative content analysis which enables a context sensitive and comprehensive exploration and description of ‘corrective rape’ presentation in South African newspapers. Criticisms of Framing and Representation theory were addressed by applying framing and representation theory as an important pathway for thinking about language use and the ability to identify themes through categories and codes to highlight the use of language for a communications discipline in which language was not necessarily an obvious target of analysis.

The theory of Agenda setting refers to the process by which the creators of media content set up an issue that the media will focus on and which audiences might subsequently view as more important than others (O’Shaughnessy & Stadler 2012). That is, if a news issue is covered frequently and prominently the audience will regard the issue as salient. Mass media coverage has a powerful impact on what individuals think that other people are thinking, and as such audiences tend to allocate more importance to issues that have been extensively covered by mass media (Weaver, 2007). The premise of Agenda Setting theory – for the purpose of this study – is that, whether intentional or unintentional, the media creates an image of reality. If the editor and the newsroom staff as well as other producers of news content does not consider an issue to be newsworthy or in the public interest, they do not report on it (this is an example of agenda-cutting). The omission of certain issues, and the over emphasis of others, establish a particular way for media audiences to think about reality.

In viewing the issue of ‘corrective rape’ and its presence in media, agenda setting provides the theoretical framework to determine the significance behind whether the selected newspapers report on the issue. How much coverage the issue receives in comparison to other issues (rape is used as a comparative variable) as well as the positioning of the reports is explained in how the media go about determining what issues to focus on and how this process could possibly influence public opinion. Framing supports agenda setting in extending the scope of the research to include not only whether the issue is set as a focus point, but also how the issue is presented to audiences. Where agenda setting describes recall (through accessibility) of an issue by audiences, the framing and representation theory explains the narrative – how people think about the issue.

It is necessary then to consider press selection of issues to report on based on the criteria these issues comply with. Including a discussion about newsworthiness can assist understanding of why newspapers may or may not publish reports on ‘corrective rape’. Although the research does not investigate why reports on ‘corrective rape’ are selected for publication, but rather how; Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) work on newsworthiness contribute to the research in terms of helping the reader understand why it is important to look at where those reports are located in newspapers as a frame in itself. Scholarships about news values have remained relatively similar since the writings of Galtung and Ruge in 1965 (Nel, 2009). Galtung and Ruge (1965) posited that an event or issue (such as ‘corrective rape’) should be reflected as news when, in escalation of importance, it satisfy the conditions of frequency (lowest importance), threshold (including absolute intensity and intensity increase), unambiguity, meaningfulness (including cultural proximity and relevance), consonance (including predictability and demand), unexpectedness (including unpredictability and scarcity), continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons and reference to something negative (highest importance). For the issue of ‘corrective rape’, according to the conditions of newsworthiness, the more the issue satisfy the criteria mentioned, the more probable it becomes to be registered as news (selection).

**IV. GATHERING DATA FROM THREE SOUTH AFRICAN NEWSPAPERS**

As basic communication research, this study aims to expand the general understanding of a phenomenon by investigating whether newspapers report on an issue and how (if the selected newspapers do report on the issue) those newspapers report on the issue. The methodology chosen to investigate is structured to support exploring and describing objectives and not to yield solutions or recommendations in dealing with the issue of ‘corrective rape’. Therefore this research intends to obtain new insights as part of a comparative study of articles reported in the newspapers on rape compared to those articles reporting on ‘corrective rape’. The research also seeks to contribute to the definition of ‘corrective rape’ and add to the existing body of knowledge concerning the issue. Currently the discourse surrounding ‘corrective rape’ remains active, but mostly exclusively, to the LGBTI community. In a Special Assignment (SABC3, 2015) segment dedicated to ‘corrective rape’ the need for better understanding of the severity of the issue was called for and information sharing and building of understanding and acceptance from conservative communities where many of these incidences occur. For example, if a report on ‘corrective rape’ does appear in a newspaper on a particular Sunday, the opportunity to set the agenda in the mind of the reader exists by being present. The researcher will then read the report and identify specific codes which explore whether the report is framed in such a way as to suggest urgency (that is, strong codes) or whether the report represents information (that is, weak codes). According to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014) analysing the content (of newspapers concerning the issue of ‘corrective rape’) creates meaning.

The research problem investigated in the study was to explore and describe if and how selected South African newspapers report on ‘corrective rape’ over a twelve month period by looking at the frames used in those reports in comparison to those used when reporting on rape. Therefore, the intention was to determine whether more reports on rape appear in the media than on ‘corrective rape’, comparing the angles from those reports to better understand the newspapers’ narrative when reporting on the issue, classifying the power relationships that are evident in the reports on ‘corrective rape’ as well as whether the selected newspapers used more generic frames than issue-specific ones when reporting on ‘corrective rape’. To clarify what was meant by generic frames, Chong and Druckman (2007, p.635) describe these frames as those reports which include general information about ‘corrective rape’, but do not refer to a particular occurrence – for example, ‘corrective rape’ mentioned as a gender based violence issue, but not an occurrence where a lesbian was raped.

The qualitative design of this research is used to interpret data from a content analysis of reports on rape and ‘corrective rape’ found in the target population newspapers to describe and investigate the framing and representation of the issue. To investigate how media frame and represent the issue of ‘corrective rape’, three South African newspapers have been selected as population to explore whether the issue of ‘corrective rape’ is being reported on and if so, which frames are used to report on the issue. Newspapers are still considered a reliable source of information by media consumers, as they employ journalists to produce text which reflect relevant occurrences in society by adhering to a professional code of conduct. The research occurred over a twelve month period from 1 March 2012 until 28 February 2013.

The *Sunday Times* newspaper, owned by Times Media Group (Sunday Times, 2013), was selected as it ranks as the number one paper by copy sales (estimated 253 721 per edition) in 2011 (Sunday, weekly publication) (Audit Bureau of Circulation of South Africa, 2011) and is widely regarded as the most influential weekly newspaper in South Africa and the largest Sunday paper in sub-Saharan Africa (Media history, 2015). Published by M&G Media (Mail & Guardian, 2013), the *Mail & Guardian* is ranked third in terms of sales (35 324 per edition) compared to other national weekly publications. The paper appears every Friday (Audit Bureau of Circulation of South Africa, 2011). Finally, *The Sunday Independent* owned by Independent News and Media, exceeded 80 000 readers per publication in 2012 (Media Club South Africa, 2013). The publication is selected as it is comparable with the *Mail & Guardian* and the *Sunday Times* in terms of its subject focus and content. Each of the three publications were selected as they committed themselves to the Press Code of Professional Practice and would therefore contribute to the trustworthiness of the study.

Reports considered in the research will include genre conventions of written articles (editorials, features, syndicated reports and domestic- and international news stories), advertisements, pictures and cartoons whereby the newspaper can set the public agenda.

Each report is selected purposively as it appears within the selected timeframe published in the Mail & Guardian, Sunday Times and The Sunday Independent. Counting newspaper reports will yield nominal results (absent or present) to partially investigate the research problem: “Have the selected newspapers reported on the issue of ‘corrective rape’ in the selected time frame?” Counting does not, however, provide information about the framing of each category (Du Plooy, 2009). This necessitates the developing of categories from emerging codes from reading the selected articles as units of analysis.

There were eight categories developed to investigate the research problem and applied to each selected report. These categories included *weighting of reports on rape* and then *‘corrective rape’*, *reports positioning (frequency) within the sample universe*, *classifications of rape*, *victimology, outcomes*, *weak versus strong frames*, *‘corrective rape’ reports based on facts and observation versus those published based on stereotypes* and *power relationships*. Each identified report was assigned a code of for ‘rape’ or ‘corrective rape’ and the discrepancy between their weighting was tabulated and compared by transposing the number of reports into percentages as to improve accuracy when being compared.Another code was developed to try and identify the salience given to the issue by using the work from Galtung and Ruge (1994) on newsworthiness. The codes used in this category included reports which appeared on the ‘cover page’ assigned a newsworthiness identifier (1A) (which is most credence given to the topic), ‘news: domestic’ (assigned (1B)), ‘news: international’ (assigned (1C)), ‘editorials, including reviews and advertorials’ (assigned (2A)), ‘opinions, including columns, syndicated columns, quotes and cartoons’ (assigned (2B)) and lastly ‘letters to the editor’ assigned a newsworthiness identifier (2C) (which is considered least newsworthy). This category explores and describes the assumption that newspapers do not create salience for the issue of ‘corrective rape’ when compared to the difference in where rape and ‘corrective rape’ reports appear within the publications. The classifications of rape category expand the definition of rape to include the various different types of rape that exist. As a result of many of the reports not being appropriate to a specific type of rape thus being assigned as ‘non-descript’ the research wanted to operationalise this code by introducing secondary frames such as victimology and outcomes. To explore the third assumption of the research problem which is that newspapers write in passive and generic frames when reporting on ‘corrective rape’, the categories of weak versus strong frames and reports based on empirical observation and first person primary sources compared to stereotypes and generalisations were developed based. Emergent codes in the latter category was based on an article written by Sheila Liming called “Lesbian texts” (cited in Peele, 2011). These codes included ‘axiomatic of lesbian reality’ and lesbians being presented as a stereotype or based on hearsay.

To describe how much importance each newspaper placed on reports of rape and ‘corrective rape’, reference to frequency and prominence as an element of newsworthiness described by Galtung and Ruge (1994) was made. The codes include reports which appear on the ‘cover page (1A)’, ‘news: domestic (1B)’, ‘news: international (1C)’, ‘editorials (2A)’, ‘opinions (2B)’ and ‘letters to the editor (2C)’.

To address the limitations of data gaps in the newspapers regarding the comprehensive consideration on the reporting of the selected newspapers, library clippings published online were used to supplement the data collected from the selected articles. Because limited information about ‘corrective rape’ exists, this study defined concepts clearly to achieve face validity, whereby the content of measured items seemed to measure what it claimed to measure (Du Plooy, 2009). This is why continuous testing of the research categories, sub-categories and codes was done. Another possible limitation of the study is the question of audience as the lack of coverage might be possible that the lack of coverage on the issue of ‘corrective rape’ where black lesbians living in lower income communities are most affected, might not be of interest to the readers of the selected newspapers.

**V. TABLES REFLECTING THE DATA COLLECTED, ANALYSES AND FINDINGS**

The first two tables reflect numeral data from identifying reports on rape and ‘corrective rape’ in the selected newspapers from 1 March 2012 until 28 February 2013.

**Table 1: *Weighting of population newspapers including 72 reports (including ‘corrective rape’) concerning rape***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Newspapers | Number of total sample | Percentage of total sample |
| *Mail & Guardian* | 23 | 32% |
| *The Sunday Independent* | 24 | 33.30% |
| *Sunday Times* | 25 | 34.70% |

The weighting table (Table 1) shows how many reports on rape (including ‘corrective rape’) were identified during a 12 months period and was developed based on the research requirements in uncovering raw data to address the assumption of whether the selected newspapers reported on or did not report on rape. There were 72 reports in total including articles on domestic and international news, book reviews, supplement reports, cartoons, advertisements, advertorials and letters. Every report is categorically assigned to its paper of origin to explore the weighting of reports per publication. The findings of this table reveal that, from the 72 reports on rape (including ‘corrective rape’), 23 of those reports appeared in the *Mail & Guardian* (31.90%), 24 of those reports appear in *The Sunday Times* (33.30%) and 25 of those reports appear in the *Sunday Times* (34.70%). The data reveals that the number of reports is spread evenly among the selected publications. This is not unexpected as high profile cases of rape as well as events of activism (for example, the International Day of No Violence Against Women annual campaign on the 25th of November) receive relatively equal page space across newspapers. From the data, each newspaper reports on rape.

**Table 2: *Weighting of population newspapers including five reports on ‘corrective rape’ exclusively***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Newspaper | Number | Percentage |
| *Mail & Guardian* | 4 | 80% |
| *The Sunday Independent* | 0 | 0 |
| *Sunday Times* | 1 | 20% |

The table (Table 2) was developed based on the data uncovered from the selected newspapers to determine whether it included reports on ‘corrective rape’. For the research to uncover trends in media in how the issue of ‘corrective rape’ is framed and represented, it is important to identify that such reports are present. This table (Table 3) shows which newspapers reported on the issue and also indicated how many reports appear in the publication. The findings of the table reveal that, four of the reports concerning ‘corrective rape’ were found in the *Mail & Guardian* (80%), one report was found in *The Sunday Independent* (20%), while no reports on ‘corrective rape’ appeared in the *Sunday Times*. While reports on rape are equally spread over the three selected newspapers over a 12 months period, there is a clear difference in report weighting when focussing on ‘corrective rape’ as a classification of rape. Most of the reports found on ‘corrective rape’ appeared in only one newspaper, which means that there is a difference in approach to the issue of ‘corrective rape. *The Sunday Times* does not set the agenda for the issue and cannot be included in how the issue is framed and represented in the media. Thus, to address the sub-problem of the research, two newspapers report on ‘corrective rape’ even though the issue agenda is set more by *Mail & Guardian* than by *The Sunday Independent*. Also, no reports on ‘corrective rape’ appeared in the selected 12 months period in the *Sunday Times*.

The following tables include the data relevant to the research problems of angles used to frame and represent the issue of ‘corrective rape’ embedded in the broader concept of rape and also which power relationships appear to be present when reporting on the issue.

**Table 3: *Article frames referring to frequency (positioning) of rape reports within the newspaper***



Inspired by the work undertaken by Galtung and Ruge (1965) on newsworthiness, this table (Table 3) includes data on how an issue is framed and represented by where reports appear within the newspaper. Even though the explicit focus of this research was not to determine agenda setting (or cutting) of media regarding to ‘corrective rape’ it supports the idea of news attention or state whether the publications consider the issue newsworthy. Also, the research explores and describes how the media frames and represents rape and ‘corrective rape’ by indicating where they appear. *Where* the reports appear within the pages of the newspaper also set the level of importance assigned to them (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). Referring to “Table 3: Article frames referring to frequency (positioning) of **rape reports** within the newspaper”, the findings reveal that while there are no reports found on the front page of any of the newspapers, 15 reports appear relatively prominently as they are reports on domestic news, 14 reports appear concerning foreign news, ten reports are editorial in nature (including editorials, reviews, advertorials and advertisements), 28 (and the majority of reports) are opinions of leaders and columnists (including columns, syndicated columns, quotes and cartoons (such as those drawn by the bardic journalist, Zapiro) and five are letters to the editor (that is, opinions from the readers).

**Table 4: *Article frames referring to frequency (positioning) of ‘corrective rape’ reports within the newspaper***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cover page (1A) | News: Domestic (1B) | News: International (1C) | Editorials, including Reviews and Advertorials (2A) | Opinions, including Columns, Syndicated columns, Quotes & Cartoons (2B) | Letters to the editor (2C) |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 |

Table 4 compares how frequently ‘corrective rape’ reports appeared on newspaper sections (as indicated by the sub-categories) with reports on rape adapted from the work of Galtung and Ruge (1965). The table referred to the articles on ‘corrective rape’ and coded each of the articles according to whether it is a domestic story, an editorial or an opinion. Each report was coded by considering the theme and intention of the article. When compared to *where* the reports appear within the pages of the selected newspapers of **‘corrective rape’**, the results are different. When referring to “Table 4: Article frames referring to frequency (positioning) of ‘corrective rape’ reports within the newspaper” the data revealed that one report appeared prominently as it was a report on a domestic news event. One report appeared in the editorial pages, while the remaining three reports appeared in the opinions sections of the newspapers. The work of Fiske and Taylor (1991) provide context to the data by referring to how human beings use frames to process information and determine its relevance and prominence. From the data and theory described, the results yield that the majority of articles on rape as well as ‘corrective rape’ appeared in the opinions sections of the newspapers. The issue of rape and ‘corrective rape’ were less likely to be reported on by journalists than commented on by columnists and cartoonists. While domestic- and international news on rape share similar weighting in reports, the editors of the publications provide less credence to the issue.

**Table 5: *‘Corrective rape’ reports (five reports) presented in weak- or strong frames***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Article | Strong frames | | Weak frames |
|  | Article is informative & creates awareness | First person narrative | Generic information & reports |
| 1 |  | X |  |
| 2 |  | X |  |
| 3 |  |  | X |
| 4 |  |  | X |
| 5 |  |  | X |

Referring to the work of Druckman and Chong (2007), the category in “Table 5: ‘Corrective rape’ articles (five reports) presented in weak- or strong frames” describes how the reports on the issue can be regarded as weak or strong. The three sub-categories include ‘article is informative & creates awareness’ and ‘first person narrative’, which are both strong frames. While the final sub-category of ‘generic information & reports’ is a weak frame. From the data the results show that most of the reports on ‘corrective rape’ use weak angles to frame and represent the issue. The result from the collected and analysed data showed that the issue of ‘corrective rape’ were framed using generic information more than framed by using recorded information to create awareness or first person narratives. Thus, even though there was a strong call for social mobilisation, the journalists did not provide the reader with the information required to become actively involved in the discussion around the issue, such as providing telephone numbers for reporting cases, including a reminder of their social responsibility regarding the issue, or using action words.

**Table 6: *‘Corrective rape’ articles (five reports) framed as axiom or stereotype***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Article | Article is axiomatic of real life in regards to ‘corrective rape’ | Article relies on stereotypes to describe lesbianism in regards to ‘corrective rape’ |
| 1 | X |  |
| 2 | X |  |
| 3 |  | X |
| 4 |  | X |
| 5 |  | X |

This table (Table 6) was developed from the raw data uncovered from the selected newspapers and emergent codes. To explore the power relationships present in the reports, this category answers the question whether the writer used real lesbian experiences to write the report (axiomatic) or whether they relied on personal beliefs, attitudes or values of the journalist or writer to construct their opinion (whether pro-gay rights or anti-gay rights). Because journalists and other authors who contribute reports about the issue of ‘corrective rape’ drive the knowledge readers would have about the issue, it is necessary, in exploring and describing the issue, to examine at how they frame the issue. Here, two reports written by the journalist were based on interviews with lesbians raped by assailants with the intent of “curing” them, while three of the reports relied on secondary knowledge or information. The problem with relying on information, even well intentioned, resides in the fact that opinions, attitudes and beliefs are formed by experience, subjective observation and synthesis – if a journalist does not belong to a subject-group described in the report, they run the risk of creating an “us-them” frame relying on stereotypes and generalisations instead of ‘n first person narrative. From the data collected and analysed the results are that most of the reports (60%) rely on data from secondary and unreliable or unsubstantiated or biased sources.

**Table 7: *Power relationships evident in the five ‘corrective rape’ articles***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Article | Journalist appears to be pro-gay rights | Journalist appears to be anti-gay rights | Journalist appears to be neutral |
| 1 | X |  |  |
| 2 | X |  |  |
| 3 |  |  | X |
| 4 | X |  |  |
| 5 |  |  | X |

Table 7 was developed based on the emergent codes and raw data uncovered from the selected newspapers. Although this research does not consider the impact of the message on the reader, it takes away from Hall’s (2012) work the importance of considering the language used to write a report and the bias it shows. Reports were also scanned for other linguistic markers and homosexual taxonomies that could identify sexual identities as “normal” from those which are “abnormal”. This could draw attention to the homosexual community framed positively or negatively. Normative assertions could include words such as “homosexual” or “gay”, while framing lesbians as *abnormal* could include reports which use words such as “dyke” or “un-African” as a description (McKaiser, 2012). By referring to “Table 7: Power relationships evident in the five ‘corrective rape’ reports”, three of the reports show language which appear to be pro-gay rights, while no reports are representative of an anti-gay rights viewpoint. Two of the articles appeared to be written in a neutral tone and style. This information was not unexpected as most reports written on the issue of ‘corrective rape’ were opinions by columnists and called for social mobilisation.

**VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

South Africa is often referred to as the rape capital of the world (Independent.co.uk, 2014). ‘Corrective rape’ incidents against lesbians are on the rise in South Africa (McCroy, 2014) and while sexual orientation and women’s rights are protected by the Constitution, the everyday experience by lesbians is maligned with violence and segregation. Authorities do little to prevent the violence from occurring. Homosexuality is still widely and unopposed regarded as “un-African, ungodly and unnatural” (Museveni, 2014), while patriarchy is ubiquitous within the South African society. The data being interpreted in qualitative research tries to avoid linear interpretations in which certain variables mechanistically relate to one another. Here, the data interpretation focuses on integrating the data to provide a meaningful understanding of the themes and categories developed – that is, it gives meaning to the raw data. The intention of the study was to provide reasonable insights to the issue that were not clear or obvious at first glance by conducting background research and presenting it as an introduction to the study. Secondly, the aims set out in the problem statement – including the sub-problems - were accomplished by presenting the data collected and interpreting those findings by using the theoretical frames described and finally, recommend possible future research on issues which were uncovered throughout the research, but that were irrelevant to the scope of this investigation were introduced.

To properly describe *if* and *how* the newspaper media in South Africa report on ‘corrective rape’, the research problem was fragmented into assumptions and sub-problems which could be utilised to find specific data to enable accurate claims. The first assumption was to prove that selected newspapers did indeed include reports on the issue of ‘corrective rape’. Other assumptions included whether the selected newspapers published articles with bias referring to the issue of ‘corrective rape’, and whether there were more generic frames of ‘corrective rape’ reports in the selected newspapers than reports framing the issue as a topic in need of recourse. In addressing the assumptions, the selected newspapers seemed to favour reports on rape occurrences where an adult assaulted a child. While it is indisputable that the issue of child rape has gravity, the subject seems to polarise the attention of newspapers in reporting on rape.

**Figure 1: *Percentage of rape reports identified during the 12 months data collection period from the three local South African newspapers***

The figure (Figure 1) shows a relatively even coverage of the issue of rape among the selected newspapers. The figure was developed based on a statistical analysis of the information uncovered from the selected newspaper reports on rape.

**Figure 2: *Percentage of ‘corrective’ rape reports identified during the 12 months data collection period from the three local South African newspapers***

Figure 2 shows the unequal attention given to the issue of ‘corrective rape’ and was developed based on the statistical analysis of the information uncovered from the selected newspaper reports on ‘corrective rape’.

When referring to the style and tone in which reports were written, even though there does not appear to be an explicit example of anti-gay rights in the reports on ‘corrective rape’ – in fact, most of the reports appear to be written from a pro-gay rights perspective – the risk of using emotive language (affirming either the antecedent or consequent of an argument) is that it aligns with or contravene a reader’s own value systems causing them to have to defend their position on the issue (even though they might not have a well-defined position). Neutral, fact based, logical and reasoned reports effectively support informed debate and decision making. As an institution of conscience within society, it is the duty of an independent and effective media to remind communities (civil- and political) of their responsibilities (which are enshrined in Chapter two, Section 16 of the Constitution of South Africa), which states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of the press and other media; freedom to receive or impart information or ideas; freedom of artistic creativity; and academic freedom and freedom of scientific research. The right to subsection (1) does not extend to propaganda for war; incitement of imminent violence; or advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm” (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2015).

throughout the research process many possible avenues of research were uncovered and warranted the inclusion of a ‘recommendations’ section. Research should be conducted to test how LGBTI human rights groups can be consulted more when addressing issues of relevance (such as ‘corrective rape’) to its community. Instead of rape (including ‘corrective rape’) being assigned to columnists and other opinion leaders, newspapers could take a more active role in setting the agenda and framing the issue in a way that would call politicians and the public to be accountable. Both the issue of ‘corrective rape’ and rape became relevant to the field of communication science and media as soon as these fields were able to influence audiences through education, mass dissemination and production of information and persuasive messaging. Because it would be impossible to separate the obligations of a communicologist and media expert from issues affecting the environment, social issues become relevant as soon as it enters media- and or public discourse. As Tuchman said, because news is developed and distributed according to a free economy which is consumer driven, the journalist is directly responsible for what issues, how much of that issue and how the issue is seen by audiences (De Wet, 2013).

The findings revealed that although South African newspapers report on ‘corrective rape’ (issue and incidences), albeit skewed to only two of the newspapers, it underreports on it when compared to the rape-statistic-to-reporting-ratio. This is compared to the 10 new cases of ‘corrective rape’ being reported every week (Marting *et al*, 2009) in Cape Town alone with the five reports on ‘corrective rape’ identified from the 2012-2013 research. ‘Corrective rape’ is not merely an LGBTI issue. It should not be religated to communities or politicians who address issues based on their idiosyncratic agendas; Desmond Tutu once encapsulated the idea of humanity and human obligation perfectly when he said: “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality” (Tutu and Carlton Abrams, 1990). Our moral obligation, should always be the equality and respecting dignity of all.

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