Media Representations of Gender-Based Violence Against Black Women: A Decolonial Feminist Analysis

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a well-known problem, with South Africa having one of the highest rates of GBV in the world. Additionally, South African media plays a role in how and what information about GBV is disseminated. This work looks at two case studies to investigate how the media represents GBV against black women in the South African context. It uses Decolonial Feminist theory to frame and contextualise current forms of violence against black women, to the colonial history of violence against them. This approach serves to call attention to the fact that GBV against black women does not exist simply as a problem of the present. Instead, there are narrative and physical continuities of the historical dynamics of power and domination against black women, that have founded GBV's present state, and which allow it to continue. These colonial narratives and the violences they perpetuate must be investigated in the various ways in which they may manifest themselves, such as through the media. This research draws to light the ways in which the media reinforces narratives that further marginalise black women, and in so doing, perpetuate black women and their bodies as sites of violence. The project explores how black women are decentred from their own stories and experiences of GBV, and how this decentring is normalised. It also seeks to further the work within Decolonial Feminism of conscientising society to the colonial legacies of violence perpetrated against black women. Finally, it poses questions concerning black women's positionality and safety within primary modalities of justice that exist within and from colonial structures of the law and criminality.

Keywords: gender-based violence, black women, media, coloniality, narrative, positionality, justice

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Chapter One: Introduction

Timing

Sisters there is a hole in my heart

that is bearing your shapes

over and over

as I read only the headlines

of this morning's newspaper.

—Audrey Lorde, Black Unicorn

The following work will engage with what it means to try and centre black women[1]. Its pursuit is to locate and delve into the harms they are exposed to and experience, as well as to examine the complexities of their safety and freedom.

Black[2] women's safety is often contingent on other identities with greater social capital and power needing safety and freedom in the same areas already affecting black women (Pain, 2022). The result of their inclusion in social issues only when it is relevant to other bodies, is that black women are often left out or disregarded (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw (1991) illustrates the use of black women to further the agenda for women's rights or black people's rights. She illustrates that these fights were independent of, rather than in conjunction with one another. These movements did not include the many other identities that black women encompass, and for which they must find ways to survive (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991). Thus, there are a lot of other harms that they experience beyond race and gender that are not recognised or are ignored within social and institutional spheres (Crenshaw, 1991).

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[1] "Women" within this thesis includes all persons who identify in this way/as a woman.

[2] "Black" within this work is used to encompass all communities of colour within South Africa who were oppressed during apartheid.

Consequently, the position of black women within society has often left them to fend and fight for themselves within a system not built for or concerned about them, to survive. In many ways, this contributes to narratives of black women as strong and resilient (Kelly et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2016). However, the worlds that black women create for themselves and their safety and survival, can then be co-opted when broader society encounters the issues long experienced by black women (Richie et al., 2021). Their resources and ideas can then be taken and used on a larger scale, but sometimes in ways that are for the benefit of everyone except them (Richie et al., 2021). Similarly, the challenge within feminism has been its propensity to centre the distress of white women and the heteronormative ideals of femininity and womanhood, over other communities who do not and cannot occupy this niche identity (Abrahams, 1998; Collins 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981).

This, and other examples make plain the need to conduct more research that centres black women. It also illustrates the need to further the knowledge that accurately situates and understands how and why black women are subjected to violence, and how this is neither a new nor surprising phenomenon (Gqola, 2007).

The South African context also poses a unique and underexplored area of inquiry. There is a need to dissect black women’s positionality in a country where black people are the majority, but where they face similar histories of oppression and domination–and the resultant implications therein–to other dissimilar demographic contexts. One would speculate that being a part of the majority would allow black women to have a more pronounced voice within society. This would allow for black women to be more readily able to contribute towards knowledge that is held and regarded in academia and social justice, and that directly affects them positively. It is the contrast to these speculations that highlights the magnitude to which colonially patriarchal and capitalist structures have inculcated themselves into South Africa. The permutations of these oppressive systems are important to dissect regarding how South Africa continues to govern–and arguably be governed by and within the neo-colonial agenda–and the impact this has on black women's positionality and safety.

Through this introduction and the review of the literature to follow, it will become clear that there is a need to draw greater awareness to, and emphasis on more and different knowledges, including from black women. This is necessary to disrupt current models that foreground certain voices and knowledges over others (Silva et al., 2022). Generating this change includes disrupting the ideologies of the researcher as the primary knowledge holder (Kessi et al., 2022). Additionally, it is necessary to critique these models, as they use marginalised communities to extract their stories of pain, solely for the beneficence of the researcher (Solano 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2014). It is also important that this work be rooted within a decolonial approach. Doing so is crucial for expanding on research methods that actively resist emphasising certain experiences and voices, as those voices are incorporated in society as the only experiences that exist or matter (Silva et al., 2022).

This research will approach the work of decoloniality in the ways described above, by focusing on black women in relation to the media. Examining the media provides a way in which we can understand what knowledge and perceptions around black women exist, through what is represented from and by the media. This includes looking at whether black women's lives and experiences are seen as valuable outside of the colonial, patriarchal and capitalist systems to which they may participate and contribute. This is due to the reality that these contributions may be the few or only ways in which the lives of black women are valued (Abrahams, 1998; Davis,1981). Finally, this work seeks to recognise the need for black women to have the freedom to shed their armour of resilience. Black women are soft, bountiful, and joyful beings, who need and should have an abundance of softness and joy, even as they navigate the realities of a world that is violent and harmful to them (Chirape 2021; Gilchrist, 2010; Spies, 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

Therefore, the following research will explore the complexities of black womanhood and violence. In doing so, it hopes to advocate for centring the polylithic complexities of black women's subjectivities that exist beyond violence and a need for resilience. It will do this through an analysis of media representations of Gender-based Violence (GBV) against black women. The study will start by providing a framework of the current literature on GBV and black women that exists to illuminate the need for this work. The method of collecting data from media articles will be discussed, followed by an analysis of the findings. Furthermore, it will discuss whether the narratives found within the media data are a tool to further, or stop the heteronormative, colonial, racist patriarchal agenda for power which oppresses and silences black women. It will do this by engaging with the implications that the constructed narratives have for black women and their subjectivities. Finally, the thesis will discuss the future possibilities of research and social action that centre black women's knowledges, safety, and freedom.

Chapter Two: Understanding and Contextualising Gender-Based Violence

One in three women will face a form of GBV in their lifetime, with South Africa having one of the highest rates of GBV in the world (Chhabra et al., 2020; du Toit, 2014; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). These statistics exemplify the nature and extent of the problem society faces when it comes to GBV and its resultant effects on survivors (du Toit, 2014). Defined as physical, emotional, and psychological harm perpetrated or threatened to be perpetrated against someone because of their gender, gender identity and/or gender expression, GBV plagues the fabric of society, to the point where it has been described in many cases as an “epidemic” (Bent-Goodley, 2009; Chhabra et al., 2020; Frost, 2018).

The extent of GBV has resulted in a myriad of research that seeks to understand its pervasiveness in society (Bent-Goodley, 2009; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). This research has utilised both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative studies have focused on centring survivors of GBV, perpetrators of GBV, as well as on specific communities where people are affected by it (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Boonzaier & van Schalkwyk, 2011; Fuentes, 2020; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Moffett, 2006). Additionally, there has been more work on GBV regarding the complexities of race, class, sexuality, ability, and other social identities (Bent-Goodley, 2009; Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Gill, 2018; Gqola, 2007; Kelly et al., 2020; Richardson & Taylor, 2009). Research has also increased investigations into the media, and how it shapes discourses on GBV (Buiten, 2007; Isaacs, 2016).

However, despite the plethora of existing work which looks at the media and its influence on GBV, there has been minimal work in this area which focuses on identity and subjectivities. More specifically, the research that exists in this area does not explore GBV and the media as it relates to the unique experiences and complexities faced by black women. A large amount of the research on GBV within the media looks at women as a collective community, and thus subsumes the variant experiences and narratives of how different women experience and navigate this phenomenon. There is minimal research that actively serves to locate the similarities or disparities in who makes it into the news versus who does not. Additionally, research on how the stories of survivors of GBV are told concerning their intersecting identities, and the implications of these narratives on those living at these intersections, remains sparse.

Finally, there is limited work in this field that engages with the media and GBV using a Decolonial Feminist lens as its method of investigation. This research seeks to fill that gap to provide another avenue in which to understand and dismantle constructs and systems that help to perpetuate GBV and its resultant effects on marginalised bodies (Wooten, 2017). The remainder of this chapter will explore and contextualise the existing literature and how it helps to frame the groundwork for this research.

Locating a Racialised Differentiation of Vulnerabilities

In a bid to broaden knowledge, as well as make it more applicable to the various contexts within society, there have been studies that focus on identifying how women are not equally vulnerable to experiencing GBV (Fuentes, 2020; Richie et al., 2021). This research has served to situate GBV concerning understanding what it is, and how it can and does affect marginalised groups differently based on their particular contexts which put them in these positions (Boonzaier, 2018; Fuentes, 2020; Richie et al., 2021). For example, studies have shown that research on GBV cannot focus solely on gender (Gill, 2018). This progression of work has been in keeping with the various waves of feminism, which initially looked to exclude race. This exclusion inevitably meant the ostracisation of black women from the conversation concerning their unique challenges against oppression and violence (Collins 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981).

Such work has had a greater focus on identifying factors that may contribute towards an understanding of who is more vulnerable to experiencing GBV. Specific lenses have focused on how race, class and sexuality influence one's susceptibility to GBV (Bent-Goodley, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Kelly et al., 2020; Richie et al., 2021; West, 2004). For example, the intersections of race, class and education in most countries including South Africa, means that black women are more vulnerable to experiencing IPV when compared to white women (Kelly et al., 2020; Richie et al., 2021; West, 2004). Additionally, their contexts which are shaped by intersections of gender, race, class, and education, affect where they live, and their proximity to communities that experience violence, thus increasing their vulnerability to encountering IPV and other forms of violence (Boonzaier & van Schalkwyk, 2011; West, 2004). Moreover, race is intricately linked to class within the South African context. This positions poor black women within specific financial and social contexts, that are different to other women (Dosekun, 2013; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Consequently, the historically saturated contexts of power and intersectionality, make it more challenging for black women to have the resources to find themselves in communities that would socially, be regarded as safer. Additionally, it means that they have different levels of freedom and access to both personal and community-based resources, that would enable them to leave the violent communities and abusive partners, adding to their vulnerability (Boonzaier & van Schalkwyk, 2011; Crenshaw, 1991; Kelly et al., 2020; West, 2004).

Other findings within research on different vulnerabilities are related to the psychology of social perception. There are particular oppressive narratives of women that have been created and sustained by colonially patriarchal structures of domination (Davis, 1981). These narratives are not the same for all communities of women and thus do not have the same impact on how these communities are seen, understood, protected and/or violated (Dosekun, 2013). Colonially derived narratives of black women as hypersexual means that people are more likely to think that black women are more willing and agreeable to engage in sexual activities than other women (Zounlome et al., 2019). This contrasts with the narrative of white women as docile, sexually modest, and in need of protection (Davis, 1981). This and other narratives of women create racialised classifications of who is, and who is not to be considered as someone with personhood, and thus treated with human dignity (Salo & Moolman, 2013). Once again, this has resulted in certain women being deemed "worthy" to be safeguarded (Davis, 1981; Salo & Moolman, 2013). Furthermore, the hypersexual versus docile dichotomy associated between black and white women, means that there is a different set of prescriptions for what constitutes GBV for black women, with black women experiencing higher levels of brutality and violence before their cases are defined as GBV (Kelly et al., 2020). This dichotomy increases black women's chances of experiencing unwanted sexual advances, predisposing them to sexual violence (Wooten, 2017; Zounlome et al., 2019). It also means that the socialised definition of what constitutes abuse is more severe in terms of what they are subjected to before their experiences are regarded as GBV. Vulnerability is further exacerbated by the fact that black women are less likely to be believed when reporting cases of GBV, due to perceptions of their hypersexuality (Fuentes, 2020; Kelly et al., 2020; Wooten, 2017). Their assumed lustfulness and differential categorisation of what GBV is for them, combined with not being believed, means that perpetrators are better able to get away with abusing black women. (Wooten, 2017; Zounlome et al., 2019). Thus, black women were, and continue to be negated their personhood, whilst simultaneously being at greater risk of GBV than other women (Fuentes, 2020; Wooten, 2017).

Finally, Boonzaier (2018) reflexively unpacks the danger of expressions that posit communities as at a "greater risk." Their work cautions us about using these terms to inadvertently blame the marginalised communities for their particular vulnerabilities, instead of correctly locating the contexts and conditions which put them in these positions (Boonzaier, 2018). Omitting the context influences how GBV is framed and attended to, which further harms these marginalised communities (Boonzaier, 2018).

Black Women's Experiences of GBV

In conjunction with a better understanding of their difference in vulnerability to GBV, there has been work seeking to understand black women's experiences and perceptions of it (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; West, 2002; Wooten, 2017). Such research has found that black women often draw on the colonial history of violence against black women in how they navigate and share their experiences and understandings of sexual violence (West, 2002). Zounlome et al. (2019) notes that participants made specific reference to slavery and slave women being raped by white slave owners, as part of their conceptualisation of how black women have experienced sexual violence. This illustrates the historical and racial hierarchical structures embedded within GBV and how these structures still affect the ways black women navigate GBV today (Fuentes, 2020; Patil & Purkayastha, 2015). Additionally, a study done with African American women in the United States of America (USA), revealed that black women perceived sexual violence against black women to be a phenomenon that is normalised within society (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002). The research articulates black women's experiences of misogynoir–that is misogyny along the lines of race–and how it connects to sexual violence being a customary occurrence in black women's lives (Gill, 2018; Kelly et al., 2020; Zounlome et al., 2019). This interlinks with the research that different communities of women are afforded different levels of humanity, whereby violence against black women does not stray from the norm of what is acceptable for them to experience (Davis, 1981; Salo & Moolman, 2013).

Further to this normalisation was the expression that perpetrators are not held accountable for their actions of violence against black women (Kelly et al., 2020; Zounlome et al., 2019). Research has shown that the avenues for justice are fewer and that there are fewer consequences for perpetrators of sexual violence against black women (Kelly et al., 2020; Zounlome et al., 2019). This contrasts with the consequences of violence for the protection of white women, particularly when violators are black (Davis, 1981). These differences point to both the misogynoir and vulnerability embedded in black women's experiences of sexual violence (Zounlome et al., 2019).

Moreover, studies have been able to highlight black women's challenges of having to navigate their experiences of GBV about not only how it affects them, but their communities as well (Kelly et al., 2020; Zounlome et al., 2019). Some research has found that the need for black women to protect their communities manifested itself in at least two ways. The first is through the felt responsibility to not report experiences of GBV to protect black men from the dangers of racist judiciary structures, and the stereotypes about black men as violent and as the only ones who rape (Davis, 1981; Moffett, 2006). The second manifestation, linked to the first, is the pressure to take their experiences of violence resiliently as they go, to fulfil the narrative of the "strong black woman" (Kelly et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2016). This narrative comes from the idea that despite all the traumas and violence that black women have experienced, they are always able to continue moving, carrying their burdens and experienced violences in their stride (Kelly et al., 2020). It also arises from the pressures to maintain community integrity which exists against the backdrop of black women being labelled as responsible for the maintenance or collapse of the black community (Zounlome et al., 2019). Both these manifestations result in black women being silenced. They also suggest that black women are not encouraged or supported to speak out against their experiences or perpetrators. These manifestations position black women on the sidelines of their experiences, denying them the opportunity to grieve the violence they encounter (Kelly et al., 2020; Zounlome et al., 2019).

Alongside the work above, research has been conducted that highlights how black women experience GBV in ways that other women do not, because of the systemic ways in which black bodies are policed (Davis, 1981; Mama, 1989). In addition to being characterised as hypersexual, black women are also characterised as angry and violent (Kelly et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2016). This characterisation stems from the colonial pathologisation of black people responding to their oppression and domination with anger and resistance (Mama, 1989). The historically racist origins of the police, coupled with the historically racist narratives of black women as violent, means that when black women decide to report their experiences of GBV, they run the risk of being arrested with the perpetrator (Donovan & Williams, 2002; Kelly et al., 2020; Mama, 1989). This is due to perceptions that because they are violent and aggressive, black women must be complicit in the violence they experience, and thus must also be detained and controlled (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Kelly et al., 2020). This adds to their nuanced experiences as survivors of GBV in ways that other women do not have to navigate (Donovan & Williams, 2002).

The work on engaging and increasing knowledge of black women's experiences has been beneficial in advancing the work to generate more and different voices of how GBV affects black women. Other ways in which this has been done will be discussed further.

Black Women, History, and GBV in Context

To further understand the different experiences of GBV that black women have shared, scholarship has gone on to better locate the complexity of other intersections beyond race, including more research on ability, history, sexuality, class, and other identities (Gill, 2018). This has been to better understand, and explain the differences experienced amongst different communities of women, even amongst black women, so as not to perpetuate universal narratives on experience, which inevitably harm those who do not see themselves in these prescribed stories (Gill, 2018). This has been done by deconstructing certain norms like approaches to research and lenses of investigation, enabling more, variant methods for stories to be told in how GBV is understood (Lugones, 2010; Silva et al., 2022; Solano, 2019).

Examples of work that have had this focus have often used feminist approaches to conduct their research (Prah & Maggott, 2020). Abrahams (1998) and her work on Sara Bartman is one such example. In her work, she demonstrates that the workings of coloniality served to further inculcate black people, and more specifically black women, as the "other" (Abrahams, 1998). By mutilating the bodies of black women through scientific "exploration" and setting up museums of black people, colonial structures negated their humanity (Davis, 1981). Putting Sara Bartman on display set her as an example of a lack of civility. This narrated and ingrained the need to control and oppress black people. It was also a way in which to inflict psychological violence by "othering" black women's bodies and constructing them as sexually deviant (Abrahams, 1998; Baderoon, 2014). Through Sara Bartman, the rationale for gendered and racial domination was made undeniable (Abrahams, 1998). This is a poignant example as Sara Bartman is not directly connected to conversations of GBV. However, this framing helps to better contextualise one of the ways that the narrative of black women as hypersexual came to be, and how it has come to affect black women's current vulnerabilities discussed previously. It highlights the importance of connecting history to the present condition, motivating the need to look not only at the relationship between violence and gender but at how it intersects with race and history as well (Crenshaw, 1991; Gill 2018; Lugones, 2010). It also explains why black women are found to cite the history of violence against black women in their current experiences and perceptions of GBV (West, 2002; Zounlome et al., 2019). Abrahams (1998) made use of a well-recognised example to instantiate the role history and coloniality have in the modern-day violence enacted against black women. Since this work, others have followed a similar trend which sought to better comprehend the historically racialised components of violence against black women (Baderoon, 2014; Gill, 2018).

As a result of work done by researchers like Abrahams (1998), more work has served to look at the intersection of history to deconstruct current ideologies and practices of violence perceived as normal. Examples include contesting the historical narrative that, due to biological differences, black women do not feel pain (Davis, 2019). One such re-narration has surrounded the work of Dr. James Marion Sims. Since his work in the 1840's, Sims, and others like him, have been lauded for their medical advancements (Cooper Owens, 2017). Sims was and continues to be regarded as the "Father of Gynaecology" (Cooper Owens, 2017). However, the route to developing the knowledge he produced regarding women's gynaecological health, was paved through performing gynaecological procedures on enslaved black women in the USA, without the use of any pain-reducing medication. This was because of the wildly held belief that black women have higher thresholds of pain and thus do not need to be sedated (Cooper Owens, 2017; Davis, 2019). This method of knowledge production highlights many things relating to the various forms of violence black women have experienced through the centuries, as well as the ease with which black women are reduced from humans to objects, in a bid to further the colonial and neo-colonial agenda (Abrahams, 1998; Baderoon, 2014; Cooper Owens, 2017; Davis, 1981; Davis, 2019). This example of harm also illustrates one of the ways the trope of the "strong black woman" may have been perpetuated (Baderoon, 2014; Cooper Owens, 2017; Davis, 2019; Kelly et al., 2020).

These colonially generated ideologies and practices manifest themselves in ongoing practices. Current studies reveal that there are racial biases surrounding perceptions of pain between white and black people (Hoffman et al., 2016). This perceived difference results in the medical mistreatment of black people, with them often being undertreated for their symptoms of pain (Hoffman et al., 2016). This is replicated in studies of how black women are mistreated during their pregnancy, labour, and delivery experiences (Davis, 2019). Studies illustrate that black women are often not believed when they are in pain, or that medical professionals think they fabricate how much pain they and their babies are in (Davis, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2016). This connects to black women being more vulnerable to experiencing GBV because they are made to experience different, more severe enactments of violence before their experiences are acknowledged as GBV (Kelly et al., 2020). Davis' (2019) study also found that black women in the USA would be punished in micro-aggressive ways if they tried to advocate for themselves and their babies. A poignant example of this is world-renowned tennis player, Serena Williams. During her birthing process, she had to advocate for herself regarding the pain she was experiencing, and the danger she would be under should they not listen to her due to her susceptibility to developing clots (Davis, 2019). The punitive responses to black women advocating for themselves suggest that their "resilience" came not from their innate ability to withstand elements, but from a lack of freedom to choose otherwise. These studies have been able to show how ideas regarded as normative are in fact steeped in violence. They also run parallel to and interlink with Abraham's (1998) connection of the gendered and racialised character of violence, and the need to connect the current treatment and experiences of black women to historical practices of violence and domination (Baderoon, 2014; Boonzaier, 2017; Davis, 2019; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018).

As such, the work of Abrahams (1998), and others like Collins (1990) Crenshaw (1991) and Gqola (2007, 2015), have led to an understanding that violence and abuse must be contextualised within a historical framework. This approach works with race, gender and other marginalised identities and constructions, to better understand that current violence is not separate from past violence (Boonzaier, 2017, 2022; du Toit, 2014; Gqola, 2007;

Richardson & Taylor, 2009). In doing so, it has helped to pave the way for work that does things differently, through methods of practice like Decolonial Feminism (Lugones, 2010; Silva et al., 2022).

Decolonial Feminism in GBV

The reconceptualisation of GBV as it pertains to intersectionality, as well as its connections to history, served to develop work that uses Decolonial Feminist frameworks to better frame and understand GBV (Boonzaier, 2017, 2022; Coetzee & du Toit 2018; Fuentes, 2020). Decolonial framings of GBV have served to showcase how coloniality constructed who was considered a woman and who was not, and the resultant effects on how womanhood is understood today (Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Salo & Moolman, 2013). For example, Decolonial Feminism illustrates how colonial practices of harming black women because they supposedly do not feel pain, are linked to black women having to endure pain in the present day. Its trajectory follows that black women are brutalised as they are not regarded as women, or that the nature of their positionality as women is different to that of other women (Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Lugones, 2010; Salo & Moolman, 2013). Thus, Decolonial Feminism explains the correlates of history to the current differentiation of black women having to endure more violence before their cases are considered GBV (Kelly et al., 2020; West, 2002). It also draws awareness to the fact that black women develop mechanisms to cope with the pain and violence inflicted upon them because of how they are disregarded and othered. The success of these coping mechanisms then leads society to believe that black women can endure more harm than other women, reinforcing the trope of the "strong black woman" (Kelly et al., 2020). Decolonial Feminism has been used to explain how this narrative has created and currently reinforces the idea of black women as strong and impervious to pain. It has also illustrated how this influences their experiences of GBV in ways that are unique to black women (Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Lewis et al., 2016).

The progression of research in this way has played a large role in the dismantling of the conscious and subconscious interpretations of who, and in what ways people are susceptible to GBV. Decolonial Feminism positions GBV as a result of the interconnectivity of colonial–read as heteronormative, racialised, gendered and patriarchal–structures of violence, rather than women being violated solely because of their gender (Boonzaier, 2017; du Toit, 2014; Gill, 2018; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Schwark, 2017). This approach to work on GBV perpetrated against black women has also made explicit how previous research on them and other marginalised communities is in itself a violent and traumatic process that sustains the violence that these communities experience (Boonzaier, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Thus, the awareness of the interconnectivity of past violence to present violence, and how it also manifests itself in research, has led to a raised expectation that how we conduct research needs to work in conscious and intentional ways to minimise harm. Additionally, this research should be for the beneficence of the marginalised communities instead of the further exploitation of their trauma (Boonzaier, 2019; Chirape, 2021; Matutu, 2019; Silva et al., 2022; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

These developments in GBV scholarship also fuel the research conducted in this project. This research serves to dismantle how society can replicate and thus reincarnate the colonial structures through representations of black women, through the story-telling devices used to represent their experiences of violence.

GBV and the Media

It is important to understand where the media is located within society. This is to dismantle the hegemonic patriarchal and colonial structures embedded in GBV, and the particular representations of violence formulated against black women by the media (Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Morgan & Simons, 2018). The mainstream media is a common and heavily relied-on source of information dissemination (Isaacs & Mthembu, 2018; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Morgan & Simons, 2018). Additionally, its avenues of circulation are skewed in particularly power-driven and classist ways (Boonzaier, 2017). With the weight media carries, it is vital to deconstruct the role it plays in creating and influencing ideas, and in its portrayal of experiences of those being reported on (Isaacs & Mthembu, 2018; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Morgan & Simons, 2018). It plays what might be considered a subliminal, yet crucial role in how people may come to understand and thus interact with one another (Buiten, 2007; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Morgan & Simons, 2018). Through the media, people can gain insight into what the experiences, behaviours and cultures of certain lives might be like (Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Morgan & Simons, 2018). This insight may be constructive or destructive, particularly as a gateway of knowledge that some may use to understand those whom they may otherwise not interact with in their personal social niches (Buiten, 2007; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Morgan & Simons, 2018). As such, the media holds the capacity to create and shape narratives of issues and people. This illustrates the responsibility it has to provide information that is accurate and which does not serve to universalise experiences or perpetuate stereotypes (Isaacs, 2016; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Morgan & Simons, 2018).

There is a multitude of research conducting media analyses of GBV, see for example Boonzaier (2017, 2022), Buiten (2007), Carlyle et al. (2014), Chuma (2016), Isaacs (2016), Isaacs and Mthembu (2018), Lindsay-Brisbin et al. (2014), Morgan and Simons (2018), Patil and Purkayastha (2015) and Schwark 2017). One theme within research that has been identified, is the style of reporting that can be found. To understand the method and/or intention of the media for reporting on GBV, one study conducted a comparative study of articles that were written in response to, or because of GBV. These were compared to articles written to raise awareness about GBV, as well as resources available to survivors (Lindsay-

Brisbin et al., 2014). The work by Lindsay-Brisbin et al. (2014) found that most of the articles reviewed were reporting on an incident of GBV. This reporting was often without any support-based information to assist survivors of GBV, or to assist those who may have been re/traumatised by reading the article.

However, other studies have shown that in certain contexts, writers and publishers have the power to make changes regarding their stance on GBV-based reporting (Morgan & Simons, 2018). One study showed a news outlet that had made changes regarding its positionality of GBV from indifferent to participatory, in a bid to raise awareness and help promote change on a societal level (Morgan & Simons, 2018). This study alludes to the fact that there may not be a concerted effort to report about GBV in a way that is not intended to simply increase readership, without being mindful of the implications of its reporting style and tone (Isaacs, 2016; Isaacs & Mthembu, 2018; Morgan & Simons, 2018).

Another theme that can be noted amongst feminist works analysing GBV in the media, is the lack of contextual information it provides in its reporting (Carlyle et al., 2014). This finding is pertinent as it has had repercussions on how people relate to and understand GBV (Carlyle et al., 2014; Schwark, 2017). This medium of information output has contributed towards misgivings on who, where, and how GBV takes place. It has also affected perceptions of who is responsible for it, both from the perspective of perpetrators and survivors (Carlyle et al., 2014; Chuma, 2016; Morgan & Simons, 2018).

These findings are an important reflection of the need to analyse media content and how it represents people, experiences, and schools of thought (Boonzaier, 2017; Carlyle et al., 2014; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014). Without critique, the media can continue to produce and disseminate information that serves to harm, and further marginalise people, without being held accountable for the damage it may and can inflict (Boonzaier, 2017; Carlyle et al., 2014; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014).

In summary, there has been a variation of research that engages with the complexities and theories of GBV (Chhabra et al., 2020; du Toit, 2014; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). There is also research which has pinpointed the need to investigate the history of violence through the lenses of intersecting identities like gender, race, and class (Crenshaw, 1991; Gill, 2018; Gqola, 2015). This work has implicated current and future work to be mindful of and investigate how this history has created frameworks, and how these frameworks can be used to better understand the way black women exist and may have to navigate their personal and social worlds (Boonzaier, 2017; Gill, 2018; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018).

However, there is minimal research that concentrates on the effects of media reporting on black women and their experiences of GBV, particularly within South Africa. There is also little work in this area that takes into consideration, the historical context of violence perpetrated against black women. Additionally, minimal work looks at how narratives in the media may replicate historical narratives that serve to further marginalise black women. Moreover, previous research does not engage in how the media frames and influences how society comes to understand, and thus interact with black women or their experiences of pain, violence, and their subjectivities (Buiten, 2007; Davis, 2019). Finally, the lack of robust work on how black women's experiences of GBV are narrated in the media, means that there is a lack of work that centres black women in the conversation of GBV, media and the impact of representations. These are important elements that this research seeks to engage in and discuss.

Aims and Objectives

This research aims to analyse how the media represents GBV against black women, taking a case study approach. The research conducted in this project seeks to investigate and deconstruct colonial narratives that may exist in media reporting of GBV against black women. It aims to analyse and discuss the implications this has on existing narratives of black women, and their locale as different and imperceptible to pain in ways that other women are not. This will serve to highlight the effect this has on subliminally re-enforcing black women's marginalisation within society. It will also grapple with how black women engage with their worlds from this positionality, by asking the following questions:

Research Question: What are media representations of gender-based violence against black women in South Africa as represented in two select cases?

Sub questions: How does media discourse reinforce or resist existing narratives about the subjectivities and lives of black women?

What are the implications of media reporting on understandings of black womanhood, subjectivity, and violence?

The next chapter will discuss the method used to conduct this study. It will delve into the framework used to engage with the issue of GBV in relation to this project and the research question. Additionally, it will discuss how the data was collected and the methods used to analyse it.

Chapter Three: Research Method

This research project falls within the purview of a greater project, entitled *Unsettling Knowledge Production on Gendered and Sexual Violence in South Africa,* and it was within this larger project that this research was formulated. This research project focused on an analysis of media representations of GBV against black women using a case study approach. The study looked at the narratives that were found in the media to investigate whether these narratives perpetuate colonial ideologies regarding black women and violence. Additionally, this research engaged with how these narratives may contribute towards the perpetuation of violence against black women. This chapter will engage with the method that was followed in conducting the research for this thesis. It will start by discussing the theoretical framework which grounded this project. It will then focus on the design of the study and how the cases were selected for this project. Following on from this, it will discuss how the data was collected, and the approaches used to analyse the data.

Theoretical Framework

This research takes a Decolonial Feminist approach to investigate media reporting on GBV against black women. Decolonial Feminism seeks to dismantle the presumed universal truths that currently exist, but which stem from colonial systems of domination (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Lugones, 2010). This theoretical approach explicitly recognises and calls to task the fact that colonial institutions worked to create and produce knowledge in a manner that served to instil power for some, whilst subjugating others (Abrahams, 1998; Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Fuentes, 2020). Although considered to be historical, there is still an ever-present conditioning of coloniality that persists today (Fuentes, 2020; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Lugones, 2010). Bulhan (2015) has identified coloniality's continuation in modern times as "metacolonialism" which works under the guise of globalisation (p. 244). Thus, efforts of Decolonial Feminism include contextualising and thus unsettling what is seen as common knowledge and/or truth (Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Lugones, 2010). It serves to disrupt these constructed truths in a bid to highlight the source of their existence; sources steeped in a historical agenda of power and domination (Abrahams, 1998; Gqola, 2015). Furthermore, Baderoon (2014) posits that coloniality is “a violent system that called itself rational” (p. 7). Consequently, Decolonial Feminism seeks to unveil the mechanisms that rationalise the violent, oppressive structures intrinsic to coloniality (Kessi et al., 2022).

Decolonial Feminism is also cognisant of the power dynamics embedded in the research process. Historically, most research methods have assumed that the researcher holds the knowledge, whilst providing an opportunity for the “researched” to confirm the researcher’s expertise (Kessi et al., 2022; Msimang, 2020). However, working through Decolonial Feminism disrupts the colonially held practice that researchers are the only knowledge holders (Kessi et al., 2022). This approach recognises and gives space for the reality that those categorised as “participants,” have and create knowledge and that there are different ways of knowing (Kessi et al., 2022; Salo, 2015; Silva et al., 2022).

This theory is particularly important to include in Psychology as it serves to address and redress the current neo-colonial systems that govern who the producers of knowledge are and thus whose experiences and ways of knowing are validated. It is also important to critique how knowledge that is produced is still biased and oppressive (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018). Mainstream Psychology marginalises and pathologizes those it deems to lie outside of the colonial narratives of what is normal–where normal is centred on whiteness, and patriarchal heteronormativity (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Silva et al., 2022). Additionally, Psychology has a long-standing history of pathologizing black people’s resistance to subordination (Mama, 1989). As such it is important to work with a lens that locates

Psychology within its correct historical framework of coloniality which still has implications for how it is practiced today (Mama, 1989).

Furthermore, Decolonial Feminism helps to unmask how GBV against black women does not exist in isolation as a modern-day problem. Instead, Decolonial Feminism locates GBV to its history of violence and misogynoir, recognising it as simply one manifestation of violence against black women (Abrahams, 1998; Boonzaier, 2017; Davis, 2019; Fuentes, 2020). This framework will effectively help to analyse and identify if and how media reporting helps to perpetuate colonial truths about black women that serve to further marginalise and violate them.

This framework is also an important lens of engagement because it is not only based on theory. Rather, it is intentional about reimagining new ways of practising research and shifting society towards ways that do not perpetuate harm or further inflict physical and psychological violence (Silva et al., 2022). This practice of reimagination includes subverting the gaze of conqueror to conquered (Chirape, 2021). It critiques and works to remove the colonially inscribed practice of those in power looking down on, passing commentary and making decisions about the “other.” This theory provides a platform in which those who are marginalised can be placed at the centre of their own lives. Additionally, it is a practice where systems of life can be created by and for the marginalised, without them being reduced to entertainment for the prying eye of oppressive institutions (Chirape, 2021; Kessi et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2022; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

Therefore, Decolonial Feminism will assist in better understanding and thus dismantling any pervasive and colonially structured truths and practices that promote the marginalisation of black women within the media. It will enable the research to position black women at the centre of their narratives, whilst refusing to put on display and replicate the violence that black women experience for the benefit of neo-colonial consumption

(Boonzaier, 2017; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Lugones, 2010; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Thus, the intentions of the researcher to do this work for, with, and as a black woman, makes Decolonial Feminist Theory an appropriate framework for this study.

Having established the framework for this project, the chapter will now proceed with how the research was carried out.

Study Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative research design. Qualitative research seeks to explore the nature and nuance of the human condition, looking to delve more deeply into knowledge, meaning and experiences (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). The approach of looking at the complexity versus the universality of how people navigate their lives, aligns with the complexity of using a Decolonial Feminist framework, as it engages in the nuances and subjectivities of experiences as they relate to the past and the present (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Lugones, 2010).

This research used a case study approach. This method of study serves to delve deeply into one or a few examples of the topic being discussed to explain, unpack, and better understand these cases and their related topics (Lune & Berg, 2017). Case studies also serve to give greater detail of a single example. This is done, not to isolate the case, but rather to draw attention to details that may be missed when looking at the topic more broadly (Lune & Berg, 2017). Case studies help focus the picture to showcase what can be understood or gained by what comes to light from specific cases. This approach provides the opportunity to theorise about how what is revealed within the selected cases, may reflect what transpires on a larger scale. Thus, case studies can be used as microcosms of broader contexts (Lune & Berg, 2017).

This study used the instrumental case study approach. Instrumental case studies make use of a particular example to explain or better understand a phenomenon (Lune & Berg, 2017). This relates to this study as the cases will be used, not to describe what happened to survivors as unusual cases, but rather as a reflection of a bigger phenomenon of racialised gender-based violence within a decolonial understanding (Lune & Berg, 2017). In this instance, the cases were used as instruments to better examine the phenomena of GBV, and violence more broadly, against black women (Lune & Berg, 2017).

Case Selection

The sample for this work was collected using purposive sampling which aims to include participants, or in this instance, information that pertains to the specific requirements of the study (Campbell et al., 2020). Its concentrated approach is compatible with answering questions of depth, such as the ones proposed in this work (Campbell et al., 2020). In alignment with the case study approach, the sampling was a collection of news articles on the cases of GBV perpetrated against Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni. The conceptualisation of this research work took place from questions engaged in the larger project in which it takes place. It was also influenced by the dialogue that was taking place within the media concerning GBV as the second pandemic within the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, within this work, the media was defined as commercial newspaper outlets and publications. It did not include other forms of media such as social media, television, and radio reporting, as that would have fallen beyond the scope of this research. Once the definition of the media had been refined, the cases were selected. The criteria of selection for the case studies were based on the recency of the cases that had been documented in the news. It was also based on location. The cases had to be from within South Africa due to the dynamics of race, gender, and history in South Africa, as well as the prevalence with which black women in South Africa experience violence which often goes undocumented. Thus, these cases were to be examples that could highlight how cases perpetrated against black women do not exist in isolation, but rather as reflections of the context of GBV in South

Africa. Additionally, the researcher thought it would be best to focalise the area of investigation to look at one example of GBV rather than various examples, to remain within the scope of the research project while still being able to provide an in-depth analysis. As such, the cases selected were to be cases of IPV and femicide. Once the basis of the case selection had been established, a preliminary survey of the media was conducted, and it was found that the cases of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni had occurred recently and within an overlapping period. They also had several articles and thus were best suited for this project. An added benefit that cemented these two cases was that the respective trials of their perpetrators were also documented in the media at the time the study was being conceptualised. This was thought to provide an interesting element of analysis of how their stories were represented and which, to the knowledge of the researcher, had not been done in previous research.

Data Collection

This project used the *South African Media Database* which is hosted by the *Sabinet Reference Database* to collect its data. This data collection format was most relevant as it is South Africa's largest database, housing South African media from as far back as the 1970s. It was also relevant as the South African Media was this project's point of focus. This database also comprises a combination of local and national news outlets within the South African context, which would have allowed for a larger access point to media from different locations within the country.

Procedure

Once the cases of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni had been chosen, the data collection process started with an overall search of available articles for Tshegofatso Pule and then for Nosicelo Mtebeni. The researcher searched for articles that related to Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni's GBV cases, as well as the reporting on the court cases of their respective perpetrators. The search included all articles from June 2020 when Tshegofatso's case first emerged, until what was published by the end of the data collection period on June 15th, 2022.

When searching for "Tshegofatso Pule," there was found to be an initial result of 535 articles. This search was filtered to exclude journal articles, African News Agency, Provincial and Government gazettes as well as Retrospective Government gazettes. This filtering process reduced the result to 178 articles. In comparison, when searching for articles for "Nosicelo Mtebeni," an initial result of 50 articles was produced. When including the same filters as that of Tshegofatso Pule, the result was reduced to 48 articles.

The articles for each case study were read and categorised into articles directly related to their experiences of GBV and perpetrator's court cases, or into articles that made mention of their names concerning GBV or other broader conversations within the media. From this categorisation, 50 articles were directly related to Tshegofatso's case of GBV and the related trial. In contrast, only eight of the initial 48 articles were directly related to Nosicelo Mtebeni's case of GBV and the trial against her perpetrator.

The difference in numbers was interesting to note and their significance will be discussed further in chapter five.

After this initial categorisation, more specific search words were used for both case study examples with the results as follows:

For Tshegofatso Pule

- "Tshegofatso Pule + GBV" gave 36 articles
- "Tshegofatso Pule + gender-based violence" yielded 20 articles
- "Tshegofatso Pule + IPV" produced three articles
- "Tshegofatso Pule + intimate partner violence" found two articles
- "Tshegofatso Pule + femicide" gave 34 articles

- “Tshegofatso Pule + murder” resulted in 96 articles
- “Tshegofatso Pule + trial” produced 39 articles

For Nosicelo Mtebeni

- “Nosicelo Mtebeni + GBV” gave 20 articles
- “Nosicelo Mtebeni + gender-based violence” yielded 31 articles
- “Nosicelo Mtebeni +IPV” found one article
- “Nosicelo Mtebeni + intimate partner violence” also found one article
- “Nosicelo Mtebeni + femicide” gave rise to 20 articles
- “Nosicelo Mtebeni + murder” produced 28 articles
- “Nosicelo Mtebeni +trial” yielded four articles.

The additional refined search words were used to ensure that there were no other articles that existed within the database that were missed or not a part of the initial search terms. All the articles from the refined search words were already collected from the initial search words. As such, the number of directly related articles included in the final analysis remained at 50 for Tshegofatso Pule and 8 for Nosicelo Mtebeni.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using a narrative approach. Narrative Analysis delves into the portrayal of phenomena through the accounts and stories told of said phenomena and how these stories shape identity, ideas, and society (Murray, 2003).

Media institutions are not devoid of ideological, cultural, and other societal influences (Buiten, 2007). Put simply, their work is not a neutral platform. Instead, media is a reflection and inference to the society on which it reports, being fed by and simultaneously feeding into the societal norms in which it is located (Boonzaier, 2017; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014). Thus, it becomes important to be cognisant of what knowledge is produced by these platforms (Boonzaier, 2017; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014). The lack of neutrality in media reporting needs to be dissected to ascertain who stories are told for, and to whom they belong, based on how and what they emphasise or conceal. This can be accomplished with a Narrative Analysis (Boonzaier, 2017; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Murray, 2003).

Additionally, stories are intricate tools that can consciously and unconsciously influence the psyche of an individual and of a society (Isaacs, 2016). Thus, it becomes important to unpack the reporting that is done by the media about Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni's cases of GBV. This unpacking should investigate what is told, how it is told, and the potential motivations for the telling (Boonzaier, 2017; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Murray, 2003). The description that goes into the stories of the death of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni holds the potential to structure or restructure ideas and systems of thought relating to GBV and black women. Stories do not work in isolation and thus must be interrogated as to how they infiltrate and affect society (Boonzaier, 2017; du Toit, 2014; Isaacs, 2016; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014). This is interlinked with how people understand and interact with black women, and how black women feel they must navigate the world. The use of a Narrative Analysis will be a useful and appropriate tool to achieve an understanding of this (Davis, 2019; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Murray, 2003).

This study made use of a combination of thematic and structural narrative analysis (Riessman, 2005, 2008). This combination of analysis enabled the researcher to decipher what language is used to create meaning, as well as identify recurring themes throughout the articles (Riessman, 2005). This dual approach was an aid in analysing the use of language as a tool to construct narratives (structural), and to delve into what this language creates in terms of recurring ideas (thematic) (Riessman, 2005, 2008). The analysis involved an initial reading of the articles during the data collection period for Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni respectively. This was followed by an official first reading once the articles had been collected. Multiple read-throughs of the articles included familiarisation of the content, colour-coded highlights of the articles and note-taking of emerging patterns. This process showcased a pattern of the kind of content included and the structure followed by the articles. The similarities revealed broad categories related to: descriptions of the violence, descriptions of the victims, descriptions of the perpetrators and details related to the family and the comments they made. It also included overlapping patterns relating to the respective trials regarding pace, comments made by perpetrators, witnesses, lawyers, judges, protestors and other observers, and the respective families. Additionally, there emerged a pattern relating to imagery, both verbal and visual, and a theme related to language. Directed by the research question and the Decolonial Feminist approach, the broad categories were collated together and into themes which were then refined into three themes about the victims, the preparators and the law. These themes underwent continuous review throughout the analysis and report-writing process.

Not only does the Narrative Analysis align with the unpacking of media representations, but it also aligns with the Decolonial Feminist framework being used. Through the investigation of structure and themes in the media, there can be an examination of how historical stories that were told are connected to and still influence the structure and themes of new stories (Abrahams, 1998; Cooper Owens, 2017; Davis, 2019; Murray, 2003; Riessman, 2005). This is in line with the Decolonial Feminist's framework which situates current phenomena–often displayed as new–within the broader framework of colonialist systems. This will help in providing insight and avenues for holistically decolonial imaginings for the future (Abrahams, 1998; Davis, 2019; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018).

Reflexivity

A vital component of qualitative and Decolonial research is the researcher's ability to locate themselves within their work (Chirape, 2021; Dowling, 2006; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018). The many nuances that can be found within qualitative research and its data are not entirely removed from the researcher and how they engage with their subject matter throughout the research process (Dowling, 2006). Try as one might, there is never a complete position of neutrality in research, especially when one works with emotionally challenging topics such as GBV (Dowling, 2006). Additionally, there are ideas and perceptions that the researcher may have going into their work. Thus, it is vital that the researcher review and reflect on the role and influence they may have on their work throughout the research process (Dowling, 2006). The researcher must also be aware of their position of authority constructed by the researcher/researched hierarchy, and how this power dynamic can play a role in the interaction of the researcher and their work (Dowling, 2006; Kessi, et al., 2022).

Reflexivity in this way stems from and is in alignment with the Decolonial Feminist framework used in this study, which seeks to question the nature of knowledge production and its perpetuation of hierarchical, hegemonic structures of oppression (Dowling, 2006; Lugones, 2010). In this study, reflexive work must continuously be executed to help create an intentionally decolonial space of knowledge production that reflects, recognises, and dismantles any role it might have in perpetuating institutions of violence, domination, and marginalisation (Dowling, 2006; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018).

I was very aware of the sensitivities that I have regarding gender-based violence. I was and am still mindful of how my experiences and engagement with people who have experienced GBV influenced how I engaged with this work. Working with the literature for the proposal was challenging, and there were occasions when I had to take time away to regroup and heal.

In previous versions of this work, I wrote

> *I am also cognisant of how my values and viewpoints if left unchecked, will impact my ability to analyse the data to be collected. I have been and will continue to journal*

> *and meditate on my feelings and reflections in this process. This will serve to both locate myself within my work and help me engage in the work in a way that is not harmful to my psyche.*

Having collected the data and going into the process of analysing what I had, I already had to consciously locate and relocate myself within the realities of what it means to engage in this type of work. The articles were very difficult to read both because of the descriptions they entail and also because of the greater and more implicit nuances they carry regarding GBV and what it means to live as a black woman in South Africa. GBV is not something that can be seen as having both a positive and a negative aspect, and so I think it has been only natural to feel the weight of the negatives during the collection process, as well as to feel the weight of my positionality as a black woman. The weight of these negative experiences was exacerbated during the analytic part of the process. It was challenging to read and re-read the articles and then to have to discuss the very real and very personal implications of the narratives that came from the data. This work has also been something greater than I thought it could be in how I have internalised parts of myself within South Africa, in tertiary institutions, and regarding my future role as a clinician.

Spaces of peace and clarity during this project included being with my family more and appreciating the matriarchy in which I was raised and have often taken for granted. It also included journaling meditating and engaging in creative exploration both individually and within the greater project within which my research takes place. Finally, I am forever grateful for the opportunity to have been in the *Unsettling Knowledges Project*. It opened my heart and my mind and was a space in which I felt grounded and realigned to where I am and to my “why” as this thesis was written. It was a place to cry, be angry, laugh, heal and be free, all of which I believe has had a positive effect on how I engaged with my work.

Ethical Considerations

Given the archival nature of this study, the ethical considerations aligned with this work are about the re/traumatisation of anyone who may read the study. As there were no participants in this study, there were no ethical concerns related to informed consent, beneficence or harm related directly to co-researchers. Further to this, the work that was analysed stems from a public domain where the public already has access to this information, and not directly from the families of the examples that were reviewed. This removed the requirement to get their consent to do the study as well as the requirement to ensure the anonymity of the participants. However, the values of Decolonial Feminism mean that it was and continues to be important to be mindful and respectful of the family members throughout and after the research process, as there is an ethical mandate not to produce or perpetuate harm. Additionally, it is important not to diminish their agency and humanity within this work, as they are the true knowledge holders of what the passing of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni means for them and their respective communities (Kessi et al., 2022). Remaining attuned and respectful to their experiences and ways of knowing was practised through constant reflection, journaling, and collective conversations of what it means to be categorised as the "researcher."

Decolonial Feminism looks at ethics beyond getting approval to conduct studies within colonially constructed definitions of morally sound research (Kessi et al., 2022; Matutu, 2019; Msimang, 2020). Instead, research within this approach is about continuously and intentionally working to minimise harm throughout the research process. Additionally, it includes disrupting ideas of extracting knowledge, usually in the form of pain and trauma, for the benefit of the research and academic capitalist endeavour (Solano, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Furthermore, Decolonial Feminism recognises that the researcher has their own knowledge but that they are not the only, nor the primary knowledge-bearer in research work (Kessi et al., 2022; Msimang, 2020). This understanding helps to establish that this work is in no way a project for universalising black women's subjectivities and has in no way been intended to be written or read as such. Additionally, working in and from this approach was done through writing this work from a place of respect, empathy, and care. These principles were led by a constant reflection and imagining of what and how Tshegofatso and Nosicelo might feel about reading my work were they still here. This was also done with intentionality to not write with a voice that supersedes the many realities of what violence against black women looks like and means (Matutu, 2019). Furthermore, the approach within the analysis was to refuse the idea that the researcher has access to and should divulge all information, particularly information relating to trauma and pain that has historically been the enticement behind research on marginalised communities (Tuck & Yang, 2014). As such, the analysis did not quote or use imagery that described the deaths of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni. This omission was intentional in ensuring that the work was not only approved as ethical but that it was conducted with decolonial ethicality–that is locating the ethics in a way that was contextually relevant to the respective community's practices of ethics–throughout the research process (Matutu, 2019).

A resultant challenge of excluding the descriptions of Tshegofatso and Nosicelo's deaths was that they both felt like they were missing from their own stories. This attests to the finite ways in which victims/survivors are situated in their own stories. This will be discussed further in chapters four and five. To prevent this work from being another way in which the subjectivities of black women are silenced, I started chapter four with a personal epigraph for both Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni. The epigraph served to recentre and rehumanise both women. It was also written to remember who they were as people beyond their experiences of violence. I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Boonzaier, for this wonderful suggestion, as this recognition of who both women were, is a significant part of why this project was done.[3]

The case study method was a relevant method to investigate the specifically located narratives of GBV against black women that may exist within the media. This is because case studies provide a unique opportunity to engage in a topic in greater detail. Thus, in this work, it afforded greater attention to the narratives of GBV against black women, where these narratives may otherwise remain unacknowledged, undetected, or where they may continue to exist as unquestioned, normalised practices of how black women's experiences are portrayed. Additionally, the specific cases of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni were selected based on their timing relative to this project. They were also selected because of the specific positionality of both women concerning this work and of the researcher's positionality as a black woman working with trauma and violence. The chapter that follows on from this one will discuss how the media told the stories of the lives and deaths of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni. It will also provide a discussion on the identified narratives and what they contribute regarding black women's subjectivities within society.

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[3] This thank-you is intentionally written here as the ethics of care, respect, acknowledgement, and gratitude should be directed at everyone and throughout the research process.

Chapter Four: An Analysis of Black Women and GBV in Media Narratives

We See You, We Remember You

We remember Tshegofatso Pule. She was a 28-year-old woman who had already experienced much loss in her life. Despite losing her parents at a young age, she did not lose her light and grew up to be a magnetic woman who played a central role in her family. She was always willing to do right by herself and those she cared for, including owning up to her faults and striving to be a better person.

We also remember Nosicelo Mtebeni. She was a 23-year-old woman with much to live for. We remember her as someone who was driven and highly ambitious. She aspired to further herself and push beyond any limits ascribed to her. She loved nature and would have relished the sun on her skin, and the sweet melodies of birds in the air. Tshegofatso and Nosicelo both radiated love and joy and shall be dearly missed.[4]

The following chapter will analyse the media articles that were collected for Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni's cases of GBV. It will use both structural and thematic narrative analysis to analyse these articles. The chapter seeks to discuss whether the narrative representations within the reviewed media stories resist or perpetuate colonial narratives about black women. It also seeks to dissect what this means for how black women are understood regarding their personhood and the larger conversation of GBV. Furthermore, the analysis within this chapter will be constructed through a Decolonial Feminist lens, looking at the implications of these representations on black women and their perceived subjectivities.

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[4] The lack of focus on Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni beyond their bodies and the brutalities they endured, resulted in a noticeable lack of their humanity within the articles analysed. The sparsity of their subjectivities was made more apparent within this analysis through the researcher not wanting to explicitly write about what and how they suffered. It is with this in mind that the epigraph for Tshegofatso and Nosicelo was written. This work did not want to be another place in which their lives were displaced. Nor did it want to be another place in which their subjectivities were silenced. Thus, the epigraph seeks to pay tribute to their humanity, centralising them through a personal reading and reflection of who they were, based on the emotive information that was available. Furthermore, the epigraph hopes to serve as a reminder that black women are not the sum of their bodies. That violence is not the only way in which their lives are valued, shaped, and remembered.

The analytical portion of this chapter will engage with both the structural and thematic narratives that arose from the media texts. The need to engage in two forms of narrative analysis in this work came from the reading of various literature within Decolonial Feminism. With the foundational need to locate present existence within history, there developed the need to engage with the complexity of narratives. This meant looking at the resultant output such as themes, whilst recognising that the words within which they exist and are created matter as well (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Riessman, 2005, 2008). To engage meaningfully with what it means to conduct work that is both decolonial and feminist means to ensure that all components of coloniality must be interrogated and uprooted (Silva et al., 2022). Within this work, that looks in part like examining the themes and the structure(s) in which these themes are found. Relating Decolonial Feminism to Riessman's (2005) work means looking at the use of language as an instrument of persuasion. It is important to do so because language–a tool in which narratives are created–is not neutral. The infiltration of English and other non-native languages into Africa, and specifically South Africa, came with a predetermined explanation of what words mean. Solano (2019) gives an example of how the word "power" in Latin means "to be able to." This contrasts with the colonially derived and practised meanings of power which encompass conquest and domination. This example highlights the colonisation of language (Solano, 2019). Thus, there becomes a vital need to interrogate the component of language and framing within media, because the words chosen, and how they are assembled within the story-telling structure, create, and carry meaning. In turn, this generates imaginings which influence how an event or people come to be understood (Gilchrist, 2010; Spies, 2020).

With the above understanding, two primary narratives will be discussed in the sections that follow, each with its sub-narratives. The first is Narratives of Positionality, and the second is Narratives of Justice. Both narratives will be discussed concerning structural and thematic narrations, looking at how both components lend themselves to creating the identified narratives. These narratives will then be discussed concerning what they mean and do for black women and their perceived subjectivities. This will be done through a Decolonial Feminist lens.

Narratives of Positionality

The first narrative identified from the reviewed media articles became evident in how the articles were structured. This was done through how language was used, and in how the stories were repeatedly constructed and told. The following section will locate these different components and how they worked together to create this narration. It will start by discussing this narrative concerning the victims, and then the perpetrators.

Positioning the Victim

Victim Displacement through Structural Framing

There were two primary ways in which the articles positioned and thus represented the stories and experiences of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni. The first method was framing. Within the media articles, there was a common structural framing which emphasised who was of importance in the stories that were being told. The framing was often laid out in the introduction of the article, by opening with a brief positioning of the victim's family, sometimes including an identifier of the victim.

> *The parents of …University of Fort Hare LLB student Nosicelo Mtebeni have expressed content with progress in the case* (Ntshobane, 2021, p. 2)
>
> *It was a bittersweet moment for the family of Tshegofatso Pule when a second bid to be released on bail by Ntuthuko Shoba failed* (Pijoos, 2021c, p. 3)

> *The family of Nosicelo Mtebeni has decried the sentence* (Velaphi, 2021c*,* p. 1)
>
> *The family of Tshegofatso Pule are desperate to find details* (Mahamba, 2020a*,* p. 2).

If the articles did not open with the family, they would instead draw and maintain focus on the perpetrators. The articles would then reference the victims concerning what the perpetrator did to Nosicelo Mtebeni and Tshegofatso Pule respectively. This would be done at a point that was necessary to better contextualise what was going on in the perpetrator's life that would warrant the article.

> *Twenty-five years. This is the sentence handed down to Aluta Pasile* (Daily Dispatch, 2021*,* p. 11)
>
> *The 31-year-old man accused of... told the Roodeport Magistrates Court on Wednesday that he would not be applying for bail during his next appearance.* (de Villiers, 2020, p. 5)
>
> *The man charged with…was allegedly boyhood friends with the father of Pule's unborn child.* (Wicks & Pheto, 2020, p. 12)

In either approach, however, the point of centrality was very seldom on the victim. Rather, the victims have been superseded and instead were introduced or mentioned within the articles as citations. The media represented the perpetrators and the reactions of the victims' families as the real and crucial characters of the articles. One can understand the need to identify and attend to the perpetrators and the families of the victims. However, their stories were not positioned as being about the victims who suffered, but rather in place of them. There is a repeated focus on who the perpetrators were, how the families were represented to feel, and a focus on how Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni lost their lives. However, equal measures are not taken to mention who both women were beyond their deaths. Writing in this way only emphasises what the violence was and by whom it was planned and executed. This is done instead of focusing on who the violence was inflicted on, and what this meant for their subjectivity as victims.

The second way in which the Narrative of Positionality is constructed is with language. This will be discussed in the following section.

Displacement Through Language

Many of the articles used specific language to instruct the stories and subjectivities of both Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni.

The displacement of personhood and centrality from their own stories can also be identified through how they are described when they are mentioned within the articles. The common reference to the victims was of their name and age and in a few instances their careers. The examples below illustrate how they are brought into their own stories:

> *Fort Hare University student Nosicelo Mtebeni's* (Velaphi, 2021b*,* p. 1)
>
> *Who was studying towards her LLB at the University of Fort Hare* (Velaphi, 2021a*,* p. 2)
>
> *Pule, a 28-year-old beautician* (de Villiers, 2020*,* p. 5)
>
> *The 28-year-old beautician had left her home in Meadowlands, Soweto, to visit her boyfriend in Florida.* (News24 Wire, 2020, p. 6)

These are examples of how Nosicelo Mtebeni and Tshegofatso Pule were briefly mentioned. Thereafter, the articles would refocus on the representations of their families' reactions, the perpetrators, or the court cases of the perpetrators.

The use of capitalist descriptors like "beautician" and someone "studying towards their LLB" is to be considered further. These descriptors are Nosicelo's and Tshegofatso's most prominent reference points within their respective articles. This highlights the colonial legacy of capitalism which dictates how people can exist with meaning (Davis, 1981). On their own, Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni are two black women who have been violated, identifiers which socially may not carry much weight or meaning, and which follow a long-standing narrative of brutality against black women (Abrahams, 1998). However, locating a part of their personhood to their socio-capitalist contributions of working and studying, means that these occupational identifiers hold meaning within a society where personal characteristics may not matter. As in coloniality, their bodies do not matter, but what their bodies were able to do, and the labour that could have been extracted from their bodies are what is important (Abrahams, 1998; Davis, 1981). Thus, referring to them in this way both illustrates and sustains the capitalist (neo)coloniality embedded within society. It expresses that capitalist contributions take precedence over personhood and character (Davis, 1981; Fuentes, 2020).

Furthermore, locating their respective forms of labour perpetuates a narrative that they can be distinguished from other black victims and afforded a certain amount of value. As such, they can be given a certain level of concern for their particular victimhood because of these labour-based identifiers and the hierarchically determined places those identifiers hold within society. This subsequently ingrains the narrative that as black women, they do not in and of themselves have/hold value (Davis, 1981; Fuentes, 2020). This is similar to previous research which critiques how positions and identities of women make their experiences of violence more or less mournable (Fuentes, 2020; Salo & Moolman, 2013). For example, Gqola (2015) explains that the positionality of black women within colonial and neo-colonial structures means that they are unrapeable compared to other women. By that expression, she elaborates that they cannot, or are less likely to experience unwanted sexual advances due to their (colonially derived narratives of) intrinsic hypersexuality (Gqola, 2015). This marginalising representation leaves them more vulnerable to experiencing unwanted sexual advances and to being sexually abused. Additionally, it contributes towards black women being regarded as disposable and less worthy of receiving remorse or empathy for their incidences of abuse (Fuentes, 2020; Gqola, 2015). Within this understanding, the lives of both Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni are rendered unmournable as are other black bodies. However, including their careers means that their contributions to the colonial capitalist agenda provide a saving grace for them to experience some consideration—and perhaps empathy (Davis, 1981; Gqola, 2015). Understanding these descriptors in this way invokes one to question whether the empathy shown is not then directed at the loss of work they were to contribute towards, rather than to losing them as people.

It is interesting to note that the displacement of Tshegofatso and Nosicelo from their own stories is contrary to what exists in most media-based research. The literature identifies that there is usually a lack of locating the role of the perpetrator in women's experiences of violence (Boonzaier, 2022). The narratives noted in other research have been that women are victims, without locating that for there to be victims, there must be an existence of violators (Boonzaier, 2022). This contrasts with this research's narratives which place both Tshegofatso and Nosicelo not as victims, but as appendices to the stories of their violators.

It can also be noted that there is a critique in previous research that even though the women are at the centre of their stories, how women are described suggests that they are liable for their victimhood (Boonzaier, 2017; Spies, 2020). This is painted by narratives which construct how deserving or undeserving survivors are of their violence based on their moral identifiers and actions (Fuentes, 2020). This previous research aligns with how Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni were narrated in these articles. For example, where articles noted what preceded their experiences of violence, it was the actions of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni that were purported to incite the violence they experienced.

> *Pasile detailed how he and Mtebeni enjoyed an evening of drinking together on August 16 when he noticed that she paid more attention to her cellphone than him. He confronted her and an argument ensued.*

> *While she was in the bathroom the following day, Pasile managed to crack her new code and saw "I love you" and "I miss you" messages.*
>
> *He confronted Mtebeni, who attempted to take her cellphone from him. He then grabbed a knife* (Velaphi, 2021b, p. 1)

This extract shows that the supposed actions of Nosicelo Mtebeni are what fuelled the violence perpetrated against her. Thus, there are notable differences regarding positionality in this research. However, how they are described from their replaced positionality, as complicit in or at fault for their experiences, aligns with previous work (Gilchrist, 2010; Spies, 2020). For example, Boonzaier (2017) highlights how despite descriptions of Anene Booysen as a "good girl," there are still narratives constructed through her actions of drinking or being warned of staying out too late that inscribe her as at fault for her femicide. This is similar to what is discussed above regarding Nosicelo. This further perpetuates the victim-blaming narrative in instances where attention is drawn to the victim's subjectivity (Boonzaier, 2017; Spies, 2020).

Another example of how language simultaneously displaces the victim and centralises the perpetrator is seen in how many of the articles within Tshegofatso Pule's case, used the word "mastermind" to describe one of the perpetrators. This word and its variation *"masterminding"* (Wicks, 2021a, p. 7) was used over 30 times within the 50 reviewed articles about the case of GBV perpetrated against Tshegofatso. The repetitive use of the word is generative, and the nuances of the word seem to multiply within the variant uses. This word is used in the headlines, *"'Mastermind' pleads not guilty to charges of murder, defeating ends of justice"* (Nkosi, 2022a, p. 1), by-lines, *"Pule: Case of 'Mastermind'...starts in October"* (Wicks, 2021b, p. 6), in the text *"The man believed to be the mastermind behind"* (Dlamini, 2021, p. 2), and as subtexts to photos that went alongside certain articles. The continued use becomes almost a catchphrase of who the main character is in the story.

The person continuously referred to as the mastermind in Tshegofatso's death is her boyfriend and the father of their unborn child. He plans and uses another man to harm Tshegofatso on his behalf. The use of "mastermind" creates the imagery that he manipulated who he used as well as Tshegofatso. It supposes that he can plan and orchestrate those around him to do his will, whether that is to inflict harm or to experience it. Through this language, Tshegofatso once again becomes a bystander in her own story. She is shifted from being someone who has the autonomy to make her own decisions, to someone who is at the mercy of someone smarter and more skilful than she is. This shifts her positionality within her own experience and how she becomes narrated in the stories, pushing her to the outskirts. It also insinuates that violence is something that simply happened to her because she was not smart enough to stay safe. This contrasts with the realities of violence being something intricately woven into society, and from which few can escape.

This narration of a woman lacking autonomy, and of GBV being about women being unable to effectively protect themselves or be protected from danger, is in accordance with previous research and feminist theorisations of violence and the patriarchy (Shefer & Munt, 2019; Spies, 2020). Feminist theories have long critiqued the fact that women are not seen or represented to have their own autonomy (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Salo & Moolman, 2013). They critique that institutions have historically been set up by men to control women (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Shefer & Munt, 2019). This translates into the understanding that women exist, both implicitly and explicitly, to be orchestrated (Fuentes, 2020). An example of this orchestration exists even within discourses of combatting GBV. Women are placed as beings in need of protection by personal, community, and institutionally patriarchal structures (Boonzaier, 2022). This narrative agrees with a normalised script that implies that violence can be avoided. In contrast, Decolonial Feminist work on violence recognises and critiques the idea that violence is something that simply happens to people (Abrahams, 1998; Bulhan, 2015; Davis, 1981; Gill, 2018). It emphasises the reality that violence is a fundamental component of how modern neo-colonial structures have been created and continues to exist, and of which GBV is just one part (Shefer & Munt, 2019).

When one looks at the structural narrative of positionality through a Decolonial Feminist lens, one can see the implications this has for black women. It perpetuates the violence of generating a singular story of who black women are. To use Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni to contextualise the family and the perpetrators' stories is to use them as appendices to their own narratives. This shifting in positionality highlights the violence that black women currently experience. It also perpetuates the position they are made to inhabit in society–on the periphery, and only relevant as citations to their own lives (Chirape, 2021; Mama, 1989).

Additionally, referencing both women only in relation to the violence they experienced locates the shock of the violence higher on the ladder of importance than to whom the violence was enacted. The uproar is represented as being towards the ghastly manner in which they died rather than who was killed[5]. This highlights what is readily done to black women regarding their positionality. It also cements where black women are located within the hierarchical structures of society.

Furthermore, in removing them from the centre of their own stories, they are reduced to representations of something beyond themselves. They become a portrayal of what happens to black women, and what is possible to do to them (Abrahams, 1998; Carrijo & Martins, 2020). For example, when Sara Bartman was put on display, her story and humanity were removed (Boonzaier, 2017). She became a representation of what all black women are and look like (Abrahams, 1998; Carrijo & Martins, 2020). Similarly, Serena Williams has a personal story, but she gets put on display and becomes not just a tennis player, but a black tennis player. Her personal story is reduced, and she becomes a reflection/representation of black women everywhere (Abrahams, 1998). This shifting in these women's positionalities refutes them the space to exist beyond their violence, bodies, and talents. Yet that space is freely given to other women. Furthermore, their flaws, if noted, get used as reasons, or justifications for why they and other black women cannot occupy other roles beyond bodies for violence and harm. An example of this is Nosicelo being accused of infidelity and how this was used to justify her experience. This strengthens the association that black women must have experiences and conversations of violence as a normal part of their subjectivity, while their personhood and experiences of violence continue to be disregarded.

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[5] The reader is reminded that–even though the ways Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni died were dreadful, and the articles written on their respective cases of GBV repeatedly described how they died–the researcher has intentionally omitted the details of their deaths in this paper and within this analysis. Research and/or academia should not assume that it is entitled to have access to all information or experiences, especially if that access serves only to benefit the researcher while causing further harm on already marginalised communities (Tuck & Yang, 2014). Thus, the stance of the researcher, as well as the theoretical framing of Decolonial Feminism from which this thesis is written, mandates a refusal for this project to be another place in which the violence black women experience is put on display (Solano, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

When enacting Decolonial Feminism within the media, one can see the ways in which displacing victims from their own stories can be circumvented. This can be addressed and changed in future cases by increasing the attention given to victims' humanity. It can be done by focusing not only on the brutality and status of victimhood, or through representations of what the families feel towards the perpetrator and their trials, but also by reporting more consciously on who the victim was as a person. This can be done through greater representation of what the family shares about the person and having that be included in the articles more frequently. Within the articles that were available for this research, only four out of the more than 50 articles had narratives on the humanity of the victims

> *She described Mtebeni as a person driven by ambition to further her studies to masters after graduating. "A person who loved nature and agriculture,"* (Velaphi, 2021c, p. 1)

> *Tshepiso Tsita, a childhood friend of Pule's, said while she was heartbroken, she wanted to urge mourners not only to remember the manner in which she died but also how she lived*. (Pijoos & Njilo, 2020, p. 2)
>
> *Pule was a beautician who was talkative, adding that she was also apologetic when in the wrong.* (de Villiers, 2020, p. 5)
>
> *"Tshego's aunt, who had been bringing her up, is torn because she [Pule] was the light of the family."* (Pijoos, 2021c, p. 3)

In these articles, information regarding the perpetrator and the trial is given. However, space is also given to readjust the lens and remind the reader that it is about honouring, centring, and giving voice to the victim. It attunes the reader to the subjectivity of the victim beyond their body and the violence they endured. The extracts above show how there is a potential for articles to generate narratives that re-sensitise the reader to who the victim was as a person, thus recentring their humanity. These examples show that it is possible to do what most of the articles did not. They illustrate the possibility to correctly place the person, not just as a victim, but as someone who was nuanced, and who impacted the lives of their community in meaningful ways. Writing in this way would align with Decolonial Feminism which seeks to create change not just through theory, but through practical mechanisms for restoration and social justice (Chirape, 2021; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Mama, 1989). Another potential benefit of this method of writing could be to re-sensitise society not only to the people in the stories but also to the personal nature of GBV. Countless stories of GBV which contain only the facts of the violence, may contribute to the desensitisation society feels when reading these stories. However, locating the facts and connecting them to context, meaning, and personhood, helps people to relate better and see themselves within these narratives. This could potentially increase the kind of ownership people take when thinking about GBV. It could also affect the role they choose to play–as individuals who circumvent or perpetuate an environment that allows GBV to exist.

The following section will look at how the narrative of positionality was constructed and applied to the perpetrators.

Positioning the Perpetrator: Positioning Violence

Placement Through Language

Language was not only used to shift the lens away from the victims and their personhood within the selected cases. It was also a narrative tool congruent in locating the perpetrators of violence in particular ways (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016). Through repeatedly phrasing Tshegofatso Pule's boyfriend as a "mastermind" who knowingly coordinated her demise, the positionality of Tshegofatso's experience was shifted away from her own experience. It simultaneously cemented the positionality of her boyfriend and the type of person he is at the centre of her story—and of the conversation of GBV. Instead of a narrative that represents the realities of femicide and the plight of Tshegofatso Pule, the narrative becomes about the genius of the perpetrator. This narration of genius inadvertently overshadows the real mechanisms of power and patriarchy that are at play in his narrated actions. Power and domination can be argued to work in congruence with entitlement (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; du Toit, 2014; Gqola, 2007; Jewkes et al., 2011). Thus, rather than representing Tshegofatso's boyfriend's actions as driven by power and entitlement to be the decision-maker in his relationships, his actions are represented as genius. One can interpret that Tshegofatso Pule's boyfriend felt entitled to be with multiple women at once, without his wife's knowledge and consent.

> *Malephane testified that he was approached several times in 2020 to help find someone to murder Pule, who lived with her family in Meadowlands, Soweto. He said*

> *the planned murder was to hide Pule's pregnancy from her boyfriend's wife.* (Pijoos, 2021a, p. 12)
>
> *Shoba was married and didn't want his wife to find out about his relationship with Pule.* (Wicks, 2021a, p. 7)

He also felt entitled to compel Tshegofatso Pule to terminate the pregnancy despite her own decision to continue with it. This is because it jeopardised his ability to benefit from the life policy his other partner was going to get, which he felt entitled enough to use to pay the person he hired to harm Tshegofatso.

> *The money as part of the reason he wanted Pule killed was to ensure that he did not lose "R8m Trust Fund payout" that belonged to him and his partner.* (Feketha, 2022, p. 2)
>
> *"The reason why I trusted that he was going to pay me was when we met and he asked me to assist – when he told me he wanted Ms Pule to die – he told me about money from a trust fund he had received amounting to R8 million"* (Wicks, 2022c, p. 2)

When one reviews the articles, the picture becomes clear: maintaining his entitlements was dependent on him doing whatever was deemed necessary, which in the articles is narrated as masterminding. In more linear contexts, perpetrators feel entitled to women's bodies, and they do as they wish to act on those entitlements. This includes destroying and violating when those entitlements are not given (Boonzaier & van Schalkwyk, 2011). In other words, they take what they want, or punish those who do not give them what they want. In this instance, the entitlements are many and intertwining, and the existence of some jeopardises the continuation of others. Thus, to have everything he wants despite the discord requires that there be manipulation or "masterminding." However, to refer to Tshegofatso Pule's boyfriend as a "mastermind" dislocates his actions. It becomes about him being smart and coordinated. This is instead of it being about someone embedded in a colonially patriarchal system that makes him feel entitled to manipulate, to get what he feels he is entitled to. This is similar to how conversations around GBV have been constructed and critiqued by literature (Boonzaier & van Schalkwyk, 2011; Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). The reality and underlying reasons and nuance of why GBV exists and is so prevalent are reduced to superficial rationales, misrepresenting, or ignoring that there is a history and context for the current ways it exists (Gill 2018). There is a longstanding entitlement of violence within society which is not always referred to in common dialogues of violence, including GBV. Rather than locating Tshegofatso Pule's boyfriend's actions within the greater conversation of power, domination, and violence, her story and the actions of the perpetrator become about the perpetrator's personality as a "mastermind" (Chuma, 2016). Thus, the perpetrator is positioned as the key person in what should be Tshegofatso's story. This is done through language that places his intelligence as the focus, whilst displacing the mechanisms behind the need for him to enact such intelligence.

Another example of the use of language as an instrument for positioning the perpetrator is the use of the word *"heartless"* (Nkosi, 2022b*,* p. 1). Additional words used included, *"heinous act"* (Velaphi, 2021a*,* p. 2), *"gruesome"* (Dlamini, 2021*,* p. 2), *"harrowing"* (Wicks, 2022d*,* p. 2), and *"horrific"* (de Villiers, 2020, p. 5). These words were used over 30 times to describe the nature of the violence that took place against both women. That averages to a rate of approximately one in every two of the articles reviewed. These descriptors helped to construct various positional narratives around violence and perpetrators as discussed below.

Firstly, using words that describe the perpetrator's actions as lacking in feeling, empathy, or heart, constructs the narrative that it is these features and their salience in a person that would cause someone to harm or not harm others. Put differently, positive affect in the form of empathy and love are so powerful a force that those who can love and empathise are less likely to be violent. Conversely, those without these traits are so driven by their negative affect that they are more likely to brutalise and harm. The danger in this is its possibility to position, and thus divide people into those who only experience one or the other group of emotions. Additionally, it gives too much power to the force that emotions have over people. This idea is harmful in that it sustains the justifications that are already available on why men brutalise women. Such justifications include not being able to control oneself or one's urges or having one's emotions "run away with you" (Boonzaier, 2008; Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Donovan & Williams, 2002; Tlhabi, 2017).

A second implication of using language repetitively in this way is that it can create a narrative on what it takes, or of the kind of person who becomes capable of inflicting harm. Describing perpetrators and the type of violence they inflict in this way, constructs perpetrators to be people who are without feeling, love, or empathy. This can be harmful in that it posits violators to be particular kinds of people (Boonzaier, 2008; Davis, 1981; Moffett, 2006). Additionally, it creates room for people to absolve themselves of the reality of their actions. The unsaid narrative in these expressions allows for people to not take ownership of their violent behaviour as they do not see themselves as embodying, fully or otherwise, the heartless persona of the perpetrator constructed within the media. Moreover, it may warrant people to excuse their violence as acceptable, where "acceptable" can be understood as not "gruesome" or "horrific." There is also a subliminal construction that those who feel love and have heart cannot be violent and/or that what they do is not violent because they love. Both these framings are dangerous, as research shows that women more often experience violence from people they know, and with whom they have intimate or personal relationships. In other words, relationships where there is love (Boonzaier, 2017; Gqola, 2015; Patil & Purkayastha, 2015). We can see an attempt to discredit the reality that violence is possible from anyone, from the mother of the perpetrator that Tshegofatso's boyfriend hired. She is quoted by the media as saying that:

> *He is a "peaceful man who is not capable" of the gruesome murder he is accused. Malephane's mother said her son would not have any reason to kill anyone for money as she took care of him.* (Dlamini & Makhetha, 2020, p. 6)
>
> *Despite his failings, she said, her son was a "sweet and kind boy" who would help anyone in need. "He is not an aggressive person and he's just very down to earth."* (Wicks & Pheto, 2020, p. 12)

Through this, one sees the narrative that he is a decent and kind person and thus incapable of harming someone else. This minimises the fact that one can be good, and yet be able to do bad things. This is also seen in how the many different stories worked to narrate the perpetrators as only bad people. In the case of the trial against Nosicelo's perpetrator who is her partner, he is described as someone whose *"'actions imply that he is a dangerous person'"* (Ndaliso, 2021, p. 1).

> *"There is no showing that the accused is remorseful. The accused showed a complete disregard for the rights of others."* (Velaphi, 2021c, p. 1)

Similarly, the hired hand in Tshegofatso's death is described as someone with a *"chequered history with the law"* (Wicks & Pheto, 2020, p. 12) and *"as a self-confessed killer and liar"* (Nkosi, 2022c, p. 2). This perpetuates the idea that perpetrators must be bad people to perform gruesome acts of violence, and that there is only a mutually exclusive split of bad or good. Consequently, they are the only ones who can cause harm. This narrative concurs with research from Boonzaier (2008) that discusses how perpetrators are often portrayed as only occupying the "bad" part of a good versus bad dichotomy of existence. Through these examples, it becomes important to note that the given media narratives are unable to allow for the complexity of understanding human subjectivity. There is a limited representation of other characteristics that do not present violators solely as bad and dangerous. Through the media's particular construction, perpetrators are identified and positioned as particular bodies incapable of containing both good and bad qualities, or of occupying different qualities in different contexts. This is similar to existing literature critiquing narratives of who perpetrators are and look like, which interrogates the implication of only representing certain types/groups of people as part of the problem (Boonzaier, 2017; Dosekun, 2013).

Furthermore, in failing to correctly locate the complexity of human subjectivity and context, the perpetrators are further situated only as villainous people. Narrating them in this singular way mimics intervention programmes against domestic abusers that are devoid of context, reinforcing a one-dimensional script of who perpetrators are (Boonzaier & van Niekerk, 2018). This is cemented further through the inclusion of particular imagery of the perpetrators at their trials. Thus, it becomes seemingly implausible that they would do anything but be perpetrators of GBV. Phrases used to describe the perpetrators included,

> *She said Pasile was not remorseful* (Ndaliso, 2021, p.1)
>
> *Alutha Pasile…was a dangerous person* (Ndaliso, 2021*,* p. 1)
>
> *"It was being greedy and being selfish and for the love of money"* (Wicks, 2022b*,* p. 2)

This narrative is a common one identified in many different works around GBV regarding the embodiment of violence (Boonzaier, 2017). Though not new, it is worth engaging and discussing further. Locating the perpetrators as *"'unremorseful'"* (Ndaliso, 2021, p.1) creates an idea of who a "typical" perpetrator of GBV is. Additionally, repeatedly using images of the perpetrators informs us of what they look like and who they are. Images coupled with headlines like *"Pule's 'killer' had brushes with law before"* (Dlamini & Makhetha, 2020*,* p. 6) and descriptors such as *"someone who was prone to violence"*

(Feketha, 2022*,* p. 2), generate a racialised positional narrative of who perpetrators are (Davis, 1981; Moffett, 2006). This allows one to engage with the racialised and gendered narratives ascribed to black men, prompting a reflection about whether racialised and gendered narratives of black men work in tandem with the narratives for black women, and the implications therein (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016). Additionally, the repeated use of descriptors of the visual appearance of the perpetrators also raises the question of whether white perpetrators would be referred to, painted, or overtly identified in this way (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016).

> *The 32-year-old man, with a beard and bald head, wore an all-black suit and shirt for his first court appearance. He had chains around his ankles. He appeared calm during his brief appearance.* (Pijoos, 2021b, p. 2)

These and other extracts in which the media describes perpetrators lead to questions about how racialised narratives of violence affect systems of recourse. Through this type of narrative, certain populations are targeted while others are ignored. The resultant ramification is that it reduces the problem of violence to a community of people rather than correctly attributing it to a complex, and intentional system (Boonzaier, 2017; Buiten & Naidoo, 2016).

Narrating the perpetrators as a niche of bad people diminishes the pervasive nature of violence that women are exposed to (Gqola, 2007). It states that their experiences are a result of a particular type of person who looks a particular way. It also detracts from the reality that violence is a deeply embedded part of society that practices/enacts itself on the marginalised.

Additionally, representing the perpetrators as only bad people reduces Tshegofatso and Nosicelo’s experiences with violence to bad judgment on their part. It implies that they engaged with black men who are characterised as stereotypically more prone to violence. In doing so, the onus is placed on them as the victims to identify this and avoid the dangers accordingly. However, to suggest that the perpetrator is a certain type of person who must be avoided perpetuates a disconnect between the pervasiveness of toxic masculinity, coloniality, and domination (Boonzaier, 2017; Patil & Purkayastha, 2015).

Furthermore, this narrative of avoidance becomes about what women must to do stay away from the violent men, who are already othered on account of their race and context (Boonzaier, 2022; Boonzaier & van Niekerk, 2018). In the case of Tshegofatso Pule, the violence inflicted on her that led to her death was depicted as not the first, but second attempt on her life. Articles narrate that her boyfriend and the person he hired had first tried to take her life differently:

> *Tsitsa appeared to corroborate this – telling the court her friend had been contacted by a someone purporting to be a recruitment agent who had invited her for an interview at a McDonald's during the same period but that she had felt uncomfortable about it and ended up not going* (Wicks, 2022a, p. 4)

Here, the media suggests that Tshegofatso was mindful of the explicit dangers of meeting someone she did not know and is described as having taken the responsibility to judge the situation based on the dangers that would have supposedly been apparent to her. However, to say that she and other women must constantly and accurately assess all dangers implies that women who judge incorrectly can only fault themselves. This absolves structures and systems of violence of responsibility. Instead of a discourse on the need to attend to violence, the discourse is about being a better judge of character. It also becomes about being a smaller target for violence than the next person. Put differently, the burden is placed on what women must do (be "good," correctly enact femininity) to decrease the "risk" of experiencing violence (Boonzaier, 2008, 2018; Shefer & Munt, 2019; Spies, 2020). Furthermore, there is a disregard for the reality that violence is not delineated by race, despite narratives that represent it as such. Consequently, this narrative has larger ramifications through minimising the realities of violence. It also affects any institutionally based social justice work from being done to help unravel why violence is so pervasive in South Africa. The result is a misalignment of ideas on violence and a misallocation of resources and approaches to attending to it.

To describe the perpetrators in ways that narrate them as bad, coupled with the racialised representations and imagery, is a way to other them. This excludes others who are also violators from the common understanding of who a perpetrator is and looks like. Additionally, the narration reduces the nature of violence to something that is explicitly and overtly enacted by niche groups of people (Boonzaier, 2017). In doing so, the colonial and patriarchal institutions within which violence is intentionally practised get lost. Thus, the connection between past and present continuities, and narrations of violence against black women gets overshadowed, and their subjectivities remain intricately tied to violence.

Finally, using language in this way removes the reality and pervasive condition of violence in South Africa. It portrays the nature of violence within these two cases as fantastical (Boonzaier, 2022). Firstly, framing the violence as *"'reminiscent of a horror movie'"* (Velaphi, 2021c*,* p. 1) makes it appear that violence is somewhat rare. This narration is in accordance with the methods used that determine which cases of GBV make it into the news. Those that do make it, appear because they are cases seen as unusual or counter to the norm. They are depicted as outliers from the normal processes of society, and thus worthy of being noted (Gilchrist, 2010; Spies, 2020). If not to classify these cases of violence as unusual or rare, this narrative also portrays that there are levels of violence that seemingly have heart and are thus acceptable and that there are levels which cross an imaginary boundary into what is less acceptable. This helps the ongoing patriarchal and colonial goal of normalising violence against marginalised communities within society. It simultaneously helps perpetrators to identify the boundaries of violence within which they can work to increase their chances of going unscathed (Bulhan, 2015; Fuentes, 2020; Wooten, 2017; Zounlome et al., 2019).

The conscious and subconscious knowledge produced by these narratives serve to further the colonial mechanism of power, which in turn, fortifies violence. Resultantly, this reinforces the displacement of black women and their subjectivities (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981; Gqola, 2015). Furthermore, representing the violence that Tshegofatso and Nosicelo experienced as horrific and as outliers, perpetuates ideas around the disposability of black bodies. Black women become associated with extreme acts of violence, meaning that the less severe forms they may experience go unacknowledged. Thus, they are made to traverse the tightrope that their lives are less or unmournable. These representations then prompt the questions: In what ways is it acceptable for black women to be violated? How often are these “acceptable” forms of violence occurring while going unacknowledged? How do we disrupt their occurrence and normalisation?

Decolonial Feminism would argue that the nuances of these constructed narratives are some of how coloniality becomes a natural, undetectable part of society. By distorting the realities of violence and its history, coloniality embeds itself as something that organically and flawlessly exists in how society operates (Kessi et al., 2022). Literature on habit formation notes that repeated enactments of a given behaviour, which can be aided by prompts and routines, result in that behaviour becoming more intrinsic and automated (Lally et al., 2011). Therefore, less conscious thought is given to doing the behaviour, especially if the cues remain in place (Lally et al., 2011). The same argument can be made for coloniality. If violence is represented as taking place by particular people and worthy to be noticed within particular acts seen as heinous, then society’s associations to it become more intrinsically linked to particular examples of violence deemed gruesome and taking place within certain circumstances (cues), and against certain people. As a result, the true nature of where and how violence stems from becomes lost. It is no longer correctly located within the mechanisms of coloniality and patriarchal structures of domination. Instead, it is positioned as occurring by certain people. As such, violence becomes habitual, and coloniality becomes entrenched as a normalised practice of behaviour and structure (Bulhan, 2015; Silva et al., 2022). This allows coloniality to become implicit, and eventually forgotten as a core mechanism and root of why violence exists in its current forms. Thus, by not locating violence as a systemic issue and associating it with its cues of coloniality and power, coloniality further inculcates itself as a natural component of life. It affirms and reaffirms itself in how people experience their lives, and it becomes harder to locate its mechanisms of operation to dismantle its systems (Kessi et al., 2022). Consequently, black women's positionality within society remains the same, and their experiences of violence are reinforced as a normal part of their subjectivities, whilst those subjectivities are disregarded.

The remainder of this chapter will go on to discuss the second identified theme of Narratives of Justice.

Narratives of Justice

The following section will discuss the theme of Narratives of Justice that were represented within the reviewed media articles. It will draw attention to the sub-themes of effective and ineffective justice within the trials of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni's violators. Within the narrated stories, justice for Tshegofatso and Nosicelo was constructed as the law and the proceedings of the law through the trials of the respective perpetrators.

Justice Done Right

The first theme of justice was of the law, which was represented as a system that would correctly run its course. This suggested that justice would ultimately prevail. In both cases, family members are portrayed as having faith in the legal system as the antithesis to the previously discussed “bad” perpetrator. Quotations that were selected from both Tshegofatso and Nosicelo’s families included,

> *“Let the law run its course.”* (Velaphi, 2021a*,* p. 2)
>
> *“For now we are still happy with how the case has progressed”* (Ntshobane, 2021*,* p. 2)
>
> *“It’s a process, and eventually, the day shall come.”* (Mahamba, 2020b*,* p. 2)
>
> *“Direct imprisonment would be an effective sentence option because of the gravity of the offence”* (Ndaliso, 2021, p. 1)

Excerpts from what the families of Nosicelo Mtebeni and Tshegofatso Pule shared with the media are used to narrate their beliefs. They are represented as believing that the law and everything within it would lead them to justice. In the analysed articles, this justice was represented to mean that all the violators would be convicted. Further to this, was the construction of stories about the families’ connection to what justice would mean, not just for the perpetrators but for themselves. The selection of chosen quotes from the families can be interpreted to mean that they believed that the correct and just enactment of the law would be a gateway to healing.

> *Katake said the family had a sense of relief that Shoba was arrested* (Pijoos, 2021b, p. 2)
>
> *Pule’s uncle says although the trial…was a gruelling experience for him and his family, he believes they can now finally begin the healing process.* (Wicks, 2022e, p. 6)

One can see the constructed power that justice and its right enactment have. Any difficulties, delays, or deviations on the journey to justice would result in a narrative of a *“reopening of old wounds”* (Pijoos, 2021b*,* p. 2), or an impediment to the healing that the families were waiting for. This was also evident in how the media chose to include certain reactions from the respective families, regarding how they seemingly felt about what the sentences of the perpetrators should be. For example, once the perpetrator against Nosicelo Mtebeni had been sentenced to 25 years in prison, the following quote from Nosicelo's father was included in one article:

> *"We are not happy with this sentence. He [Pasile] had time to go and buy tools…and he gets off lightly with the crime."* (Ndaliso, 2021, p. 1)

This illustrates the representation that the law would have effectively done its job in combatting the evil of the bad and villainous perpetrator if only the weight of punishment was equal to the felt weight of the crime.

The narrative of effectiveness is simultaneously contrasted through the opposing narrative sub-theme of justice being executed ineffectively.

Doing Justice Better

In contrast to commending the justice system and a belief in its effective enactments of the law, was the narration of its criticism and recommendations. There was seemingly an appreciation for the speed of the trials. This was portrayed through the included recommendations that all GBV trials should be conducted and concluded as quickly as these trials were.

> *The Commission for Gender Equality has commended the "speed and efficiency" with which prosecutors and the court handled the ... case against Aluta Pasile, describing it as a model that should be applied to all cases of gender-based violence and femicide.* (Maromo, 2021, p. 3)

This was linked to the represented narratives that faster trials meant there would be a better outlook for GBV survivors because they would not have to wait long for their cases to be resolved. This, in turn, meant that they and their families could heal from the fast conclusion of "correct" justice proceedings.

> *Pule's family said that the postponement delayed the process of finding closure.* (Dlamini, 2021, p. 2)

It is also suggested that continuing with a pace that mimicked these two cases would mean a better outlook for the justice system concerning its mandate on GBV. To have a faster turnaround time for these cases could mean greater concern and effort is being directed towards addressing the issue.

> *The commission further called on the criminal justice system to speed up all gender-based violence and femicide-related cases that have stalled in the system.* (Maromo, 2021, p. 3)

The articles also included information presented as recommendations to aid the legal system in their enactment of justice. This resulted from the families' dissatisfaction with the efficacy of the punishment of the perpetrators. The articles included critiques of punishment that presented anything less than a life sentence as being too lenient. Once again, this leniency was constructed through the feelings of the families being done a disservice in their healing process:

> *The family of Nosicelo Mtebeni has decried the sentence imposed… as too light, describing it as a way of "bringing the murderer back to life", while they will never see their child again.* (Velaphi, 2021c, p. 1)

Additionally, the perpetrator was mentioned to have access to social media while in prison. This interpreted freedom of the convicted perpetrator by Tshegofatso Pule's family is portrayed as a blight to what conviction, and thus justice, should mean.

> *Katake said Malephane had not made contact with the Pule family. He said the convicted killer could have used his cellphone privilege to call and apologise for what he had done to the family. "He won't learn the lesson from what he has done. This*

> *man is having a nice time in prison, for us if we see someone taking responsibility for what happened, it will help us as a family.*
>
> *"My plea is that a person like Malephane gaining access to Facebook sends the wrong message"* (Mafisa, 2021, p. 2)

Additional recommendations were also made, with some articles noting community-based suggestions to reintroduce the death penalty as a more effective course of justice (Zwane, 2020).

When one regards the media's selected remarks from the families, one can examine the literature and interpret their represented reactions as stemming from a punitive understanding of what discipline and justice currently look like in South Africa. The alternate lengths and forms of effective punishment highlight the tendency to reprimand violence with violence. As such, one can see the many manifestations that violence has in South Africa. This highlights the necessity to point out its history and current pervasiveness.

These narratives of justice relate to research that focuses on the role of traditional and mainstream systems of justice. The close following of the perpetrators' trials represents the legal criminal system as the primary route that is taken by victims and/or their families to seek justice. However, there are ongoing discussions within research that note how victims/survivors may not often feel safe using this system (Gangoli et al., 2020).

Thus, the narration regarding the reliance on the law leads to a larger and more complex conversation of justice–namely, around how the current system neglects the nuance of what the victim is left with once the trial ends. In the above cases, there is seemingly justice for the families through the convictions of the perpetrators. The families are then represented to be able to heal their wounds. However, the researcher cannot help but question: what about those without convictions? And what about justice for Nosicelo Mtebeni and Tshegofatso Pule?

In the case of Nosicelo Mtebeni, the family is given money by the university she attended.

> *Kholisile and Nosicelo's mother, Ntombizandile Mtebeni, met members of the UFH convocation led by its president, advocate Andile Mini, at the Mayfair Hotel in Mthatha on Wednesday.*
>
> *Mini later told journalists that during Nosicelo's memorial service on August 25, the convocation had pledged to contribute R150,000 as part of its support for the Mtebeni family after her funeral.*
>
> *The money came from the pockets of six members of the structure, but it came with terms and conditions.*
>
> *"We decided not to give the money as cash. Instead, we want the family to start something that will stay on for years."* (Ntshobane, 2021, p.2)

However, as indicated by the text above, Nosicelo's family is given conditions under which they are allowed to spend their money. This is done without regard to their ways of knowing and to their experiences of how best to utilise the money. In the case of Tshegofatso Pule, no articles within the data collection period mentioned the verdict of her boyfriend. However, he was ultimately charged guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment (Seleka, 2022). The person who he contracted to take Tshegofatso Pule's life was sentenced to 20 years in prison (Pijoos, 2021a; Wicks, 2021a). Despite these rulings, there are no reparations afforded to her family as with Nosicelo's family. Although both cases resulted in guilty verdicts, one could argue that there has been a trail of violence that has denied both Nosicelo Mtebeni and Tshegofatso Pule their justice.

The narrative of justice is further created by representations that evidence is an important component which allows justice to in/effectively run its course:

> *After the defence closed its case in Ntuthuko Shoba's…trial yesterday, the family of… Tshegofatso Pule expressed confidence that the State deposed adequate evidence to fetch a life imprisonment sentence.* (Nkosi, 2022d, p.4)

Through this excerpt, one can see the construction of evidence as having an important role in solidifying a guilty verdict against the perpetrator. However, the challenge which is often faced in cases of GBV is that bodies may not always tell the tale of violence (Boonzaier & van Schalkwyk, 2011). Additionally, the violence that black women face within GBV is not solely physical. Black women are also forced to endure emotional, psychological, and financial violence, and these forms of GBV are difficult to use as evidence against perpetrators (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002).

Additionally, when one thinks of the different, more stringent standards to which black women are held when it comes to being believed about experiencing GBV, it becomes important to acknowledge that there may be a differentiation in how much evidence would be regarded as "enough" (Fuentes, 2020; Kelly et al., 2020; Wooten, 2017). This would affect whether they are believed, which would affect if, and when they get to experience justice (Fuentes, 2020; Kelly et al., 2020; Wooten, 2017). This challenge may be exacerbated when there are no other people to corroborate their experience, as can be the case with GBV. In the cases of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni, the lack of life within their bodies contributed significantly towards the sufficient evidence used against the perpetrators. This was in conjunction with the aid of other people to substantiate their experiences. In these two cases, the perpetrators were the ones to assist in providing this evidence. However, this is not often the case. Thus, one must ask, if lifeless bodies are the standard amount of evidence to be brought forward, is there, and can there be justice for black women? Additionally, if black women are held to a different standard regarding their pain and experiences, how much weight does a black woman's story and experience hold on its own before she is to be believed and justified? This is especially pertinent to ask since black women are often displaced from their own stories for the benefit of others.

Consequently, the narrative of justice represented in the reviewed articles raises various questions regarding the implications of justice and the justice system concerning black women. These implications will be discussed in the chapter to follow.

This chapter sought to illustrate and analyse the various narratives constructed by the media and engage with what was found through a Decolonial Feminist lens. Two primary themes were identified from the collected articles. The first was “Narratives of Positionality.” This theme had two sub-themes: “Positioning the Victim” and “Positioning the Perpetrator: Positioning Violence.” The second primary theme was “Narratives of Justice.” It also had sub-themes: “Justice Done Right,” and “Doing Justice better.” The structure of the articles and the language used within them highlight how black women are continually superseded in their own stories. In the cases of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni, both women were included as references to stories of their respective families and perpetrators, rather than as the people about whom the stories were about. Their lives were reduced to descriptions of how they died, without correctly locating their subjectivities.

Additionally, their experiences were made to appear as horrendous cases perpetrated by heartless violators. Thus, the pervasive nature of violence against black women is reduced to fantastical once-off cases (Boonzaier, 2022). These narratives mimic colonial practices of silencing the experiences of black women from their lives and the many violences they encounter. Additionally, the representation of their cases as abhorrently violent based on the evidence available represents black women as only deserving of attention when severe, evidence-based cases of violence are enacted against them. This reinforces the differential experience that black women are made to face in society. It perpetuates disparities of their womanhood to that of other women. It also reinforces that their pain is different to other women, whilst narrating that pain and violence are the sum of who black women are.

Furthermore, these narratives denote that violence for black women looks a specific way: gruesome and overt. This representation guides the journey of justice for black women along particular pathways, leaving little room to ask for justice beyond families healing from perpetrator convictions, after the loss of a life.

The chapter that follows seeks to further discuss what was found and analysed, focusing on the implications and significance of the work.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This final chapter will discuss the implications of the narratives identified in chapter four. It will then go on to discuss the significance of conducting research of this nature, whilst recognising the limitations within it. Finally, it will suggest ways in which this research can be continued and developed further.

Disparities in Coverage: Timing and Visibility on Newsworthiness

The first implication to be discussed from the results and analysis is the media coverage that was available for the GBV cases of Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni. It is interesting to note that there is a significant difference between the number of articles that were available for analysis for Nosicelo's case, compared to those that were available for Tshegofatso's. The difference is thought to be attributed to different things that will be discussed below.

The first reason may be attributed to the length of time that each case took to be completed. The trial against Nosicelo's perpetrator was completed within a few months of the first report of her case of GBV. In contrast, Tshegofatso's case of GBV occurred before Nosicelo's. However, the trial against Tshegofatso's second perpetrator was still occurring after the data collection period had passed. Additionally, there was a quick admission of guilt from the perpetrator in Nosicelo Mtebeni's case. The admission could have resulted in a shorter trial period which would have meant less coverage. This contrasts with Tshegofatso Pule's case where there was also a relatively quick admission of guilt from the first perpetrator, but where the second perpetrator did not admit to being guilty and thus needed to be tried.

Another perceived reason that may have affected the initial reporting of the respective cases could have been the timing. Within the first month of their respective cases taking place, there were zero articles written about Nosicelo Mtebeni's case. However, there were seven articles written about Tshegofatso Pule’s case in that same initial period. Tshegofatso Pule’s case took place in June 2020, whereas Nosicelo Mtebeni’s case took place in August 2021. Although they took place during a similar period of COVID-19-related lockdown regulations, Nosicelo Mtebeni’s case took place during the month considered to be Women’s Month in South Africa. The media coverage in the same year as her case notes a surge of GBV cases during this period (Mosupyoe, 2021). Thus, the timing may have impacted the coverage of Nosicelo Mtebeni’s case. The perceived surge may have also resulted in the media having to report on many other cases taking place during this time. This may have reduced the extent to which each case, including Nosicelo’s, was written about and followed up on. It may also explain why there were many articles where Nosicelo Mtebeni was mentioned, but which could not be used within this study because she was being mentioned in passing either as part of a list of the survivors/victims of GBV within Women’s Month or as a reference in opinion pieces which were discussing the dilemma of GBV. As such, she was mentioned along with other women who had been brutalised, and she, along with these women, was given one shared place to be grieved.

There is a lot that can be discussed regarding the perceived phenomenon of increased cases of violence in a month that advocates for women. Firstly, it is important to discuss that the perceived increase in cases could be because more attention is being paid to women. Thus, the focus on women, including the atrocities against them, becomes more relevant to document and circulate, creating the illusion that there is more violence within this month. There is an importance in advocating for change to better the lived experiences of women. However, the greater focus given to women in this month, highlights the default role women play within society. This role is in subjugation to hegemonic colonial and patriarchal systems of domination, rendering a “Women’s Month” necessary.

Secondly, if there is a surge of cases of GBV within that month, it highlights the disjuncture between the constitutional claims for equality, and the practical realities of power and domination that are enacted against women (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Chuma, 2016; Domínguez, 2022; Dosekun, 2007; Fuentes, 2020; Gqola, 2007). This disjuncture illustrates that there are psychological as well as institutional barriers to creating a social climate that recognises and respects the subjectivity of women (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Chuma, 2016). Finally, this difference points to the work that still needs to be done in addressing societal engagement with violence. It also shows the roles that masculinity and power play in perpetuating coloniality within all structures in South Africa (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Chuma, 2016; Gqola, 2007).

The differentiation in coverage between both cases may also be attributed to the differences in the visibility of their bodies. In the case of Tshegofatso Pule, her body was put on display to be found by people traversing the area (Wicks & Pheto, 2020). In contrast, the perpetrator attempted to hide Nosicelo’s body from being found (Velaphi, 2021a). These differences in visibility may have contributed to the newsworthiness of each case. The more readily visible brutality against Tshegofatso may have warranted greater attention. This is illustrated in the difference of initial articles written about each case within the first month of their deaths.

Although analysed together, this difference in coverage between both cases highlights an important component concerning visibility and newsworthiness. It showcases that even when the deaths of black women are “heinous” and “gruesome,” they warrant more attention when they are made visible to the world. The nature and extent of the harm they experience are only made real and believable when there is evidence to put on display. This is especially true when that evidence is a body. This showcases the extent to which black women must suffer and be violated before they are to be truly seen. This relates to the literature which found that there are differences in definitions and experiences of harm that are ascribed to black women before they will be believed for their experienced violations (Kelly et al., 2020). These narratives implicitly reinforce the idea that black women are strong and can endure more pain than other women. This difference is not because they are stronger or have higher thresholds as colonially depicted, but because they are not given a choice to be soft (Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Lewis et al., 2016). Consequently, newsworthiness that is geared around severe acts of violence and visibility, affects how black women are seen within society. As with Sara Bartman and the connection created between sexual deviancy and race, black women and their connectivity to violence is perpetuated (Abrahams, 1998). The coverage of certain stories over others and descriptions of their bodies are used to locate their bodies as sites of violence (Abrahams, 1998; Baderoon; 2014). Resultantly, selectivity in coverage reinscribes black women and their womanhood as subaltern to white womanhood, femininity, and masculinity (Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Salo & Moolman, 2013). This affects how black women are made to, and able to navigate their social worlds (Kelly et al., 2020; Wooten, 2017; Zounlome et al., 2019). This in turn affects their safety and their freedom (Abrahams, 1998; Davis, 1981; Kelly et al., 2020; Wooten, 2017; Zounlome et al., 2019).

Race as it “Intersects” with Violence

A second implication that the analysis forces us to consider, is the racialised interconnectivity between the perpetrators, and the subjectivities of black women as victims. The Narrative of Positionality noted how Tshegofatso and Nosicelo were located within their own stories. It also illustrated how their respective perpetrators were positioned as well. Although it is important to correctly situate perpetrators of violence within conversations of GBV, there is an added challenge when the victims/survivors are black women. This is because when victims are black women, the legacy of coloniality means that black men are almost immediately implicated as the perpetrators (Baderoon, 2014; Boonzaier, 2018;

Dosekun, 2013; Mama, 1989; Matutu & Mpofu, personal communication, November 9, 2022). This makes it difficult to have one conversation that fully centres black women and another conversation that correctly identifies the role of perpetrators. Instead, the conversations are merged because of the connection between black women, black men, and violence. This interconnectivity further perpetuates the rhetoric that black women do not or cannot exist as their own identities. It posits that their experiences of violence are tied to black men. This coincides with previous literature that sees the suppression of black women's experiences of violence to protect black men and the black community (Davis, 1981; Kelly et al., 2020; Zounlome et al., 2019). Thus, it is important to recognise the role of media narratives in shifting black women's positionality. In doing so, we can highlight how black women are not given the space to have a personalised and focused conversation regarding their safety. Instead, these conversations become racialised in ways that serve to silence their experience. This is seen even within this paper when the narrative of positionality focuses on how the perpetrators are located within the victim's stories.

Additionally, omitting the context of violence while linking black women and black men together, serves to racialise it. It represents black people as the sites of whom violence is "meant" for and enacted (Davis, 1981; Moffett, 2006). This representation warrants a conversation concerning how violence becomes implicated as an intangible identity that black people take up. As such, a particular "intersection" between blackness and violence is generated/sustained. This intersection between tangible blackness and intangible narratives of violence affects how black women are treated, perpetuating the normalisation of their encounters with violence. Consequently, it entrenches systems that make it difficult to believe and stand up for black women's experiences of violence. Thus, black women continue to be marginalised and violated and their womanhood and subjectivities continue to be disregarded.

The intersection of tangible identities like race, with depictions of violence, hypersexuality, and incivility is not necessarily new. However, the importance lies in naming the phenomenon, rather than enabling it to affect the representation of black people and their lived experiences— hiding as microaggressions (Kessi et al., 2022). In doing so, we draw explicit attention to the mechanisms of coloniality which otherwise continue to be camouflaged as normal and natural (Kessi et al., 2022).

Criminality & Justice

This section will now discuss the implications of justice within the context of the analysed articles concerning the cases of Tshegofatso, Nosicelo, and black women in general. Within the articles, the families of the victims were used as a tool to discuss justice for Tshegofatso and Nosicelo. The identified sub-narratives of Justice Done right and Doing Justice Better, raise an important discussion around what Moolman (2022) describes as the problem of violence, versus its criminality. Moolman (2022) states that legal systems criminalise (certain) violence, in a bid to tackle it as a phenomenon. However, its criminalisation reduces violence from a pervasive issue, down to criminally defined instances of violence (Kim, 2018, 2021; Moolman, 2022). In doing so, the context, complexities, and many manifestations of violence are lost. How it is understood and attended to is then affected.

There are also European origins and influences in how criminality is defined in South Africa (Solano, 2019). These stem in part from the coloniality of language within the country's past and present (Solano, 2019). Additionally, when one engages with the context within which this definition was created, one is mindful that it was not purposed to serve black people (Dosekun, 2013; Kim, 2018, 2021). Rather, constructions of criminality were used to subdue black bodies and to protect white people from them (Kim, 2021). As such, the essence of criminality's definition, and thus its enactment, was not intended to and continues not to serve black women and other marginalised communities (Domínguez, 2022; Kim, 2021; Moolman, 2022).

Further to this was the charge to raise awareness about the scourge of GBV. Feminist movements utilised the increased focus on crime as a societal issue, to move GBV from a social problem to a criminal offence within the confines of the law (Kim, 2018, 2021). This means that the definition of GBV works within the limits of the coloniality of the law. This begs the question of whether GBV, when redefined as a crime, can fully fit into a decolonial model of centring the black experience (Chirape, 2021). Moreover, this reconstruction of GBV from a social problem to a crime has repositioned how we engage with the social problem of GBV. Through this redefining, GBV is understood not as a colonially fuelled and systemic problem of violence, but as a crime within the colonial construction of the law (Kim, 2018; Richie et al., 2021). Therefore, the way it is attended to is in retaliation to an illegal offence that is often individualised, rather than a social problem steeped in mechanisms of domination and power (Kim, 2018; Richie et al., 2021). Thus, locating the origins of criminality, and current representations of GBV as a crime, helps to contextualise where black women are situated in conversations of justice. It becomes evident that black women are not implicitly included in the protections that are meant to be afforded to victims/survivors of GBV.

Furthermore, the challenges of safety and justice for black women are made more concerning when one thinks about how GBV is seemingly the only avenue in which justice against violence can be sought (Kim, 2018, 2021; Richie et al., 2021). This is despite there being many other unexpressed forms of violence that black women experience (Domínguez, 2022; Dosekun, 2007; Dosekun, 2013; Fuentes, 2020; Matutu & Mpofu, personal communication, November 9, 2022). The construction of GBV within the criminal legal system makes it more visible and more “punishable” than other forms of violence. Once again, this points to the barriers caused by confining GBV to an issue of criminality, rather than a social ill of violence and power—of which GBV is one recognised manifestation (Kim, 2018, 2021; Matutu & Mpofu, personal communication, November 9, 2022). It means that various forms of harm are rendered invalid or are ignored. It also means that GBV is galvanised on behalf of other unrecognised harms in a bid to try and seek justice and help for other experienced violences. There are several problems with this. Firstly, other forms of violence continue to be sidelined and ignored (Domínguez, 2022; Dosekun, 2013; Fuentes, 2020; Matutu & Mpofu, personal communication, November 9, 2022). Secondly, the success of using GBV to advocate for justice is usually contingent on valid and substantial evidence (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). It is also contingent on the narrative of a particular kind of victim/survivor that would warrant empathy and justice (Boonzaier, 2017; Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Salo & Moolman, 2013). Thus, these violences persist, often unacknowledged as legitimate, unless framed through the criminality of GBV. However, there are also many obstacles and points of violence that affect victims/survivors even within GBV. Thus, it becomes important to acknowledge the realities of these obstacles regarding how they affect black women. Understanding the colonial legacies of current structures helps us to correctly locate that black women are the most vulnerable to experiencing violence but are provided with the least safety and/or opportunities for justice.

Furthermore, the approach to justice in this way remains reactionary. It seeks to punish things already done within the confines of a single crime, without giving adequate attention to proactive equity that seeks to undo structures that enable violence to persist (Domínguez, 2022). Additionally, survivors/victims who use the traditional forms of justice of state law, become tied to a system that could just as easily harm them because of its founding colonially punitive principles and mechanisms (Dosekun, 2007; Kim, 2018; Richie et al., 2021).

With this context in mind, the importance of redefining how violence and GBV are understood concerning justice on individual and social levels becomes unavoidable (Kim, 2018). Moreover, it highlights the importance of centring black women and other marginalised communities in these reconstructions. Doing so would enable an intersectional investigation of what it means to discuss coloniality, criminality, and justice in the face of GBV and other less-recognised forms of violence (Kim, 2018; Richie et al., 2021). One can argue that by not doing so, we are intrinsically re-excluding and re-silencing these communities. However, having an awareness of these harmful systems opens the opportunity to develop Decolonial Feminist-based questions and innovations. It provides an opportunity for critique, ingenuity, creativity, and action that centres rather than others black women. The current pitfalls open a different way to think about and disrupt coloniality, criminality, and justice. They also provide opportunities to reimagine how society engages with violence (Moolman, 2022). This would implicate how black women are represented, including having a better regard for their personhood.

A simple example of how the media could engage in helping to change avenues and systems of awareness for justice would be to provide alternative resources for survivors of GBV to get help, besides the police. They could do this by including information in the articles that they write (Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Richie et al., 2021). However, all avenues of this work would have an obligation to ask victims/survivors what justice looks like and means to and for them (Kim, 2018, 2021). Additionally, this would include asking them about how these forms of justice can be executed relevantly, meaningfully, and correctly (Gangoli et al., 2020).

The Gaze versus Critical Reflexivity

The third implication of the data analysis is regarding the role of the media in society. The results prompt the researcher to ask whether the media could disrupt the colonial gaze it may often perpetuate within its writing. The influence and impact of the media begs the question of whether it is possible to alter the role of the gaze from one of denoting and thus reinforcing the “other,” to one of societal introspection (Tsikata, 2014). One would argue that using the gaze at all allows coloniality to remain inconspicuous and unchallenged, rather than to be overtly identified and dismantled (Kessi et al., 2022; Mama, 1989).

Locating the role the media may play in creating and perpetuating the gaze, is important for how we are to understand how and what the gaze does in further marginalising black women and the conversation of GBV. The gaze silences the context and nuance of why women in general, and black women in particular, face egregious challenges to their safety in overt and implicit ways. Writing on “newsworthy” cases of GBV, without drawing attention to the complexities and histories of violence in South Africa, makes it so that these stories are focused as fantastical, unusual displays of violence to be gawked at before returning to normal (Boonzaier, 2022; Gilchrist, 2010; Spies, 2020). How cases of GBV are written mimics the slow of traffic, as cars take turns to stare at the accident on the side of the ride, before pressing down on the accelerator and returning to their lives. In the cases of Tshegofatso and Nosicelo, the media’s representation implicitly serves to display the scene of the accident. The articles display the bodies of the casualties and other affected parties. Those who do not look like or experience a similar subjectivity to these people can point, stare, and have their assumptions about black women, black bodies and violence confirmed or reinforced, before moving along. In doing so, the gaze situates black women as the site of violence, and as the other. Once again, this reduces the opportunity to correctly locate violence. Additionally, it reinforces how violence is understood and associated with black women. It simultaneously reduces the many violences black women experience to one mechanism (Domínguez, 2022; Matutu & Mpofu, personal communication, November 9, 2022). Narrating only on GBV and femicide negates the realities of there being other forms of violence that black women experience and for which they are misunderstood or not heard/ignored. This not only affects their subjectivities of how they experience and grapple with these various personal and systemic violences, but it narrows the avenues within which they will be able to receive help and healing. It pre-defines and confines how they can come forward, affecting their relationship in and to society, and ultimately to freedom (Dosekun, 2007; Dosekun, 2013). Thus, writing in this way focuses and maintains a particular gaze and representation of black women and GBV. This contrasts with the potential for the media to be a lens for society to be critically reflexive of its oppressive and marginalising systems of operation through correctly locating the contexts of what it chooses to report.

Having looked at the various implications that arise from the representations and narratives of GBV against black women, the next section of this chapter will look at some of the shortcomings within the research. It will also highlight the contributions of this work and make recommendations for possible ways forward.

Limitations

The scope of this study means that there is a limitation regarding its ability to be accurately expanded to broader understandings and experiences of GBV. The two examples used are limited in the extent to which their findings can generate meaning that goes beyond the particular categories of the examples given. However, the work provided here contributes towards the modest work that currently exists in the field of understanding the complex relationship of representations of black women and their subjectivities, violence, and the media.

Additionally, the two cases used in the sample are of two able-bodied, cis-gendered women who were in heteronormative relationships. As such, this work cannot appropriately or adequately discuss the complexities of violence against black women as it relates to their intersectionalities of sexuality, gender identity, gender expression, ability, and other identities.

Significance

This project is vital, as it will help to broaden the scope of knowledge of GBV particularly for black women. Illustrations from the literature review show that there is work that has been done and that is ongoing regarding GBV. However, what has not been adequately explored and is currently missing from the scope of work, is the misogynoir that can exist in GBV, in its reporting and its representation (Boonzaier, 2017; Gill, 2018). There is wide research on GBV, but less information when it pertains to GBV against black women. Additionally, there is little information about how the representation of GBV against black women in the media has implications connected to the colonial narratives against black women. Nor is there work on the implications of colonially-related systemic structures about black women's safety and subjectivity (Davis, 2019). This research highlights that it is important to engage with these nuances. It also highlights the need to articulate how they affect how black women are perceived and treated, which can affect their positionality in society and the ways they navigate their worlds (Fuentes, 2020; Kelly et al., 2020; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018).

Additionally, the concern about violence within the South African context is not a new one (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). However, a lot of the research in this work regarding black women and violence is situated outside of South Africa (Davis, 1981; Davis, 2019; Donovan & Williams, 2002; Fuentes, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2016). There is minimal GBV research in South Africa that deals with the complexities of violence against black women and looks at the implications platforms like the media have on black women, and their experiences of freedom and justice, using a decolonial feminist lens. The work in this project is important in working to further fill that disparity in knowledge for black women and within the South African context. Additionally, this project seeks to further increase the visibility of the colonial legacies that play into why black women experience violence the way they do. It also seeks to increase the knowledge of the historical underpinnings of the systemic problem of GBV and its resultant physical and psychological ramifications within the South African context (Abrahams, 1998; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018).

This research has worked to fill current gaps in the research while creating opportunities for further work that can be done to better understand the interplay of representations of black women, GBV and the media. Additionally, it is significant for its attempt to contribute towards assessing the functionality of media in reinforcing marginalising and oppressive ideologies in its narratives. This is in the hope of raising awareness that will effect change in reporting that is cognisant of context and impact. Finally, this work hopes to contribute to a plethora of Decolonial Feminist work that is underway to effect change on a personal, societal, and institutional level towards understanding and combatting GBV and violence. It seeks to contribute to the work of helping black women navigate society and justice in safe and liberating ways that centre their experiences and knowledges.

Considering ways that this project seeks to add to existing work and promote change, the following section will discuss possibilities that can come from this work's contributions. It also provides suggestions for future research that can be done to further centre marginalised voices, experiences, and knowledges.

Future Possibilities

One way to counter the harmful narratives that may arise from the media would be firstly to provide context. This context would be to correctly situate violence about marginalised communities and the institutions that perpetuate oppression and domination (Boonzaier, 2017, 2022; Chuma, 2016; Lindsay-Brisbin et al., 2014; Morgan & Simons, 2018; Patil, & Purkayastha, 2015; Spies, 2020). Secondly, it would be to establish solidarities between media hubs and those working within GBV spaces. Collaborating in this way would help to draw attention to how writing can cause harm and reinforce both the physical and non-physical violences that people experience. It would also help to better navigate the re/traumatisation that may result from the way cases of GBV are written (Mishler & Squire, 2020; Sanger, 2010). Establishing communities and systems of collaboration within these spheres can also mean a collective discussion on how to do things differently, and I would even argue, decolonially. Working in this way would not only counter the colonial, but it would also hopefully provide a way for the media to provide an introspective or reflective lens onto the society in which it writes. This would be in resistance to perpetuating the colonial and violent gaze onto victims/survivors. In doing so, it could work to challenge the ways we as people engage with knowledge, with ourselves and with others, enabling imaginings for a new way forward.

There also remains ample room to continue doing research that centres the knowledges and experiences of black women. Similarly, there is much work that can be done which would help to dismantle the coloniality of universalised truths that are based on one community that centred itself through conquest and violence. The work in this project could be expanded on by looking at more case studies on how black women are represented in the media. Additionally, there is an opportunity to conduct research that explicitly looks at whether there are differences in media reporting between women of colour and white women. This work could delve further into the implications of the findings for conversations of social justice and the amount and type of resources that are needed within and between these communities. Additionally, there is more research that can be done that centres the intersections of race, sexuality, class, gender, gender expression, and ability within conversations of GBV and the narratives constructed by various forms of media. This is an important part of the decolonial practice that actively centres the knowledges and experiences of these marginalised communities (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Kessi et al., 2022). It is also important to engage with these communities to ensure that conversations about GBV and violence do not leave out the histories, and realities of these communities from how GBV and violence are discussed. This could then have an impact on how justice is formulated and practised.

Coinciding with more intersectional research on GBV and the media, and the discussion of justice within this work, is the potential for future work to look at how restorative, transformative and social justice can be practiced and made more readily available for black women. This work would seek to go beyond the predominate forms of justice that are currently available, but which carry harm. Current research on abolition feminism looks at how GBV has come to be criminalised, the limitations of this, as well as the possibilities of transformative justice as an avenue for healing, change and community development (Domínguez, 2022; Kim, 2018, 2021; Richie et al., 2021). However, current discussions are mostly theoretical. Thus, it would be beneficial for more engagements in how these forms of justice would look practically, and the potential implications they could have for the safety, healing, and self-determination of victims/survivors of GBV (Richie et al., 2021). This would also be pertinent within conversations about how Psychology as a discipline is practised (Domínguez, 2022; Mishler & Squire, 2020). These future conversations around non-punitive justice would also have to grapple with the complexities of the entrenched understandings of punishment and violence in South Africa. They would also have to navigate how perpetrators, victims/survivors, their communities, and we as a society would internalise and take ownership of these forms of justice (Domínguez, 2022;

Kim, 2018, 2021). This work could interrogate how best to do this in ways that do not cause further and/or different forms of violence for victims/survivors and the battle against violence within our society.

Conclusion

Black women have long since been attributed a different definition of womanhood to white women (Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Salo & Moolman, 2013). The history of this differentiation is documented through somewhat implicit narratives within slavery (Baderoon, 2014). It is also documented through overt narratives as with Sara Bartman (Abrahams, 1998). Thus, the current voices and experiences of black women within GBV are a result of deliberate actions by researchers to raise awareness of the discrepancies in vulnerability to and safety from GBV to which black women are uniquely subjected (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981; Fuentes, 2020; Richie et al., 2021). This thesis has served to include that deliberate focus regarding the media and how it constructs narratives of GBV against black women. It sought to use a Decolonial Feminist approach to analyse the media, looking specifically at the cases of GBV against Tshegofatso Pule and Nosicelo Mtebeni. It aimed to ascertain whether the representations in media articles perpetuated or worked to resist colonially derived narratives of how black women are portrayed in society. It also sought to engage with the resultant implications of these representations.

Through an analysis of the media, this research showcased the importance of more media reporting that integrates personhood into its work. It also advocated for engaging in a decolonial approach that deals with issues of violence and justice. Additionally, this thesis highlighted the need to focus on and centre black women. It did this by illustrating how black women are negatively implicated when their positionality and experiences are not considered. In doing so, it served to re-conscientize us about the mechanisms of coloniality, so that coloniality does not further habituate its violent ways on marginalised people (Kessi &

Boonzaier, 2018; Kessi et al., 2022; Lugones, 2010). Failing to do so means that the lives and stories of marginalised communities continue to be dismissed and disregarded. It means that this thesis is rendered irrelevant, and that is a narrative that the researcher rejects.[6]

A Woman Speaks

I have been woman

for a long time

beware my smile

I am treacherous with old magic

and the noon's new fury

with all your wide futures

promised

I am

woman

and not white.

—Audrey Lorde, Black Unicorn

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[6] Being able to reject the narrative of irrelevance is in great thanks to Decolonial Feminism, and even greater thanks to the *Unsettling Knowledge Production on Gendered and Sexual Violence in South Africa* Project and *The Hub for Decolonial Feminist Psychologies in Africa*

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