The Pandemic of Being a Woman: A Qualitative Analysis of the South African Media on GBV at the Time of COVID-19

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

A decolonial feminist discourse analysis of the media's reporting on Gender Based Violence (GBV) during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic was conducted. One hundred and fifty articles were collected from the Sabinet database. From this eight discourses were identified: GBV as a pandemic; GBV as genderless; women as vulnerable; the marginalization of victims; coddling men; redistributing fear; the co-option of GBV; and GBV as a systemic issue of power. It is argued that the media maintained the relevance and newsworthiness of GBV throughout the COVID 19 pandemic by borrowing legitimacy from COVID 19 in various ways. While this, along with the presence of more contextualized understandings of GBV, is a success, this paper argues that there is still work to be done on the way GBV is reported in the media. The data set demonstrated reductionist, uncontextualized and highly gendered representations of GBV that uphold colonial ideals of masculinity and femininity, while doing little to resist those power dynamics that uphold GBV. Recommendations for the media's reporting on GBV are made.

Keywords: GBV; Gender-based Violence; COVID 19; Media

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Chapter One: Introduction

We find ourselves in a unique time in 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the world in 2020 and its impacts on economies and communities are unprecedented. In South Africa, president Ramaphosa described femicide and GBV as South Africa's second pandemic stating that one woman is killed every 3 hours (see-Dlamini, 2020). South Africa has been named the rape capital of the world and issues of GBV have become a larger public concern of late with the publicized death of Uyinene Mrwetyana in 2019, and the resultant increasing outcry for change (Lyster, 2019). We have since seen the formation of the Interim Steering Committee on GBV and Femicide in 2020 which developed the Emergency Response Action Plan that was given a budget of R1.6 Billion (Dlamini, 2020). The interaction of GBV and COVID 19, as well as the social ramifications thereof, has never been seen before. Thus, there is a need for research which unpacks the impact of the interaction between COVID-19 and the ongoing issue of GBV. The present study aims to contribute to this research by looking at the depiction of GBV in the media over the time of the pandemic in South Africa through a decolonial feminist lens. This introductory chapter will discuss the media, the context of GBV and the theoretical framework of this study in order to frame and contextualize this thesis.

The Media

GBV needs to be understood contextually. It is both a maker and a product of the prevalent discourses in our society which construct our social dynamics and experiences (Adjei, 2013; Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Gavey, 1997). As such, the news media constitutes a major powerhouse of knowledge production. In the context of this study, the term "media' refers predominantly to print news media i.e. newspapers. This is because this is the data the study

engages with, however it is useful to point out that todays news print media publishers often disseminate the same articles that are printed, through various online platforms. The media broadly has a major influence on public discourse and opinion. It has the power to shape and frame understandings surrounding the issue of GBV (Bird & Garda, 1996; Boonzaier, 2017; Buiten, 2013; Jungherr et al., 2019; Lykke, 2015; Menon et al., 2020; Stark & Ager, 2011). Thus, to understand the discourses the media is engaging with, in a time when the severity of the pandemic is combined with the ongoing severity of GBV, can give us insight into public discourse and public opinion. It also gives us insight into whose interests the media protects and advocates for, and whose it silences. Media analysis regarding GBV in SA exists, but recent studies are limited. Such studies in the time of a pandemic are, of course, limited even further. Thus, the present study aims to fill these gaps by providing an updated analysis of media reportage on GBV in the time of COVID-19. While the literature review discusses the role of the media in the context of GBV, it is useful here to point out that newspapers in specific have played an important role during Apartheid, and in the transition from Apartheid to the Post-Apartheid South Africa (Baron, 2021; Du Plessis, 1998; Duncan, 2003). Historically Afrikaans media publications have supported the National Party of the Apartheid regime and many of these publications remain South Africa's largest media houses (Du Plessis, 1998; Steenveld, 2012). This provides valuable context for the necessity of a decolonial feminist lens, which aims to point out those discourses which originate in coloniality and Apartheid ideology.

Contextualizing GBV in South Africa

Gender based violence (GBV) is violence enacted on another on the basis of gender or gendered power dynamics including physical, sexual, emotional, and financial violence or abuse

(Dlamini, 2020). It is a heinous human rights violation and has ongoing negative consequences for all women (Capasso et al., 2021; Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Ellis, 2020; Kaladelfos & Featherstone, 2014; Keith et al., 2022). Globally, the most common form of GBV is Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) (Devries et al., 2013). IPV is the leading cause of homicidal death of women globally, and approximately 30% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner (Devries et al., 2013). Women who experience intersecting oppressions are more at risk for GBV (Boonzaier, 2008; Boonzaier, 2018; Pinheiro & Kiguwa, 2021; Van Niekerk, 2015; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2014). Worldwide, the issue of gender-based violence is rightly justifiably gaining public concern, with the World Health Organization emphasizing the need for gender equality.

In South Africa IPV and rape are predominant forms GBV and South Africa has one of the highest rates of GBV in the world. Research indicates that between 25% and 55% of women in South Africa have experienced violence from a male partner (Jewkes et al., 2016; Steele et al., 2019). A recent study showed that 24.9 % of women, in a randomized household survey in the Rustenburg district, reported having experienced sexual violence (Steele et al., 2019). A third of those women had never spoken about these incidents to another person. A study by Jewkes et al. (2016) found that 10.9% of their sample of men reported that they have raped. Jewkes et al. (2009) found that 42% of men in their sample reported having perpetrated violence against a woman partner and one third of their sample reported having raped. This demonstrates an incredibly high incidence of rape and a structural issue regarding the perpetration of sexual violence in South Africa. These high percentages are shocking when considering the likelihood that they are underestimates given the complex nature of the reporting of sexual violence (Smythe, 2015; Taylor & Gassner, 2010). While updated prevalence studies are needed, it is safe

to assume that while the numbers may have changed in the time since these previous studies, GBV has been and will continue to be, a dominant form of violence in SA.

South Africa's colonial history plays a major role in the gender dynamics and the gendered violence within the country. South Africa's struggles around race, coloniality, slavery and culture have embedded themselves in the mythology, power distribution and discourse around gender and GBV (Boonzaier, 2017; Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Jones, 2011). Sexual violence is connected to cultural and racialized stereotypes (Boonzaier, 2017; Gqola, 2015; Lykke, 2015). Historically, black bodies have been depicted as hyper-sexual with black men seen as insatiable, animalistic and dangerous, and black women as intrinsically sexual and unrapable (Gqola, 2015; Lykke, 2015). On the other hand, white women have been portrayed as the ideal "victims' with connotations of innocence and vulnerability (Gilchrist, 2010; Joseph et al., 2019; Lykke, 2015). White men's role in GBV has been largely silenced by the white male domination that constitutes post-colonial patriarchy (Bonnes, 2013; Joseph et al., 2019; Lykke, 2015). The present study understands these meanings in the context of coloniality where the sexualization, domination and oppression of the black female body is central to the colonial project and thus the "rapability" of the black woman's body must be understood as a consequence of this project (Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Gqola, 2015). Beyond this, this thesis also understands sexual violence and race in South Africa, and potentially globally, as completely enmeshed (Gqola, 2015). The details and implications of this position will be explored more deeply in the theoretical framework section of this thesis.

The present study thus engages in a media analysis which focuses on the South African media discourses around GBV during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Media constitutes a major producer of knowledge for the masses and discourses found in the media can be indicative

of public discourse and sentiment (Aroustamian, 2020; Bird & Garda, 1996; Buiten, 2013; Duncan, 2003; Gillespie et al., 2013). Therefore, engaging in media analyses around GBV is useful for providing insights into public discourse around GBV and how those discourses support or resist the systemic power dynamics which uphold GBV. To do this from a decolonial feminist perspective allows for a deeper engagement with those power dynamics and how they are represented, reproduced, resisted and even dismantled in the media (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018). This study is being conducted in and on media from the time of COVID-19 which allows for an exploration into how GBV is negotiated alongside this emergency. Studies have found that GBV increases in times of emergency, so the media's engagement with GBV at this time is particularly important (Capasso et al., 2021). The media can play a role in supporting survivors and holding perpetrators accountable of GBV during these unique times (Bird & Garda, 1996; Menon et al., 2020)

Theoretical Framework

Decolonial feminism is a theory which engages with knowledge making in such a way that acknowledges and exposes both gender and coloniality as axioms of our social and academic knowledge systems (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018). Such a theory has a built-in agenda which involves resistance to a dominant patriarchal and colonial power, violence, and oppression (Adams et al., 2017; Velez, 2019). It involves a rigorous ethical orientation which puts the interests of the historically silenced, colonized woman of colour in the global south at the centre of knowledge production (Adams et al., 2017; Boonzaier & Van Niekerk, 2019; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Shefer, 2019). It challenges conventional notions of gender, sexuality, and race as well as challenging conventional methods of research and knowledge production, often

engaging in radical, participatory, and emancipatory forms of research (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Shefer, 2019). It holds space for the nuance of multiple knowledge systems and realities which make sense of the authority of research participants over the knowledge that is produced, and the presence and power of the researcher and the knowledge that they produce. Central to this work is the idea that coloniality and gender are inextricably linked and must be understood in enmeshed ways (Gqola, 2015). To this end the present study understands gender-based violence as colonial, and coloniality as expressed through patriarchal dominance through forms such as gender-based violence.

As a media analysis, the present study operates within this conceptual framework, because the media is understood as a powerhouse of knowledge (Cashmore, 2006; Gillespie et al., 2013; Williamson et al., 2012). It is a dominant knowledge producer in a historically colonized country in the language of the colony which is English. As such, a critical investigation of such knowledge is essential to a decolonial feminist agenda, in which the knowledge that the masses receive through various channels is as important, if not more important, than the knowledge which is produced in the academy. Furthermore, understanding the discourses present in such a powerhouse regarding issues such as gender-based violence, sits directly within the logical jurisdiction of decolonial feminism. In line with this, the present study uses discourse analysis to generate its findings through an explicit attention to language used in media reports on GBV during the pandemic.

This thesis will begin by reviewing the literature on the media and GBV in Chapter Two. The review will also explore the literature on GBV and the pandemic in SA to date. Then research aims and questions for the study will be outlined. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the study. The methods section will discuss the decolonial feminist framework as well as the data

collection and method of analysis employed in the study, in some detail. Following this will be the analysis and discussion of the findings of the study. Eight discourses were found in the data and will be discussed at length. This will lead to the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter Two: A Critical Review of the Literature on Media Representations of GBV and GBV in the Time of COVID-19

This chapter reviews the literature on GBV in the media in South Africa as well as the literature on GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic. I begin by looking at the role the media plays in an issue like GBV. This is followed by a discussion of the representations of GBV victims and perpetrators found in the media. Then the literature on GBV in the time of COVID-19 is reviewed. It is argued that the literature to date on COVID-19 suggests that GBV is likely to have increased in the circumstances of the pandemic. This review argues that there is a need for a decolonial feminist analysis of the media, and a need for an analysis of the media during the time of the pandemic. The present study aims to contribute toward some of these gaps.

The Role of the Media

The nature of GBV and its prolific reach in SA is a good enough reason to motivate intellectual investment in studying its nature, its resolutions, and its causes. The transformative nature of the pandemic, which has changed the way we live, suggests that research in GBV at this time is important. It has been widely accepted that the media is an important knowledge producer which gives us insight into dominant public discourse and which has the power to impact public opinion and perspectives on issues (Bird & Garda, 1996; Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier, 2017; Duncan, 2003; Hindes & Fileborn, 2019; Jungherr et al., 2019; Lykke, 2015; Stark & Ager, 2011). As such, media analysis has become, and remains, an important line of research. Media analysis has remained important particularly in feminist work which understands the role of the media in either advancing or thwarting a feminist agenda. The present study which analyses media from 27 March 2020 to 27 March 2021, is relevant as a gauge of

dominant discourses in the media in South Africa. This is particularly of interest in the time of an unprecedented pandemic, where the feminist agenda has been shaped, as has everything, by the COVID-19 pandemic (Parry & Gordon, 2020). This review argues that while the research on Media in SA on GBV is not lacking, it centres around representations of sexual violence (see-Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier, 2017; Boshoff & Prinsloo, 2014; Jamel, 2014; Morrissey, 2013; Thusi, 2016). While representations of IPV are studied in media studies (see-Isaacs, 2016; Ndlovu, 2008; Spies, 2020) and individual and specific cases of GBV have been studied, (see-Boonzaier, 2017; Langa et al., 2018; Spies, 2020) how the media negotiates "Gender-based violence" as a broad concept across cases is still to be studied. Beyond the value of a study done on media in the pandemic, this thesis argues there is an ongoing need for research which produces knowledge in the decolonial feminist canon. This is particularly lacking in research on media and GBV in SA (Boonzaier, 2017).

The present study understands GBV as resultant of patriarchal and colonial legacies manifested in structural power distribution. Those structural power dynamics structure discourse. Discourse can work to support or resist such power. In other words discourse is both a product and a manufacturer of GBV (Aroustamian, 2020). As a disseminator of discourse, news media is important in guiding people's understandings of sexual violence, gender- based violence and related concepts, like rape (Hindes & Fileborn, 2019). At a social level the media has power to contribute to changing the societal norms which create and maintain men's power over women (Aroustamian, 2020; Devries et al., 2013). News media plays a role in the ways in which gendered inequality is sustained through its articulation in the public domain. In silencing, giving voice to, creating a narrative of, and framing the news, articles in the media have power (Aroustamian, 2020; Tsampiras, 2021). Research has shown that media, in the case of

magazines, is often motivated by whose interests are at stake and the audience which the media is directed at (Aroustamian, 2020). Aroustamian (2020) demonstrated that magazines aimed at white men contained the least articles related to sexual violence and these articles had the highest percentage of accounts of false accusations of such violence. Whereas the same study showed that a magazine aimed at black women had the highest number of articles about sexual violence and least accounts of false accusations (Aroustamian, 2020). Arguably this demonstrates that media can be intended to resonate with its audience and often draws on shared knowledge with its audience. At the very least, the media reinforces cultural norms and interpretations in the audience it is aimed at. Thus, media is considered an archive which has something to tell us about public opinion and discourse (Aroustamian, 2020; Boonzaier, 2017; Buiten, 2013; Jungherr et al., 2019).

Media Discourse and GBV

Recent South African Literature on the media has done much to contribute to our knowledge on South African public discourse surrounding GBV. Research has been done on intimate partner violence and domestic violence (see -Isaacs, 2016; Spies, 2020), male rape (see-Jamel, 2014), corrective rape (see- Morrissey, 2013), sexual violence reporting in the media of higher institutions (see- Thusi, 2016) and on specific incidents of Gender based violence as reported through multiple newspapers (see-Boonzaier, 2017; Langa et al., 2018; Spies, 2020). Findings revolve around representations of women, victim blaming and perpetrators, and I have structured the review of this section to reflect this.

Women in the media. Outstandingly, across both local and international research, women are positioned as powerless victims in the media where GBV is concerned (Bonnes,

2013; Hindes & Fileborn, 2019; Isaacs, 2016; Jamel, 2014; Kelly & Payton, 2019; Lykke, 2015; Ndlovu, 2008; O'Hara, 2012; Spies, 2020; Van Niekerk, 2015). Women are positioned this way by through a hyper focus on their victimization where personal details of them are silenced in the reporting, and the horrors of their assault are made visible (Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier, 2017; Morrissey, 2013). The persistent use of the term "victim" rather than the name of the individual or even the term "survivor" as well as persistent focus on women's vulnerability contributes to a perpetuation of the victim discourse (Morrissey, 2013; Spies, 2020)[1]. Perhaps it is useful to point out that victims may not want their details in publications about their experiences and that personal details may have legal consequences for media outlets. However, the point is not about identifying survivors and victims, but rather about how these women are framed, even where they are identified by news media i.e. their humanity is ignored in favour of the sensationalism of their victimhood. They termed "victims" rather than survivors, while they may be named, they are more often referred to as victims, and details of their attacks are more often focused on rather than details of their lives, nature and other attributes- none of which need to identify them (Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier, 2017). Appeals to the female victims' vulnerability are made through reference to their "femininity" as is deemed ideal in the patriarchal view i.e. they are referred to as mothers, with reference to their kind, and caring nature (Boshoff, 2022; Isaacs, 2016; Langa et al., 2018). Kramer and Bowman (2021) argues that "victimhood" is negotiated through social

[1] It is noteworthy that such constructions of helplessness transcend hegemonic identities, and while research on the media and LGBTQI+ community is growing but limited, we know that people from this community face this challenge in compounded ways (Jamel, 2014)

constructions of masculinity and femininity such that legitimate victimhood relies on notions of femininity as vulnerability and susceptibility to the violence and sexual prowess constructed in masculinity. In this conception, masculinity precludes men from occupying the victim position in Kramer and Bowman's work and, extrapolating to the context of the media, it means that for the media to create legitimate victims it creates ideal versions of femininity. In these ways the media relies on the dialectical relationship between hegemonic ideas of masculinity and femininity in its reporting of GBV, further entrenching these constructions. Through this project of reification, the media continues colonial work, as these constructions of masculinity and femininity as binary, hegemonic and dialectical are colonial (Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Gqola, 2015; Jones, 2011 ; Oyewumi, 1997).

Research has also begun to identify the ways in which the woman victim is raced in the media. White women victims accord more clearly with "ideal victimhood" and thus garner more sympathetic writing from the media, where women of colour and black women are often blamed for their victimization by references to their behaviour (Boonzaier, 2017; Capasso et al., 2021; Langa et al., 2018; Lykke, 2015; Stark & Ager, 2011).

Black women are often pornographically displayed in the media in terms of the graphic details of their assault and physical trauma and wounds (Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier, 2017). The pornographic display of black women's bodies in the aftermath of sexual assault and gendered violence constitutes an obvious and explicit continuation of the colonial legacy which commodifies the black female body for the entertainment and use of the world (Abrahams, 1996, 1998). Furthermore, the media tends to construct black women as a poor, helpless, uneducated, and vulnerable population (Bird & Garda, 1996; Boonzaier, 2017). This persistent discourse underpins accounts of GBV with black women victims, over time eroding the empathy and

sensitivity given to these women who are endlessly portrayed as victims. Their most recent victimization is thus unsurprising, and so is reported in the most shocking way to garner newsworthiness. Cases are often reported as parts of explicit lists of numerous crimes which garner outrage on the basis of their number rather than the traumatized and murdered individuals who make them up (Isaacs, 2016). There is limited research which situates these forms of racism and sexism in the media as part of the colonial traditions which we as a society still uphold, and further decolonial feminist work is needed (Boonzaier, 2017; Langa et al., 2018).

By reporting on black women in ways that focus on the horrific detail of the crimes committed against them, articles tend to direct outrage at the incident of GBV while being insensitive to the victim and revictimizing the victim through the erasure of their humanity (Bonnes, 2013; Isaacs, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2015). In contrast to the vulnerable women, the media portrays that black women are, in reality, resistant to GBV in many ways (Boshoff, 2022; Thusi, 2016; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2014). The silence in the media around these resistances continue to ignore women's power, rather than provide a platform for it (Isaacs, 2016; Morrissey, 2013). While women are indeed victims of GBV and acknowledging their plight as victims is important, the singular narrative of women as victims is very problematic. In discussing the discursive constructions of black lesbians in the South African media, Morrissey (2013) eloquently argues for the problems with this, and highlights racial intersections:

> "There is a fine line between identifying the needs of a particularly at-risk population and discursively rendering that group helpless. As we see evidenced in the previous excerpt, however, White lesbians are referenced as being more empowered than their Black lesbian counterparts. In such instances, these discourses can do damaging work to

> ‘‘construct a stereotype of the ‘helpless victim’ that links femininity to dependency and racial ‘otherness’ to cultural deviancy’’ (Hua & Nigorizawa, 2010, p. 402), locating Black lesbians in South Africa as especially susceptible to marginalization. Although it could be argued that this newspaper is only reporting the facts, there are consequences to framing these women in such a way—consequences that further isolate these women and render them assailable.” p.82

In these ways we can understand that the discourse of the “victim woman” and particularly the “black victim woman” sits happily alongside those colonial discourses of femininity and blackness which simultaneously construct black women as “unrapable” (Gqola, 2015, p. 50) due to their perceived promiscuity and culpability as well as the ownership of their bodies. It can function to make black women a target for rape as a weapon of discipline. It implicitly constructs rape as an achievable crime given black women’s lack of protection and status in this world which constructs them as insignificant. Contrasting research from Boshoff (2022) has shown that the tabloid media does celebrate women who fight back, supporting their deviation from traditional femininity in these specific cases. While this indicates positive change, it is important to note that this support is limited, only following very narrow scripts of successful resistance to GBV. In research more broadly, there is a call to the media to begin to tell stories which capture the resistance, strength and success of women who face GBV daily (Boonzaier, 2017; Isaacs, 2016; Morrissey, 2013).

Victim blaming. Victim blaming in the media is well documented (Boonzaier, 2017; Houlihan & Raynor, 2014; Isaacs, 2016; Richards et al., 2011; Spies, 2020; Taylor, 2009). Victim blaming occurs directly when the media refers to the victim's behaviour, choice of clothing or state of mind when reporting on the incident (Taylor, 2009). In cases where the victim of the rape is black, victim blaming and overall insensitivity to the issue is found to be higher, while white victims are often accorded more sensitivity in accordance with the ideal victim status representation discussed earlier (Boonzaier, 2017; Gilchrist, 2010; Langa et al., 2018; Spies, 2020). A study on an incident which occurred in 2010 in Cleveland Texas where an 11 year old girl was taken hostage and gang raped by 28 men and boys, demonstrates the tenacity of victim blaming in the media (O'Hara, 2012). A study on the articles in North American newspapers surrounding this incident showed that the girl's social media posts, clothing choices and general behaviour was often referred to. In this case a young white child, the stereotypical victim who should be the most believable on the basis of such stereotypes was delegitimized because of the way she dressed (O'Hara, 2012). A South African media analysis demonstrated similar findings when the victim, Anene Booysen's behaviour on the night of her rape and murder was called into question (Boonzaier, 2017).Where the media makes reference to the victim's choices or behaviour so as to make those women seem more culpable, it is rarely behaviour that is deemed "innocent" or aligned with traditional roles of femininity. For example, Boonzaier (2017) demonstrated how Anene's mother is quoted as telling her not to come home late in the media headlines. In this case Anene's decision to stay out late is connected with her assault in such a way that it implies if she had not stayed out late she would have been safe (Boonzaier, 2017). A woman that aligns with colonial ideals of femininity is not one who stays out late partying, so this is what is used against Anene. When the media victim blames in these

ways, it forms part of that system which polices women's behaviour with the threat of gendered violence. The unsaid implication is that women who wish to remain safe should not be out late at night. Women who do not fulfil the colonial ideals of whiteness, conservative dress, motherly duties and domestic activities are not only punished with GBV but are then held accountable for that violence in the media. That is to say that black women who break these rules, primarily by being black, are always seen as somewhat culpable for their assault (Boonzaier, 2017; Gqola, 2015). Taylor (2009) suggests that victim blaming in the media can also be indirect, where instead of focusing on the victim's behaviour, choices or state of mind, the media sympathizes with the perpetrator. It is argued that when the media places the focus on the distress or plight of the perpetrator in ways that are sympathetic or speaks about the incident of GBV in ways that neutralize it, attributing blame to external factors or both parties, the media is indirectly victim blaming. Evidence of this is documented in South African analyses (see-Bonnes, 2013; Isaacs, 2016; Spies, 2020). Langa et al. (2018) documented the sympathetic ways the media reported on Oscar Pistorius' murder of his girlfriend.

Representations of perpetrators. Where the perpetrator is present in the media, he is often constructed as an exceptional, dangerous and violent man (Isaacs, 2016; O'Hara, 2012; Spies, 2020; Stark & Ager, 2011). The construction of perpetrators as these exceptional beings involves animalistic descriptions, as perpetrators as "monsters" for example, which serves the purpose of 'othering' (Boshoff, 2022; Buiten & Naidoo, 2013; Isaacs, 2016). In its construction of this exceptional individual the media ignores the ways in which perpetrators of GBV are many and part of a systemic issue of patriarchy in SA. The narrative of an exceptional monster

perpetrator ignores the entrenchment of violence in masculinity as it has been colonially constructed through the history of SA (Boonzaier, 2017; Gqola, 2015).

Far too often however, the role of the perpetrator is obscured (Bonnes, 2013; Isaacs, 2016; Lykke, 2015; Spies, 2020). The role of alcohol, substances, the criminal justice system, mental health and even an imaginary black intruder, as in the Oscar Pistorius case, is used to divert blame and focus from the perpetrator (Bonnes, 2013; Isaacs, 2016; Langa et al., 2018). Where focus cannot be diverted, the incident of GBV is obscured and doubt is cast upon it by media reports of perpetrators in ways that engender sympathy (Bonnes, 2013). This is done by reporting on personality traits of the perpetrator or accounts of them that make them seem unlikely to be a perpetrator of GBV (Bonnes, 2013). The implications of this doubt and diversion are to add to the victim blaming of women who experience GBV as well as to cast doubt upon their plight. One particularly interesting example of this diversion was one described by Langa et al. (2018) which demonstrated that the media persistently reported in ways that were sympathetic to Oscar Pretorius who killed Reeva Steenkamp. This sympathy tends to detract from the crime that was committed against the victim. The authors point out the ways in which Oscar's narrative, that there was an intruder in his house leading him to shoot through a closed door, brings into being this imagined intruder, who in the context of South Africa is constructed as a black man, as an alternative perpetrator for this crime (Langa et al., 2018; Phaswana, 2021). This has the function of creating the colonial trope of white female victim and the black male perpetrator, even in a crime where no such black man exists. It functions to shine the light away from the horror of Reeva's murder, onto the horror of black intrusion into white spaces (attempting to put forward a sympathetic reading of the perpetrator) thus minimizing the incident of gender-based violence, and distracting from the prevalent white male domination in favour of

a racist cover story. This example indicates some of the complex ways in which perpetration is racialised and distracts from GBV and how far this distraction goes when white men are involved.

We can see that just as femininity and masculinity are dialectically constructed, such is the construction of perpetrator and victim in GBV. This discursive relationship between perpetrator and victim in the eyes of the media can be understood as an important part of the gendered nature of GBV. Ideal perpetrators are constructed as the zenith of masculinity while ideal victimhood constitutes the zenith of femininity (Bonnes, 2013; Buiten & Naidoo, 2013; Stark & Ager, 2011). An Australian study on the media's representations of sexual violence crimes committed by the Australian military found that the media often characterized such crimes as non-issues or issues to be expected from military men. This demonstrates the ways in which violence, and particularly sexual violence, is understood as part of "normal' masculinity in the media (Chaudhuri et al., 2020). A South African study on men's experience of a treatment program for domestic abuse found that men intertwine violence and power with their notions of masculinity, highlighting that this construction of masculinity exists in SA outside of the media too (Van Niekerk & Boonzaier, 2016). The perpetration of GBV is often constructed as opportunistic and a normal consequence of masculinity i.e. men will naturally rape if they get the chance, and women are thus inevitably vulnerable to rape (Buiten & Naidoo, 2013). Thus, *ideal victims,* women who are deemed innocent and domestic, are constructed alongside ideal perpetrators, men who are violent monsters (Isaacs, 2016; Spies, 2020). The less ideal the victim or perpetrator, so then does its opposing subject become less ideal. So, in extrapolating from Spies (2020)'s work, where Oscar Pretorius is constructed as an abusive monster with an uncontrollable temper, Reeva Steenkamp is constructed as a sweet, beautiful and innocent white

woman. Where Oscar is constructed as heroic and humanized, Reeva is obscured and minimized in the narrative. This gendered logic that underpins the media's reports of GBV may account for much of the silence regarding GBV and sexual violence enacted on the LGBTQI+ community, as well as the silence around male victims of GBV, as such a logic struggles make sense or room for these kinds of violence (Kramer & Bowman, 2021; Morrissey, 2013).

The construction of the perpetrator in SA is, of course, also raced. Spies (2020) identifies how the femicide case of Karabo Mokoena is treated differently from three other high-profile cases of femicide where the victims and perpetrators are white. In Mokoena's case, the media deems her death "femicide" whereas in the other three cases this term is never used. This quick framing, as well as the lack of the media's description or engagement with her perpetrator, highlights the ways in which both the perpetrator and victims' race filter the media's engagement. The perpetrator is not explored in depth because he fits those rape myths in SA which paint a black face on perpetrators of GBV. Thus, he is uninteresting and treated as a statistic. The crime is called "femicide" because femicide is positioned among the social problems that is seen as inherent to black communities in the colonial conception (Boonzaier, 2017; Buiten & Salo, 2007; Gqola, 2015). In the case of Oscar Pistorius, Langa et al. (2018) argues for how black masculinities are brought into the trial to act as a more believable decoy to protect Oscar. More research is needed on the ways in which colonial discourses in the media race the issue of GBV, and particularly perpetrators of GBV, in the media.

As media constructions entrench notions of femininity and masculinity, they simultaneously entrench rape mythology. In the construction of perpetrators the media buys into notions of monster perpetrators who have power, are violent, deviant and dangerous. In so doing the media negates the presence of perpetrators who do not fit this mould (Bonnes, 2013; Isaacs,

2016; Thusi, 2016). Thus, the media creates an image of a perpetrator which discredits the reality of victims who are abused and assaulted most often by men known to them and who are 'normal'. The entrenchment of this mythology also creates a normative understanding of GBV whereby 'atypical' cases are reported on differently than those cases which accord with the rape mythology the media perpetuates (Bonnes, 2013). Thusi (2016) argues, in her research on university media, that this means that cases where victims are assaulted by peers and students, rather than staff, are less reported on or condoned by the media in that context as it is less aligned with the mythology surrounding who perpetrates GBV in university spaces. The case of Chris and Jayde Panayiotou constitute an example of a case that seems to have been given special attention despite the fact that the crime is common and the victim and perpetrators are by no means famous (Spies, 2020). This case is arguably treated as 'atypical' by the media as despite high rates of femicide in SA, we do not tend to see other cases with so much media attention (Spies, 2020). Anecdotally, the case of Nicholas Ninow comes to mind. In a country where child rape and GBV are extensive, the media coverage of Nicholas Ninow was massive. He was even given the title: Dros Peadophile. However, in both the Ninow and the Panayiotou circumstances, the perpetrators are white, which highlights the way in which the media finds white perpetration and victims more newsworthy (Bonnes, 2013). Arguably this newsworthiness is due to that conception of GBV which constructs it as a black problem, and thus these cases are deemed atypical because they challenge this myth (Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier, 2017; Buiten & Salo, 2007; Gqola, 2015). These ways in which race surreptitiously directs media focus, discourse and reporting need to be exposed through further decolonial feminist research.

The apolitical stance of the media. Beyond constructions of perpetrators and victims, research indicates that the way GBV is portrayed in news articles is often uncritical (Boshoff, 2022; Isaacs, 2016; Spies, 2020). The media reports can often revert to a dry fact orientated tone when discussing crimes of GBV (Isaacs, 2016; Spies, 2020). By not commenting and explicitly condemning these issues the media ultimately fails to inform and support the end of GBV (Morrissey, 2013). For example, articles often use terms such as 'accuser', 'claim' and 'allegedly' repeatedly when recounting sexual assault incidents even when such incidents are captured on video (Aroustamian, 2020; O'Hara, 2012). Taking into consideration the legal frameworks which may engender the use of these terms, it is nonetheless important to point ou that this language affirms an underlying assumption that lying about rape is a possibility equal to telling the truth and does not reflect the reality that the likelihood is in the favour of the victim (Aroustamian, 2020; Thusi, 2016). In fact it has the function of casting doubt and delegitimizing the plight of victims (Thusi, 2016). While it may be a legal requirement to use terms like 'allegedly', the media does employ ways of using this term which can be more or less supportive to victims. That is to say that many authors have ways of using the term while making their support of the victims claim known, and studies argue that often these terms are used in ways that are not supportive of victims in these ways (Aroustamian, 2020; O'Hara, 2012).

Where media reports are more emotive in its reporting they tend to sensationalize GBV. While these reports express outrage, they focus heavily on the violence of the crime with little reference to the dignity of the victim (Aroustamian, 2020; Boshoff, 2022; Isaacs, 2016). This sensationalism makes GBV exceptional, ignoring its systemic nature. In some ways it also exploits the issue, commodifying what is a traumatic consequence of violent men and the systems which prop them up, as a means of selling newspapers (Goldman et al., 1991; Repo,

2020; Van Niekerk, 2015). A notable part of this sensationalism is the tendency of newspapers to only report on the most violent forms of GBV (Isaacs, 2016; Ndlovu, 2008; Spies, 2020). The focus on this extreme, predominantly physical or sexual violence renders the various other ways in which women experience GBV as unremarkable (Isaacs, 2016; Ndlovu, 2008). Besides failing to be a voice for those women who are suffering from GBV in ways that are less extremely violent but potentially still extremely traumatic, the media also misconstrues GBV as something which is only ever extreme (Ndlovu, 2008).

It is important to note that the upholding of rape mythology, the perpetuation of colonial gendered norms and the revictimization of victims of GBV in the media sits in amongst and within articles which aim to condemn, challenge and end GBV (Bonnes, 2013; Boshoff & Prinsloo, 2014). It is therefore important that research on media discourse leads the way in not only challenging the discourses in the media but also providing the alternative narratives for media to draw upon. Morrissey (2013) has begun to do this for calling on the media to be more intentional about whose voices it reports on and reflexive of how it frames these narratives. Importantly, Morrisey argues that the media needs to refrain from discursively rendering black women lesbians, and I argue black women more broadly, victims and present narratives which encompass their triumph, heroism and strength alongside their struggle. Through a decolonial feminist critique, the present research wishes to engage to some extent with possibilities for new discourse and narrative in the media.

As has been demonstrated in this review, the media has a long way to go in terms of supporting the end to GBV. Previous research in SA and elsewhere highlights the ways in which the media constructs victims of GBV, but the research has tended to focus less on how perpetrators are constructed. This is likely due to the hyper focus of the media on the victim and

the violence rather than on the agency of the perpetrator, as mentioned above. Academic research has thus followed suit. More research is needed which focuses on the construction of the perpetrator. While research in SA has begun to capture the ways in which colonial discourses of race and gender enter media discourse, this is perhaps the most limited aspect of the research. Research which uses a decolonial lens will not only provide this but will also provide a useful springboard for the much-needed engagement around new ways of constructing GBV and its subjects in the media. Beyond this, the timing of this research is poignant as not only is new research on the media due, but the global pandemic has shaken the world and its news outlets. The next section will contextualize GBV in the pandemic, as well as the role of the media at such a time.

The Shadow Pandemic

Across countries during the pandemic there has been an increase in GBV, particularly domestic violence (Bettinger-Lopez & Bro, 2020; Dlamini, 2020). While at the time of writing, limited research is available on the real ramifications of COVID-19 on GBV, all indications are that it will not be good. There has been a significant reported increase in calls on helplines for domestic violence in South Africa (Parry & Gordon, 2020). Beyond SA this seems to be the case with significant increases in calls to helplines reported in France, Italy, China and Singapore (Dlamini, 2020). There are already indications that the coronavirus will worsen the gender divide (Dlamini, 2020). Women, and particularly black women, who are over represented in unpaid care work, and the informal labour market are most likely to face the biggest economic hit (Casale & Posel, 2021). In SA 42% of homes are female headed. These women are more likely to struggle to provide for their family than men in male headed households before the pandemic.

The pandemic is likely to worsen this (Parry & Gordon, 2020). It is these structural and economic inequalities which create the foundations for Gender-based violence more broadly (Parry & Gordon, 2020). Historically it has been demonstrated that GBV increases in times of war and complex emergencies (Stark & Ager, 2011). In addition, it has been documented that those circumstances involving lockdowns are likely to increase GBV (Saalim et al., 2021). All indications are, thus, that pandemic is likely to reverse some of our moves toward gender equality, and increase GBV in SA (Pinheiro & Kiguwa, 2021).

Given these concerns, it is useful to reflect upon the role of the media regarding GBV in the time of the pandemic. The measures, including lockdown and social distancing, involve much change, particularly for how services can be offered to the public and to victims of GBV. As such it stands to reason that the media has a responsibility to inform the public of how they can receive assistance (Blofield et al., 2021). Menon et al. (2020) argue that the media has a role in creating awareness around GBV at the time of the pandemic and in so doing it should highlight the negative consequences for perpetrators of GBV and their family members, and it should include voices of experts in GBV (Menon et al., 2020). It is important that these suggestions speak about highlighting negative consequences for perpetrators. It speaks to the way in which the media reporting can make perpetrating GBV “unsafe” and that this is important in times of crisis. However, there is little mentioned about how articles should negotiate GBV alongside the very real and domineering problem of COVID-19. The present study will investigate the ways in which GBV is negotiated alongside the COVID-19 in media representations. It will pay attention to the way power is negotiated at this time and how the newsworthiness of GBV is managed alongside the dominant headlines of COVID-19. It is important, at a time like this that GBV is not side-lined and nor should it detract from the

important news of the pandemic. This study, with its decolonial feminist lens, will explore the discourses employed at this time and the ways in which they may be related to the pandemic.

Moving Forward

For the most part, studies have either investigated a GBV related concept- like "femicide" or "intimate partner violence"- in one newspaper (see- Bonnes, 2013; Boshoff, 2022; Ndlovu, 2008) or they have investigated specific incidents of GBV-like the murder of Reeva Steenkamp by Oscar Pretorius- across many newspapers (see-Boonzaier, 2017; Langa et al., 2018; Spies, 2020). There is no study that looks at how the media conceptualizes "gender-based violence" across a variety of South African newspapers, engaging with both high-profile and more low-profile cases. Research has indicated that in cases of IPV and intimate femicide, the media often does not name the attacks as 'femicide' or 'domestic violence' or 'gender-based violence' raising concern around public understandings of such concepts (Bonnes, 2013; Spies, 2020). Furthermore, in cases of IPV, only the most brutal cases tend to be presented in the media which skews the public's understanding of IPV (Isaacs, 2016; Ndlovu, 2008). This raises questions around how the media defines GBV broadly, and who it locates as subjects (agents, victims, and perpetrators) of GBV in SA given South Africa's colonial history. The present study aims to shed light on these absences. I believe that this can give us important insight into dominant public understandings and discourses centred on the term "gender-based violence". This is of particular interest given that in 2021 amongst the COVID-19 crisis, gender-based violence and femicide have been deemed a 'second pandemic' in South Africa (Dlamini, 2020).

It is also worth noting that most of the available research on the media and GBV has been done on media published prior to 2015 (see- Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier, 2017; Boshoff &

Prinsloo, 2014; Jamel, 2014; Ndlovu, 2008; Thusi, 2016) and while some local research has occurred on media printed after this, it is limited. Thus, the present study aims to fill these gaps by using "gender-based violence" as a search term across multiple newspapers on articles published in 2020 and 2021.

Research to date has focused on representations of women, perpetrators, and victims as well as the ways in which the media perpetuates victim blaming and rape mythology. Research on media discourse around men regarding GBV is limited. While the decolonial feminist framing of the present research will be discussed elsewhere, it is important to note that much of the previous research on the media in SA is feminist but does not position itself in the canon of decolonial feminist work (Boshoff, 2022; Boshoff & Prinsloo, 2014; Isaacs, 2016; Ndlovu, 2008; Spies, 2020; Thusi, 2016). Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that a great deal of international research on discourses and narratives in the media do not investigate the presence of racial information, the discussion of race or anything to do with race specifically (Casale & Posel, 2021; Chaudhuri et al., 2020; Hindes & Fileborn, 2019; O'Hara, 2012). Through the decolonial lens the present study aims to bring more focus to the construction of men and their role in GBV as well as to how race intertwines with GBV in the media's discourse. It is important to understand the discourses in the media as historically located, particularly in terms of South Africa's colonial history which has shaped the reach and nature of GBV in our country as well as shaped those discourses which continue to uphold GBV in our nation. Consequently, the present study aims to contribute to those knowledge production systems which persistently locates discourse in the context of the colonial history of SA and aims to deconstruct and resist the power distribution and violence that these discourses perpetuate.

In 2022, all indications are that GBV is increasing due to COVID-19 and the restrictions it has prompted. The present study will be able to shed light on the ways in which the media frame GBV in the time of a pandemic. It aims to pay attention to the racial and historical discourses in the media. By shedding light on the discourses surround the concept of GBV in the media, the present study aims to produce relevant and decolonial, feminist knowledge around public discourse regarding GBV in SA. While research on the media exists in SA, there is a need for more up to date, decolonial readings of the media across various news outlets and cases of GBV. The present study aims to contribute toward filling these gaps. The following section will outline the aims of the study.

Aims and Research Questions

The present study is aimed to unpack those discourses which the media employs regarding gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study endeavors to explore the ways the media negotiates the power and seriousness of both issues, and how such crises have pushed the media's discourse toward constructive or destructive concepts, discourses and themes when reporting on gender-based violence. Specifically, the research aims to do this through a decolonial feminist lens which locates the discourse historically and resists the ways in which colonial power distribution is maintained through these discourses. The research hopes to begin to illuminate ways of writing and speaking about GBV which are decolonial, feminist and thus resistant in nature.

Research Questions

- What discourses does the media endorse or reproduce when discussing GBV in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- In which ways do colonial discourses of gendered violence show up in the media's conception of GBV?
- How are victims and perpetrators of GBV, as well as men and women more broadly, represented in media discourses around GBV in the time of the pandemic?

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter, I describe how I conducted this qualitative media analysis, using a decolonial feminist theoretical framework. I describe the context, and research design, summarize the data collection process, and explain my analysis technique. Finally, I give attention to the ethical dimensions of this research.

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic hit South Africa in March of 2020 and South Africa has been in varying stages of lockdown since then until the time of writing. Before COVID-19, gender-based violence was already a major crisis in the country, gaining wider public attention. However, in the time of the pandemic, all the indications are that these issues have worsened (Casale & Posel, 2021; Dlamini, 2020; John et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2021).

Due to the lockdown, research involving participants and face-to-face work or any unnecessary contact by the researcher with any participants or others, faces a whole host of new ethical complications. For this reason, archival research is optimal for this context. This research involved accessing all data online through the Sabinet media platform.

Research Design

The present study is an archival analysis and specifically a media analysis. Archival analysis is defined by using pre-existing records as the object of analysis which are accessed through an archive, in this case, the South African Media Database, hosted by the Sabinet

Reference Database (Hershberg, 2014). Newspaper articles are the object of the present research, and as such the research constituted a media analysis (Cashmore, 2006).

"Discourse represents the mode in which ideology finds its expression"(Kress, 1983, p. 3) . Kress (1983) argues that discourse analysis of the media is an imperative line of inquiry for research which aims to understand those sociological agreements upon which the material realities of our social world are built. It is argued that the discourse in media is both reproduction of dominant social discourse and a producer of it in ways that have very real material implications (Kress, 1983). One can understand then, why the decolonial feminist agenda requires engagement with discourse in the media to challenge colonial discourses which are reproduced in the media and have material implications for black women in our post-colonial context. In South Africa, the media has historically played a major role in managing the post-apartheid rhetoric of transformation and in the time of Apartheid acted as a major political power in its own right (Bird & Garda, 1996; Buiten & Salo, 2007). The media thus has a key role to play in the feminist transformation and decolonization of the country (Bird & Garda, 1996; Boonzaier, 2017; Buiten & Salo, 2007; Gillespie et al., 2013; Richards et al., 2011) . More recently, research has argued that the media has had major impacts on public behaviour regarding the COVID-19 outbreak (Anwar et al., 2020). For these reasons, media analysis continues to be a valuable research endeavour in SA. If we understand the media as a producer and consequence of dominant discourses in South Africa, then it stands to reason that understanding those discourses which surround GBV in the media has something to tell us about the nature of GBV in SA. Beyond the research's inherent aim of discovery, the decolonial feminist lens which is to be applied here opens the possibility for this research to resist colonial discourse as it exists in the media and move the needle toward ways of writing and speaking

about GBV that are decolonial and feminist in nature. Thus, this media analysis which centres itself around GBV during the pandemic and aims to be decolonial and feminist in nature is both a critical and constructive endeavour. To do this in an unprecedented time where the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be increasing GBV, is particularly useful.

Discourse is at the centre of the present study. Discourse refers to patterns of knowledge and communication which construct power, subjectivity, and objectivity in particular ways (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Hook, 2005; Kress, 1983). To support this enquiry, a qualitative approach is appropriate. Qualitative research has become increasingly popular in psychology (Rogers & Willig, 2017) . It allows the researcher to engage with the content of the media in flexible, detailed and contextualized ways (Rogers & Willig, 2017). This is particularly important when working with discourse as such detail and context is needed to explore power and subjectivity constructions in meaningful ways (Hook, 2005; Rogers & Willig, 2017). Furthermore, the decolonial feminist theory and agenda which is central to the current project supports a qualitative research design which allows for the engagement with the context of coloniality and the complexity of race, gender, sex, class, location and so on within the research (Boonzaier & Van Niekerk, 2019; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Rogers, 2017). As a researcher, such a method allows me to think critically about the social impact of this research and actively engage with knowledge production in ways that support the decolonial feminist agenda explicit in this work.

Data Collection

To support the research questions in this study, the South African Media Database hosted by the Sabinet Reference Database media platform was used to source relevant newspaper

clippings from the first year of the Corona virus pandemic: 27 March 2020 -27 March 2022. The key term used was “Gender- based Violence”. This term was used as it returned several different articles which centre around the media’s understanding of gender-based violence. This allowed for analysis across cases reported under this term, both high profile and low profile. It also allowed the various ways in which GBV entered news reporting across print news media outlets, to be included. The initial search on Sabinet returned 1700 results. This was narrowed to 364 by excluding duplicates and cases where GBV was mentioned in passing. For example, some articles which discussed crime mentioned GBV once as a type of crime. Other articles listed GBV as one of the things COVID-19 was impacting without detailing it. Also, many articles discussed funds and the allocation of resources, and while GBV is mentioned, it is not central to the article’s discussion. These articles were excluded. Any article which included ‘Gender-based violence’ in the heading was kept in the data set, regardless of the centrality of GBV in the article. I then reduced the data set further by only keeping articles which also included terms relating to the pandemic: “lockdown”; “pandemic”; “coronavirus” and “Covid 19”. This was to ensure the articles were negotiating the GBV discourse alongside those of the pandemic so as to best answer the research questions. This brought the data set to 150 articles.

Data Analysis

A discourse analysis (DA) was chosen as the appropriate method of analysis for this work. DA is a nuanced process which defies fixed definition (Adjei, 2013; Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Gavey, 1997; Hook, 2005; Kress, 1983). In this paper, the DA involved looking at patterns of language, knowledge production and themes which related to the creation of subjects in Gender-based violence. In Parker (2013)construction of DA, which is an interpretation of Foucault’s influence on DA, we are to understand it as language focused,

understanding that the data is historically located, with constructed subjects in a coherent conceptual framework, enmeshed with power distribution. Such a construction of DA is congruent with the theoretical framework of decolonial feminism as decolonial feminism requires location within history with reference to coloniality. It requires subjectivity as understood through gendered, raced and classed power distribution and so, it provides a coherent conceptual framework for the DA (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018). Within the conceptual framework of decolonial feminism, this discourse analysis looks at how language constructs men and women, victims and perpetrators, the colonial powers and the colonized, the South African community and government with a view to unpack how these constructions structure our knowledge systems around the issue of GBV and the theoretical and empirical consequences of such. Given my theoretical framework of decolonial feminism, discourse analysis allows for the most application of such a framework in the analysis. It is through the interpretive lens of decolonial feminism that these discourses are both discovered and articulated in the research.

In practice, for this study, this analysis involved reading the data, numerous times, looking for repeated patterns of language use, or repeated conceptual references relating specifically to the issues of GBV. This was done at first with little reference to the literature, focusing on sourcing all patterns from the data at hand. Once patterns were identified, the data was consulted again to determine the details in how these patterns construct subjects, power and create knowledge. Then the broader literature was consulted, and the data was checked for any discourses identified in the literature which had not been identified in the current data set.

Ethical considerations and Reflexivity

Given the nature of this study as being archival and without participants, the ethical considerations are not obvious. There are no participants to harm. The data collected is public information, the authors names are public knowledge and the institutions which publish this information are public too, meaning that issues of anonymity and confidentiality do not arise.

However, decolonial feminism requires a deeper engagement with the notion of ethics. Specifically, I am required to reflect on my positionality and that of the "participants" or producers of the data which I research. As a woman of colour in South Africa, I believe that my positionality supports my decolonial feminist work, as I am motivated, on many levels, to support the agenda of other women like myself. I am concerned with how women are portrayed in the media, how their stories are shared and how their experiences of GBV are used by the media. I also have a vested interest in how the knowledge produced constructs my society and constructs the issues of GBV which myself and my peers experience regularly. I am interested in this as a woman of colour, in a country with some of the highest levels of GBV in the world. This positions me well for this kind of research. I am first language English speaking, and this presents the limitation that my engagement with the work will be different to those who read it as a second language. As a woman who is a child of one parent who is white, my engagement with the decolonial work I do is complex. I have grown up in a household where the colonial encounter recreates itself daily and thus colonial ideals dominate. In some ways this makes my work easier as my resistance can find voice in the decolonial project of this work, but in other ways it makes this work harder as I struggle to see those things I have not yet seen and as I see them, I experience them vibrating through other areas of my life. This can be distressing. In the work I have done, I have often found myself angry, distressed and dismayed by the new ways I see things and by the old oppressions taking up more space in my life through this work which

focusses on them. However, I have also felt empowered and emboldened by this work which is endlessly challenging and invigorating. This work gives me an opportunity, not only to look at the ways in which coloniality and gender play out in the world but also the ways in which they play out in and around me. The process of analyzing, writing, rereading, rewriting, and reflecting results in a kind of processing of my own experiences which is hard to find elsewhere. In this way this work has been both challenging and cathartic. I have resolved to use the support of my colleagues at the *Hub for Decolonial Feminist Psychologies in Africa and the Unsettling Knowledge Production on Gendered and Sexual Violence Project* to support me to see things I have not seen, and to share my struggles. I have attended talks by various academics, listened to my peers and asked questions to challenge myself in new directions. Most recently, I engaged in a writing retreat with this Project, in which we reflected on what it means for us to be researching violence. This was particularly valuable to me as a researcher and created a sense of support I have rarely experienced in my life. To be part of such a group has been a privilege in this work. I also have a psychologist whom I have been paying to support me through some of these challenges. In these ways I believe I have identified and met the ethical obligations I have toward myself as a researcher. I also believe, through work with my colleagues and regular reference to other authors in the decolonial feminist space, I honor the reflexivity needed to ensure that I broaden my perspective and do good decolonial feminist work. It has been important for me to continue to put the interests of black women and victims of GBV at the centre of my research. As a South African woman, I am one of many who have experienced GBV in various forms and as such I believe I am well placed to do this. I have challenged myself to be explicit in my engagement with race, which as a woman who is born of parents from different races, has been difficult for me as my personal experience of race does not tend to reflect the

experience of many of my peers. However, the notable silence where race is concerned in the media illuminated for me the ways in which that silence acts as a smokescreen for racist and colonial agendas.

An area which I struggled with was my lack of engagement with queer work and LGBTQI+ representations in the media. I began to challenge myself to move in that direction, however as a cis-het-woman, it felt increasingly paternalistic to work in that space, especially considering my lack of academic background with work by queer authors and queer theory. I do believe it is a limitation of mine and the research that it does not do more for this community. All things considered, I think that by challenging myself to be a "good decolonial feminist" (and exploring and re-exploring meanings of that) at every part of this process, I believe I kept ethics in mind at every stage in meaningful ways.

With regards to the positionality of my research subjects, I cannot know the positionality of each journalist whose articles I read, or the editing process they have been subjected to. I am unable to understand the knowledge that they are producing or reproducing in the context of their positionality, their work and their history. However, I can understand the published articles as filtered and pushed through an institution which is a traditional media house. This work focuses on traditional newspaper media, a form of knowledge production that is both present and historical. In interpreting discourses across articles, the focus is not on authors or individual newspapers but rather, the focus is on that which is deemed 'print-worthy' by major knowledge producing institutions. It is that culture and ideology which perpetuates the discourses found in the media and it is that culture and ideology which the present study critiques from the perspective of myself, a decolonial feminist, cis, het woman of colour.

This study is first and foremost a decolonial feminist project. This is reflected in the questions it asks, whom it asks these questions of, the ethics applied at every stage of research, as well as the methods of analysis which yield the results of this study. Through this archival analysis which focuses on discourse across 150 articles from various media outlets, the study aims to shed light on the discourses present in the media surrounding GBV at the time of the pandemic and then to go further than that, so as to apply a decolonial lens to these discourses and thus understand them in ways that are historically located. In the next chapter the application of this will become clear as I explore the discourses that were found in the data set and argue for the ways in which the media can move forward in their reporting to support the end of GBV

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion of Discourses on GBV

The present study found approximately 1700 print media news articles when "gender-based violence" was searched on Sabinet. This is evidence of the pervasive use of the term "gender-based violence". The indication that GBV is being acknowledged as a crime independent of general violence and assault is reassuring for a feminist researcher such as myself. While there is no comparison data set, I venture to say that this means that GBV is a concept that is relevant in the media despite the presence of the unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak. This chapter discusses how the media managed to maintain the relevance and newsworthiness of GBV through discourse in the media and those discourses which the media perpetuated in this time. Eight Discourses were found in the data namely, *GBV as a pandemic; GBV as genderless; Women as vulnerable; Marginalizing survivors; Coddling Men; Discourses which uphold and resist perpetration; The co-option of GBV; GBV as a systemic issue of Patriarchy.*

It will be argued that members of the media used the pandemic as a platform for raising awareness around GBV. This was done through borrowing terms and thus legitimacy from the COVID-19 outbreak. That discourse which categorizes GBV as a pandemic will be discussed with reference to both its strengths and its limitations in this section. It is further argued that despite using the term "GBV", the dataset presented with articles which often removed "gender" from GBV and treated GBV akin to much other violence. In that discourse I explore how the media distances itself from the political nature of GBV, making it about everything other than colonial gendered power dynamics. Then representations of women, victims, men and perpetrators is discussed. In these sections it becomes clear that these representations align themselves with hegemonic colonial ideals of masculinity and femininity. It is argued that while

there are positive shifts in the media's representations of various subjectivities in GBV, the needs of victims are largely marginalized, and gendered dynamics are maintained. After covering these dominant discourses in the media, some less prevalent discourses are discussed. It is argued that there is evidence of the co-option of the anti- GBV movement in the dataset. It is also argued that the media is publicly engaging with feminist leaning terminology and framings of GBV. This is argued to be positive but limited. In each section I argue for new ways of reporting and documenting that may support a new reality in which victims are supported, perpetrators are resisted and the fight against GBV is proliferated.

1."Femicide is the real pandemic"[2]: GBV as a Pandemic

During the time of the pandemic, Cyril Ramaphosa deemed GBV and femicide a *pandemic* (Ellis, 2020). In this section, it will be argued that the discourse on GBV as a pandemic works to keep GBV relevant and newsworthy at this time and that it constitutes a mechanism for authors in the media to promote concerns around GBV. The ways in which this increased attention to GBV may come at a cost to our understanding of it, will also be explored. Particularly, the discourse can be reductionist in that it aligns GBV, which is a social issue, with COVID-19 which is biological, thus removing GBV from its history and its important social nature.

In naming GBV a 'pandemic', the media engages in attempts to legitimize the seriousness of GBV. Statistics, claims of costs and consequences as well as detailed accounts of

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[2] Hendricks, A. (2020). Make Public List of Sex Offenders *The Citizen* 7.

horrific cases all function to gather attention and outrage at GBV. The naming of GBV as a pandemic, or an epidemic, was found to be prolific in the data set, especially in the earlier stages of the pandemic, for example:

"Gender-based violence (GBV) is another pandemic destroying South Africa"(Ngema, 2021, p. 3)

The appropriation of pandemic terminology, which is usually reserved for contagious biological illnesses, indicates that the media recognizes the importance of GBV. Through naming GBV a pandemic, there is implicit acknowledgement that when GBV stands alone, it is not given the attention it deserves. By naming GBV a pandemic, media garners greater legitimacy for an issue that should be powerful enough on its own. We see this explicitly in comparisons made between the government response to GBV and its response to the coronavirus pandemic. For example:

"All you have to do is look at the response to COVID-19 to see how seriously the government takes violence against women…it has been easier to get someone arrested for breaking lockdown regulations than to get authorities to respond to calls from women who are being beaten to death." (Editorial, 2020e, p. 20).

The comparison that is common in this quote, and the many others present in the data set, is made to show the discrepancy in the intensity of the interventions to COVID-19, versus that of the interventions to GBV. On the one hand, reactions to COVID-19 by governments have been so drastic that they have disrupted lives globally almost immediately. On the other hand, GBV has seen no such swift or intense intervention. These articles engage in this comparison to suggest that GBV be given as much credence as COVID-19 and thus use the language of the "pandemic" and "virus" to borrow legitimacy from COVID-19 and apply it to GBV. In these

comparisons they also justify the need for borrowing this legitimacy in arguing that GBV has not seen an appropriate response. The Editorial in the Mail and Guardian (2020) wrote it succinctly when they wrote "If gender-based violence was treated as the pandemic it is, women would feel safer to sleep in their homes at night" (Editorial, 2020e, p. 20). In this way, the pandemic has provided a platform which many authors have used to advance attention to the issue of GBV in SA. It is useful to acknowledge that due to the historical, and deeply entrenched power structures in our society which are gendered, biological phenomena, a crisis like COVID-19 is bound to affect people of different identities differently, and thus it can be argued that COVID-19 is just as sociological as GBV (Pinheiro & Kiguwa, 2021). This may be a positive pay off in deeming GBV a pandemic, in that it highlights the sociological nature of a biological issue such as COVID-19.

In order to create a stronger logical link between COVID-19 and GBV, there are a number of articles which hypothesized that the regulations for COVID -19, specifically a lockdown will increase GBV or which document that statistics have increased since lockdown. For example:

'"During the first two weeks of the national lockdown, there have been 12 more cases referred to the provincial department by the national call centre, compared to the total number of cases referred to us during the first three months of the year. This is a serious cause for concern. Sadly, women and children who suffer at the hands of an abuser are required to stay home and are unable to safely call for help undetected," said Fernandez." (Vuso, 2020, p. 5)

The recent limited studies which are investigating the impact of lockdown suggest that it has increased GBV, at least in intensity if not in prevalence (Dekel & Abrahams, 2021; Nduna & Tshona, 2021; Ogunlana et al., 2021; Saalim et al., 2021). While it may be true that lockdown

has increased GBV, it is also true that GBV has been a pervasive issue in SA long before COVID-19 and in not acknowledging it or suggesting that it has now reached an intolerable level, the media potentially minimizes GBV. While it has highlighted the sociological implications of COVID -19, the media does not locate this as historical issues of power i.e. as an ongoing struggle based on the gendered and racial power originating from colonialism and maintained through apartheid (Gqola, 2015; Jones, 2011 ; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Moffet, 2006). We know that GBV has been extensive and horrific for years in SA before COVID-19. The fact that it may be increasing in a time of crisis is more evidence of the persisting psycho-social inequalities in South Africa, than it is evidence of the nature of lockdowns or COVID-19 (Pinheiro & Kiguwa, 2021). Suggesting that its newsworthiness is somehow linked to COVID-19, fails to acknowledge its pervasive history in our country. It is also concerning because COVID-19 is a contagious virus that will change and eventually become manageable by our society as a matter of biology. GBV on the other hand is a much longer, more dangerous thorn in our society's flesh. By linking it to something of such a different nature, we may not be doing the depth of this injury justice, and we are potentially confusing the nature of GBV, which is not biological, in favour of riding on the legitimacy a “pandemic” gives GBV. GBV is about people and agency whereas COVID-19 is a disease without agency. This is an important distinction which is lost in the comparison.

The ongoing comparison can be identified as a kind of intertextuality that is occurring between meaning in GBV and meaning in the pandemic. Intertextuality refers to the idea that all meaning in language is interdependent on previous and concurrent discourses (Adjei, 2013). This means that meaning is always under construction as words and phrases are always referring to the new and old ways in which they are used (Adjei, 2013). Thus, as GBV is called a pandemic,

so does the term “pandemic” broaden beyond the biological through its association with this sociological phenomenon, which is positive, as COVID-19 certainly has major psycho-social impacts; And importantly, GBV as a concept accrues meaning from the term pandemic. It is the latter, which is potentially dangerous, as while it does lend legitimacy as argued previously, the biological terms detract from the historical psycho-social nature of both phenomena. Many articles leave the historical, racial and gendered nature of GBV out of their presentation of the crisis alongside COVID-19, and this will be discussed in the following section, however it is useful to point out that this reductionistic way of looking at GBV which renders it a pandemic allows for these silences.

In negotiating GBV alongside the pandemic, some authors attempt to resist the reductionism that linking GBV too strongly to COVID-19 may result in. For example, an article titled “Worse fate than COVID-19” says about GBV that “decades of physical trauma can in no way compare to a temporary global contagion.” (Ramnun-Mansingh, 2020, p. 8). While the article stills borrows legitimacy from COVID-19 by positioning GBV as worse than the virus, it does so in a way that attempts to maintain the unique nature of GBV, while perhaps minimizing COVID-19 as a pay-off. In this way we can see that in negotiating the two issues side by side, one is likely to be sidelined in favour of the other. This is further evidenced in the quote below where GBV is positioned as second to COVID-19:

“Gender based violence has been described as SA’s second epidemic after COVID-19” (Editorial, 2020a, p. 6)

Unfortunately, this sidelining is quite pervasive in different ways in the data. An article titled “Symbolism in SA’s struggle against COVID-19, GBV”(Editorial, 2020d, p. 6) discusses how the National flag was flown at half-mast to symbolize the mourning of those who have died

of corona and GBV. We see how GBV is quite literally tacked on to the end of that heading, much like it is tacked onto the symbolism of flying the flag at half-mast. Another article detailing the opening of a support facility for victims, documents that "Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana performed a candle-lighting ceremony in memory of survivors and victims of GBV and COVID-19." (SAnews.gov.za, 2020, p. 7). It seems odd that the same act which is used to symbolize the losses to a harmful illness is used to symbolize the losses due to GBV which has very different causes and solutions. These two articles are clear examples of what happens in various ways throughout the data set. It is also important to note that much of the excluded articles were excluded because GBV was 'tacked' onto the article and not discussed in any detail. This indicates the lip service at play, when two important issues become linked in public discourse.

It has been demonstrated that the media has termed GBV a pandemic and in so doing has managed to keep it relevant in a time where COVID-19 has dominated headlines. Emergencies like COVID-19 impact people differently depending on their positionality, and in keeping GBV relevant, the media brings to our attention the ways in which COVID-19 affects social issues and specific social groups (Pinheiro & Kiguwa, 2021). It has also been argued that in linking COVID-19 with GBV in its discourse, many articles may do a disservice to the unique nature of GBV and set the groundwork for us to ignore the racial, colonial and gendered ways GBV has come to be. In the past, the South African media has been critiqued for only engaging in reporting on GBV at the time of 16 days of activism, while letting it be sidelined beyond this (Isaacs, 2016; Ndlovu, 2008). This discourse which positions GBV as a pandemic is evidence that this lack of focus on violence against women may have changed. It is admirable that the news media has GBV relevant in the time of COVID-19, where COVID-19 could easily have

overshadowed violence against women. Media reports have successfully done this by tacking GBV onto the "pandemic" terminology. In many ways this is a win for feminists and persons affected by gendered violence more broadly as the violence women experience daily could have easily been overshadowed by the global pandemic.

2. GBV as Genderless: Anything but Gendered

In the previous discourse of GBV as a pandemic, we see ways in which the social, historical, and gendered nature of GBV disappear in reporting. In this discourse, the neutralizing of gender in violence against women is explored more thoroughly. It is not uncommon for entire articles centred around GBV, to not mention gender in any meaningful way at all. In general, the media replaces gender with location, economics, or alcohol.

Location. Boonzaier (2017) demonstrates through the analysis of the media on the brutal rape and murder of Anene Booysen, a practice in the print media, which is to locate the issue of GBV in particular geographical areas. Reporters on GBV successfully construct these areas as problematic, and "others" them in line with that colonial practice which constructs rape as a problem of the poor black communities as created by the colonial gaze (Bird & Garda, 1996; Boonzaier, 2017; Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Moffet, 2006; Phaswana, 2021). The present study finds that this practice still exists, even in the context where GBV is dubbed a pandemic in South Africa more broadly. For example:

a)“Nokuphumla Dineka, said the system would assist the department to establish how many people were experiencing abuse and which areas were hot spots.” (Khambule, 2021, p. 5)

b) “Samora Machel station commander Elliot Lingani said that GBV cases were prominent in their area, claiming that it was because people were abusing alcohol. “As soon as they abuse alcohol they turn to abuse our women and children, so we do have those cases”[…] He said the areas that recorded most of those cases were Vlei, Kosovo, the Eyadini informal settlement by the railway line and Samora Machel. “Vlei is one of those areas where there is too much rape, sometimes we file up to six cases, although it changes every time” said Lingani” (Mlamla, 2020, p. 2).

The construction of GBV here, is as something that occurs in specific geographical spaces, completely removing the agency from perpetrators of GBV. Those areas where it is located, as we see in the second quote, are constructed as broadly problematic often riddled with other crimes and alcohol abuse. It is no coincidence that the articles in the present data set speak about Delft, Mitchells Plain, and Khayelitsha, while staying silent on places like Constantia, Sandton or Umhlanga when talking about GBV. These distinctions mirror apartheid’s Group Areas Act (1950), in that the media reports on GBV in historically black areas (Boonzaier, 2017; Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Langa et al., 2018). The persistent association of these areas with GBV is aligned with colonial conceptions of black communities as problematic and violent (Bonnes, 2013; Isaacs, 2016; Langa et al., 2018).

While the media associates these areas, where mostly black and coloured people live, with GBV, it simultaneously remains silent on race. It hides those racial dynamics that it is

perpetuating through these silences. The media shies away from being racially explicit as in doing so, these implications would become obvious and may face much deserved scrutiny and critique. It is arguable that this silence points to the shared knowledge authors are drawing on with their audiences, where racist assumptions about GBV and black communities still persist (Jungherr et al., 2019; Lykke, 2015). Furthermore the silence on the racialized aspects of GBV is a silence of black survivors stories, struggles and triumphs (Presser, 2019). This silence allows the media to shy away from noting and deconstructing the continued legacy of colonialism and apartheid, by placing the focus on spaces, substances, and economics as scapegoats (Presser, 2019). Presser (2019) argues that some theories of anti-sociality are silent on the systemic gendered issues involved in child-rearing, which results in accounts of anti-sociality placing the blame for antisocial behaviour on the child's caregiver, usually their mother. Presser argues that the silence on the ways in which the working world is not accommodating to women who raise children, the ways in which raising children is not deemed work by our society and the ways in which racial and gendered power negotiate access to resources, ignores the ways in which those systemic issues construct antisocial behaviour, both through the implications on child rearing and beyond it. A similar thing can be seen in the media's accounts of GBV which locate it in areas with little attention to how these areas came to be. There is no attention paid to the decades of violence that these areas and their occupants have been subjected to, based on race, gender, class and many other identities that have led to the volatility and violence perpetrated in these spaces. In this silence, the media arguably commits further violence to these communities whose stories are misrepresented by this exclusion (Presser, 2019). In perpetuating these notions of GBV as located in areas, not only do these articles align themselves with apartheid and colonial

conceptions of black communities, they also fail to acknowledge that agency involved in perpetrating GBV (Boonzaier et al., 2019).

Alcohol. There continues to be discourses in the media which place the blame for GBV on alcohol. Rather than interrogating those gendered power dynamics which exist in our post-colonial society, the media reduces GBV to violent crime, which is exacerbated by alcohol.

For example:

> "Adeshini Naicker…said their organisation was anticipating an increase in child rape and gender-based violence. "This can be attributed to the fact that some people are just bored, while also living in confined conditions with abusive and alcoholic spouses may aggravate the situation."" (Kubheka, 2020, p. 3)

Studies do indicate that alcohol abuse is linked to IPV and GBV, however the nature of this link is still unclear (Pitpitan et al., 2013; Shiva et al., 2021). Generally, studies indicate that where patriarchal domination exists, alcohol can increase the risk of GBV as well as the intensity of it (Beyene et al., 2021; Muluneh et al., 2021; Pitpitan et al., 2013; Prego-Meleiro et al., 2021; Shiva et al., 2021). However, these explanations for GBV have been critiqued. Backe et al. (2021) argue that GBV occurs in a historical structural system of power in which alcohol can play a permissive role. It is argued that alcohol is not just an aggravator of violence but also a coping mechanism with it, as well as a practice deeply enmeshed with masculinity and social norms (Backe et al., 2021). Thus, to pathologize the use of alcohol can be unhelpful and potentially oppressive. The notion of alcohol in black communities as problematic is also a common colonial trope which paternalizes black communities, policing their behaviour and

constructing them as unable to manage substances (Boonzaier, 2017). The issue of placing blame on alcohol allows these colonial tropes to exist unchallenged while issues of violent masculinity, hegemonic patriarchy and the systemic oppression of women exist in the shadows, masked by this persistent construction of black communities as violent, and in need of control (Boonzaier, 2018). This finding replicates that which has already been found in SA media with regard to domestic violence. Isaacs (2016) argues that the media presents domestic violence either a result of substance abuse or provoked by women. Importantly, Boonzaier (2018) argues that attributing GBV to alcohol, functions to increase victim blaming when it is mentioned in relation to the survivor or victim, and functions to decrease responsibility for men when it is used to describe the perpetrators circumstances. In the data set, alcohol is often referred to broadly as a contributor to violence and is often linked to the perpetrator. As with locating GBV in areas, linking it only to the use of alcohol removes the issue of gender and agency from the crime, thus distorting it into violent crime rather than a form of violence against women perpetrated mostly by men.

Economics. Many of the articles surveyed placed much emphasis on economic issues that surround the perpetration of GBV. Economic issues in this instance refer to issues such as unemployment, financial abuse and so on. For example**:**

> "Economic emancipation was important as recent statistics had revealed that half of the women who died did so at the hands of those close to them." (Tlhabye, 2020, p. 1)

The way economic emancipation is connected to murders of women implies that it is economic entrapment which allows this abuse and that by emancipating women, this abuse will

stop. While economic empowerment can be a valuable tool for providing women with power in society and thus freeing them from men's violence, it is not the case that it is only poor, economically dependent women who are abused. These assumptions continue to paint a picture of a survivor that does not acknowledge their strength, while simultaneously not acknowledging the complexity of the abuse by the perpetrator. One of the most poignant instances of GBV that was shared with me when I was volunteering as a counsellor, was an incident where a woman who is the breadwinner of her home was beaten into a hospital bed by her partner because she was providing for the family, and he could not. It is that woman's face I see when I read repetitive articles which paint a picture of domestic violence which centres on the economically dependent woman. Similarly, when I interviewed men for a project I was never able to complete, both the men I interviewed spoke about women being "allowed" to work. Keith et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review of interventions for GBV across Sub-Saharan Africa and found insufficient evidence to conclude that economic interventions had positive outcomes. In fact, the study found that social interventions reported more positive outcomes than interventions that combined social and economic interventions (Keith et al., 2022). While this is not to say economic interventions are definitively unhelpful, the media points to economics as a central issue, where the research indicates that interventions which address social attitudes tend to have the most positive outcomes. Below are some examples of the way in which articles position economics in GBV:

> "A woman who is the face of thousands of her sisters has to remain in lockdown with a partner she sometimes depends on financially. A partner who in turn physically, verbally and sexually assaults her. The woman anxiously awaits her partner to leave the home knowing it is her only time of safety. With many of the abusive perpetrators not having

> their usual outlet of alcohol drugs or gambling during the shutdown, abusing their partner will be their only outlet." (Ramnun-Mansingh, 2020, p. 8)
>
> "Women are now literally at the mercy of their abusers as they are economically dependent on them"(Ncube, 2020, p. 20)

These quotes highlight the assumptions the media carries about the predominantly black women or women of colour that they are talking about as well as the "abuser" or black man, or man of colour in a predominantly black country, that is present in these discourses. The black man is portrayed as inherently violent and in need of "outlets" which his partner becomes. The black woman is portrayed as dependent and as a scared victim. While I will discuss in later discourses the ways in which black women are portrayed in the GBV media, as well as black men and perpetrators, it is valuable to note that this genderless discourse which points the finger at economics also serves to uphold colonial images of black men as inherently violent and black women as inherently vulnerable. Of course, it is not only black women who are abused, and thus not only black women who are being referred to in the media. It is black women whose stories are persistently silenced, and in the silence regarding race, in a country that is predominantly black, where the areas in which violence is persistently constructed, are predominantly areas where black people and women of colour live, I believe it is constructive to point out the implicit race where it is not explicit (Gqola, 2015; Presser, 2019).

These constructions of women as dependent and homebound does not account for the reality that many women who are financially independent or healthily financially interdependent, are abused. In South Africa, the black woman breadwinner and black woman money manager in the

household is fairly common (Morrell et al., 2012). These women are strong members of our society, and their story is neither told nor understood in this discourse which uses economics to hide colonial gendered power dynamics. It must be acknowledged that financial abuse is real and economic factors play a role in gendered power dynamics and women's emancipation from violent men but that the over representation of this in the media can misrepresent the reality which is much more complex (Keith et al., 2022; Nduna & Tshona, 2021). Furthermore, through this focus on economics, the media detracts from the work that needs to be done socially (Keith et al., 2022).

On the one hand, in each of these cases, whether by replacing gendered power with location, economics or alcohol, the media fails to centre GBV on patriarchy and gendered power. In so doing, we see a perpetuation of colonial discourses of what it means to be men and women and little effort to dissemble those foundations of the patriarchal domination that GBV relies on (Buiten & Salo, 2007). It also buys into a notion of masculinity which implies that men will inevitably be violent to women under certain circumstances (Boonzaier et al., 2019; Buiten & Naidoo, 2013; Buiten & Salo, 2007). On the other hand, the media is engaging with some important factors related to GBV and this is good. We know that alcohol and economics can play a role in GBV and there are communities who are more affected by GBV than others. It is important that the media engages with issues relevant to GBV, and in engaging with economics, alcohol and location, the media is beginning to do this. However, the media's presentation of GBV as something which is about economics in important ways, located in specific areas or as something which is instigated by alcohol does not reflect the reality of GBV, which studies suggest is much more centred on social structures, power and dynamics (Backe et al., 2021; Beyene et al., 2021; Keith et al., 2022; Muluneh et al., 2021; Pitpitan et al., 2013; Shiva et al.,

2021; Swahn et al., 2021). This results in a distraction from those systemic, colonial structures of power which truly uphold GBV, and which the media actively avoids in its refusal to discuss race, and its reliance on genderless factors like alcohol, location and economics when explaining violence against women (Gqola, 2015; Presser, 2019).

3. Discourses of Women as Vulnerable

The media focuses its attention predominantly on the vulnerability of women rather than anything to do with men. A quote in the data set gets quickly to the heart of this discourse:

> "I am yet to come across a headline that says "a man kills" instead of "a woman dies'" - Kabelo Chabalala quoted in (Ntuli, 2020, p. 3)

This quote illustrates something important about this very pervasive discourse in the media. As a subject in the media, the woman is consistently constructed as vulnerable in discussions about GBV and the pandemic. This is done in many ways. Women are positioned alongside children as we can see in this example:

> "Many women and children are abused by their partners and we want to be a voice for the voiceless." Statement made by cofounder of Langaformen Siyabonga Khusela in relation to marches they led against GBV (Staff-Reporter, 2020 p. 2)

Women are explicitly referred to as 'vulnerable':

"Women are vulnerable and highly susceptible to abuse-now more than ever. They are locked down in the same places as their perpetrators. This has presented challenges, as seen by the high incidents of GBV cases recorded by SAPS during lockdown, with over 2230 cases in the first week. GBV has continually emerged as a reoccurring theme and key area of concern during this period and women are now literally at the mercy of their abusers as they are economically dependent on them."(Ncube, 2020, p. 20)

This occurs repeatedly even in the same article:

> E.g "The impact on women, particularly on their economic status and vulnerability to violence, has been…" and "the analysis of why women are still in such vulnerable positions…" and " economic vulnerability reduces women's ability to …" (Moloto & Makhathini, 2021, p. 6) are all quotes from one article.

And where they are not constructed as explicitly vulnerable, they are constructed as implicitly vulnerable:

> "She faces the greatest pandemic of being a woman." (Ramnun-Mansingh, 2020, p. 8)

In short, there are countless examples in the data of the prolific image of the woman as victim and sufferer. The plight of women is consistently portrayed in ways that engender pity, emphasizing struggle rather than triumph. Mudhai et al. (2016) found that black women are often portrayed as vulnerable, passive victims in the Kenyan media, which is also the case in this South African data set. Furthermore, research on GBV in general has tended to proliferate discourses of vulnerable women, depicting women as at risk for GBV, largely due to their

circumstances and often due to their behaviour (Boonzaier, 2018). As we see in the above quote from Ncube at The Star, the woman is generalized as economically dependent on the man, at the mercy of the man and vulnerable to the worst things in the world. This representation of women has been found in other research too. Isaacs (2016), for example, found that in media reports on domestic violence, representations of women aligned with hegemonic constructions of femininity. Isaacs' (2016) research argues that women were persistently positioned as passive recipients of violence. These groupings and constructions serve to make being a woman dangerous and as the last quote suggests, the pandemic is not just GBV it is being a woman (Boonzaier, 2018). Such a construction ignores women's agency, their power and their strength. These hegemonic constructions of black women as dependent on men flies in the face of the reality that approximately 40% of households in SA are headed by women (Morrell et al., 2012). Crucially, this does not include the remaining percentage of households which may be headed by a man but financially contributed to by a woman. In placing the focus on women's vulnerability, ignoring their agency and power, articles engender fear for women, implying that they are endlessly vulnerable to various forms of GBV. This contributes to what Gqola (2015) coined as "the female fear factory" p.g 78. Gqola (2015) argues that rape, the reporting of violence against women, victim blaming and the lacking justice system in our society manifests a fear factory for women which polices their behaviour through the threat of rape and violence. When the news media focuses on women's vulnerability and stays silent on their success and triumph, when it sensationalizes rape, it contributes to this fear and thus becomes part of this patriarchal domination.

The particular attention to the vulnerability of women where disease is concerned can be demonstrated in the following quote:

"According to the WHO, South Africa has the single largest prevalence of HIV in the world with 7.7 million afflicted, many of whom are women and young girls often the victims of sexual violence including rape." (Parker, 2021, p. 4)

This article states the above quote while discussing the implications of the pandemic on South African women. Here we see that many of those afflicted with HIV would be people of other genders, yet the author chooses to highlight women as victims, highlighting the newsworthiness and palatableness of a woman victim[3]. The COVID-19 pandemic has become another circumstance that many members of the media can use to construct the vulnerabilities of women, keeping women in the collective consciousness of South Africa, in their place as dependent and suffering. Pinheiro and Kiguwa (2021) argue that emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic tend to exacerbate pre-existing power structures, such that people experience the consequences of such emergencies differently based on their identities. Thus gender-based violence, which is strongly related to gendered power, increases in times of pandemics because all the ways in which gendered power is unequal increase (Pinheiro & Kiguwa, 2021). Therefore, the media's attention on the vulnerability of women may be viewed as a method of exposing these exacerbated power structures and in this way resists them. While this is important, the media does not frame these consequences of the pandemic as reflections of long-standing gendered power dynamics. In fact, as discussed in previous discourses, gendered power is often silenced in accounts of GBV, along with racialized power, which is also a major historic power structure which the pandemic will exacerbate (Pinheiro & Kiguwa, 2021).

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[3] It is also valuable to point out the silence in this quote regarding the LGBTQI+ community whose story of struggle and triumph in pandemics is not represented in this data set, nor does it seem to be well represented in other research on the media and GBV.

Therefore, the media renders the subject of the women in GBV as helpless, vulnerable and in need, rather than as a subject who is subjugated and oppressed. Such an image of the black woman who is in need of guidance, protection, and is entirely dependent is directly aligned with colonial imagery of native women who were placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Jones, 2011). Through this repetitive construction of women as vulnerable the media maintains that colonial imagery. It also shines the light away from the oppression, in favour of a discourse of vulnerability which relies heavily on essentialist colonial views of femininity (Hook, 2005; Jones, 2011).

While the discourse of women as vulnerable perpetuates helplessness and hopelessness for women, it also constructs women as "rapable" (Gqola, 2015, p. 80) to perpetrators. In constructing women as so deeply vulnerable, the media turns them into easy targets. This protects gender-based violence as viable behaviour as it continues to construct vulnerability on the axiom of gender. This means that women will always be vulnerable. Its props up those beliefs that state that women need protection and cannot stand alone. As a South African woman researcher, it is deeply frustrating to read this consistent narrative that likens women such as myself to children, makes us helpless and arouses dread toward what seems an inevitable assault. The understanding that rape and gendered violence is a crime used to discipline women who resist colonial ideals of femininity is notably missing in the data set (Morrissey, 2013). The persistent representation of women as vulnerable is in direct contrast to the image of women who face sexual and gendered violence because of resistance. This resistance may simply be a woman's same-sex desire or her trans identity or their bread-winning, or drinking and partying (Boonzaier, 2017; Morrissey, 2013).

In summary, there is a dominant discourse in the data set analyzed here where the vulnerability of women is constantly constructed and focused on. This construction of women is consistent with previous research on the media (Isaacs, 2016; Morrissey, 2013; Spies, 2020). This discourse is problematic because it forms part of the "female fear factory"(Gqola, 2015, p. 78) that polices women's behaviour, and it perpetuates their victim status by continuing to make them 'easy targets' in the media. Furthermore, such constructions of women victims is aligned with colonial imagery (Gqola, 2015; Jones, 2011). While the media does successfully highlight the ways on which women experience the pandemic differently due to their status as women in our society, it does this through the construction of women as vulnerable rather than the construction of men, or south African society as oppressive. It is useful to point out that the media favours the discourse of the vulnerable women, it sees this as newsworthy and readable, while the racialized, colonial history of rape in South Africa has not entered the newsworthy realm. The media shines a light on the struggles that GBV creates, and it has no problem locating these issues with women, yet it does nothing to locate race in GBV, and rarely engages with how queerness and the LGBTQI+ community fit into these issues (Buiten, 2020; Morrissey, 2013). Through the persistent colonial discourse of vulnerable femininity, alongside the silencing of history, race and gendered power in GBV, much of the media does not engage with the reality of women in SA's struggles and how they are negotiated by race (Presser, 2019). This silence protects the racialized power enmeshed in GBV. Lastly, in the silence around women's strength, the media lacks any engagement with the ways in which women resist GBV in their everyday lives and the ways in which GBV is enmeshed with their power and not just their vulnerability (Morrissey, 2013).

4. Marginalizing Survivors: Discourses Which Police Survivors and Victim's Behaviour

This section argues that there are prevalent discourses in the data set which police victim's and survivor's behaviour and potentially re-victimize survivors through a lack of compassion toward their process of healing. The section outlines some of the ways victims and survivors are policed, how doubt is cast upon them and how the media sometimes blatantly sidelines them and their needs.

It is valuable here to discuss terminology. I will be using the term "survivor" to refer to people who have survived their assaults and "victim" to refer to people who did not survive their assaults. It is important to state that women who have been assaulted are both victims and survivors, and that their "victim" status has been over emphasized in the media, while their survivor status remains largely silenced (Morrissey, 2013). It is to contribute then, to the knowledge production which sees these women in light of their strength that I write in terms of survivors.

Throughout the dataset there is a great deal of encouragement toward survivors to report their assaults- see below:

> "#NoExcuse has always encouraged victims to be brave and report immediately" (Staff-Reporter, 2020b, p. 4)
>
> "One of the challenges with gender-based violence was that police often reacted after the incident. She encouraged people to speak out and seek help before it was too late." (Monama, 2020, p. 4)

The notion that quick reporting of abuse and rape are important, as shown in quote above is prolific throughout the dataset. In the second quote, we see the way that the catching of

perpetrators becomes the responsibility of survivors. Instead of acknowledging the failure of law and law enforcement to create a safe country, survivors need to seek help before it is too late. In these ways catching the perpetrator is a central discourse in the fight against GBV, and it has become the responsibility of the victim who must submit samples, report timeously and "be brave"(Smythe, 2015). The focus on this comes at the expense of the survivors' healing. Smythe (2015) argues that reporting of rape in South Africa is complex and riddled with barriers for survivors. Survivors' believability is called into question and their attitude to the case plays a major role in whether police follow through on their investigations (Smythe, 2015). Furthermore, survivors claim a number of reasons for not reporting including fear for their life, and pressure from the community (Smythe, 2015). It could be argued that in promoting the reporting of GBV, the media is aiming to build a culture where communities will support reporting rather than dissuade it, however this still does not centre the survivor's needs. There is a heavy silence on the healing of survivors and the call to end GBV in the media, has little room for those who have already been victimized by its far-reaching claws. This sidelining of survivors healing in favour of reporting perpetrators further marginalizes survivors. It places arrests and law enforcement at the centre of the quest to end GBV, which obscures the need for the much deeper work that needs to happen on a societal level to end GBV. In the quotes above, we also begin to see the ways in which survivors' struggles are minimized. The suggestion that reporting one's abuser is simply an act of bravery minimizes the very real and very big risks victims face when reporting their abuse. We see this discourse played out further in the quotes below:

> "Women can film any form of abuse and attack they suffer using their cellphones… the perpetrators must be named and shamed."(Dube-Ncube, 2020, p. 4)

"Beware naming and shaming can cost you" (Staff-Reporter, 2020a)

Suggesting that women can film their abuse minimizes the reality of abuse where for many this is not possible. The struggles of victims and survivors are minimized by overstating what is possible for survivors. In implying that women can name and shame abusers, the media continues to tell survivors how to behave, and tells them to behave in ways that are not necessarily possible or safe for them (Smythe, 2015; Spies, 2020; Taylor, 2009). We can see this in the inconsistency that quotes about naming and shaming highlight, whereby survivors are being told to be wary of naming and shaming, while other media is telling them they "must" name and shame. The implications of these kinds of discourses on victims seems ill considered. We must keep in mind that in a country where GBV is so prevalent, survivors of it constitute a major reader base and thus the media's role to inform should be considered in light of this (Buiten, 2013).

The policing of survivors' behaviour can result in victim blaming as can be demonstrated by the quote below:

> "The brutal murder caught the attention of Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, who attended the picket to speak to the family of De Kock. She believed it was up to women to prevent gender-based violence by walking away from any sign of abuse from a loved one. "To our girl children, the first slap to your face is a good enough sign for you to start walking because we think we are going to have to deal with this matter through prevention," said the Minister" (Kgosana, 2020, p. 4)

Not only does this again overstate what may possible and safe for women to do, it also logically leads to in victim blaming. In this quote walking away from abuse is constructed as not only possible but also the way to prevent GBV i.e. if women don't walk away from abusers then they are partly responsible for the fact that they experienced abuse. The idea that women have the choice and ability to leave relationships is found in many places in the media, for example:

> "At the same time, it is a choice that women make to leave their abusive relationships…The idea is that women don't often realize that they are in an abusive relationship"(Court, 2020, p. 6)

This quote highlights the ways in which women's ability to leave is overstated in various ways in the data set. In the last quote it is suggested that women may not be leaving relationships because they don't know that they are abusive. This constitutes part of the overriding theme of paternalism which underpins this discourse. Paternalism toward women, and particularly black women, is a tradition located in colonial practices that reach as far back as the colonial encounter (Jones, 2011). It is part of that tradition which believes the white man to be the knower and bringer of knowledge and civilization while women are recipients of white male authority i.e. the (often black) woman never knows what is best for herself. This discourse, which disenfranchises women from their knowledge and experiences, leaves no room for the reality that women may know they are in an abusive relationship and may not be able to leave or may make the choice to stay for very good reasons(Muñoz-Rivas et al., 2021; Smythe, 2015; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2014).Whiting (2016) argues for eight reasons why women stay in abusive relationships including isolation, fear, concerns for their children and financial constraints. Van

Schalkwyk et al. (2014) conducted a study on women's experiences in leaving abusive relationships, whereby it was demonstrated how complex and difficult this decision was for these women who had done so. In some cases, it was only when women believed they would die or their children would be harmed that they were able to take the difficult steps to leave the relationship (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2014). In these ways the nuance and complexity of abusive relationships seems unacknowledged by the media, which sidelines survivors' experiences and continues the violence of the colonial tradition through paternalism. While it is true that gendered violence can be nuanced and complex such that women may doubt whether their experiences may constitute GBV, the media's role then is to inform the public about what constitutes GBV, and this is severely lacking in the data set (Menon et al., 2020; Williamson et al., 2012). The assertion that it is "a choice" actively places responsibility on the survivor's shoulders. This resultant victim blaming constitutes one of the very things that is a barrier to survivors reporting, and yet the media engages in these discourses alongside calling for victims to report their abuse. This constitutes an alignment with a large body of research which documents the victim blaming discourse in the media and in other spaces (Boonzaier, 2017; Boonzaier, 2018; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Isaacs, 2016; Spies, 2020; Van Niekerk & Boonzaier, 2016).

In these ways, survivors are dictated to, policed, and burdened with responsibility, while being shown little understanding or compassion for their circumstances as well as the diversity of experiences they may be having. In these instances, the news media forms part of the victim blaming machinery which adds to the trauma survivors experience when they come forward with their experiences. In sidelining the needs of victims in favour of discourses which centralize catching perpetrators as a viable solution to GBV, the media successfully marginalizes survivors. The media leaves out the complexity of survivor's experiences. It also fails to engage the ways in

which every person, especially men, are an agent in the complex system of power that GBV functions in, and thus is responsible for dissembling it.

Contributing to the sidelining of survivor's experiences and needs is continued through the persistent use of the term "allegedly" when dealing with cases of rape and assault. Thusi (2016) argues that the use of this term functions to demonstrate a resistance to commit. When the media uses this term, it allows them to report without taking a stance and thus distances the author and their article from the issue at hand (Thusi, 2016). This stands out as particularly problematic when such cases of rape seem obviously true. For example, "a case of a primary school pupil had to undergo an abortion after being allegedly raped multiple times during the lockdown" (Coetzer, 2020, p. 4). The article goes on to say that the court proceedings have been postponed awaiting further investigations into the incident. This approach screams disbelief in the victim who is a child. The child is under the age of consent and underwent an abortion. The case seems extremely strong that the child was raped, yet the article places the emphasis on the uncertainty. While the article gives a great deal of information about the law regarding rape in the case of children it also adds that "often younger girls are sexually active"(Coetzer, 2020, p. 4) implying that young girls can give consent, which according to the law, is not the case for children younger than 17. The law is being used to disempower the victim where possible while simultaneously, the parts of the law which support the victim's case are overridden. The quote implies the common rape myth which promotes that woman who are sexual or sexually active, especially those who are promiscuous, cannot be raped (O'Hara, 2012). There are many articles in the data set which use formal legal language like this which often functions to cast doubt and avoid emotiveness in reporting on GBV. This functions as a distancing mechanism for the author who absolves themselves from the responsibility to take a side in the article (Gillespie et al.,

2013; Spies, 2020; Thusi, 2016). In contrast, on the same day, an article published in the Star reads " we continue to be inundated with horrific stories of… a primary school girl being forced to have an abortion after her mother's tenant raped her repeatedly for eight months only to threaten the family"(Editorial, 2020c, p. 6) illustrating the ways in which the media can legitimize victims in telling their story rather than form part of the machine which consistently fails them. In this case 'allegedly' is left out of the picture entirely and it results in a firmer support of the young girl's narrative. Both these ways of reporting can be found in the data set, highlighting that some authors are choosing to report in ways that challenge the status quo, however it is the first kind of reporting that dominates.

Many articles in the media engage in horrific descriptions of femicide and rape. Such descriptions function to marginalize survivors in slightly different ways from those already mentioned. Below we can see just one example of this, which represents much of the other data in which GBV is reported on similarly:

> "In South Africa, within the first week of the March lockdown last year, the police reported 2 300 calls for help related to GBV. By mid -June, 21 women and children had been killed by intimate partners, the study found. Just last week, Lungile Nxelelwa was given a double life sentence for raping and killing Keneilwe Pule before setting her body on fire in 2019.In Mpumalanga, a man convicted of killing his former girlfriend and mother of his four children was handed a life imprisonment term. In KwaZulu-Natal, a man was jailed for life for kidnapping and raping a woman he was infatuated with in Verulam."(Editorial, 2021, p. 6)

These descriptions of murders and rapes of these women constitute another way in which survivors are ‘othered’. In many cases the women are not named and are reported on in lists or as numbers in statistics as above. These women are dehumanized by accounts that rattle off the horrors of the end of their lives with little to no detail of who these women were, their humanity beyond their horrific and “newsworthy” death (Van Niekerk, 2015). The way in which their humanity is not newsworthy, while the horror of their death is, demonstrates further how these women are “othered” rather than related to or brought to life (Van Niekerk, 2015). This constitutes the erasure of these women’s subjectivity. The erasure of the subjectivity of the oppressed is a colonial system of power, which is reaching into these media accounts (Bird & Garda, 1996; Gqola, 2015; Jones, 2011 ; Phaswana, 2021). This erasure is consistent with the work of Gilchrist (2010) which argued that accounts of aboriginal women victims were extremely cold and factual. This way of reporting relies on shock and disgust garnered by the number and horror of crimes rather than that horror and shock that arises from concern and empathy for the real women who remain faceless and sometimes nameless in these accounts. This constitutes further marginalizing of victims whose assaults become co-opted by this type of reporting, which uses them for attention grabbing headlines with little heed to their individual realities, pains, and successes (Gilchrist, 2010; Taylor, 2009; Van Niekerk, 2015).

Overarchingly, the needs of survivors are sidelined in the media. However, the lockdown has allowed for some compassion toward survivors. While the media persists in the above discourses, it also has shone the light on the ways in which the lockdown may complicate survivors’ situations. See the examples below:

> “An anonymous survivor of abuse at the Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children in Cape Town spoke to Weekend Argus about her lockdown worries. “If I was at home during this lockdown there would be lots of abuse and fights.”” (Court, 2020, p. 6)

> ““Sadly, women and children who suffer at the hands of an abuser are required to stay home and are unable to safely call for help undetected” said Fernandez” (Vuso, 2020, p. 5)
>
> “Fear of breaking lockdown regulations has led to fewer people going to police stations to report gender-based violence says Lifeline South Africa Durban director Pravesha Dhana palan.”(Hans, 2020, p. 3)

These quotes demonstrate the ways in which lockdown has propelled the plight of survivors, which has existed long before COVID-19, into newsworthiness. Research to date suggests that the lockdown did cause greater challenges for survivors (Dekel & Abrahams, 2021; Nduna & Tshona, 2021; Parry & Gordon, 2020). While these articles are important for bringing survivors into spotlight at a time where they may face new and dangerous challenges, these articles leave out the complexity and challenges those survivors face outside of pandemics which are just as problematic. For example, the last quote speaks about the fears regarding breaking COVID-19 regulations when reporting GBV, however there are many more fears that negotiate the reporting of GBV (Smythe, 2015; Taylor & Gassner, 2010). The longevity of a strategy which pins the relevance of these survivors needs on lockdown is questionable. The shared spotlight with COVID-19 means that in some ways survivors experiences are newsworthy

because they form part of the broader discourse on the coronavirus pandemic, rather than the other way around.

In South Africa, much of the population and of victims, are black women (Stats S. A., 2016). In these discourses which police the behaviour of "victims", other them and marginalize their needs, and sensationalize their deaths and their bodies while erasing their subjectivity, it is predominantly black women and women of colour whom this is being done too. Out of context, the marginalization of victims, the victim blaming, and the sensationalizing of women's deaths makes no sense, particularly when this occurs in articles which attempt to call for an end to GBV, or express outrage at GBV. However, when read in a context of coloniality, these practices not only make sense, but are completely aligned with that ideology.

In many ways the media continues the colonial legacy through this marginalization and erasure of black women's experiences as victims of GBV. Furthermore, the coronavirus pandemic has been used in ways that slot neatly into this legacy by creating more ways in which victims are told what to do. The policing of victims behaviour, calls to report and prioritization of reporting in the fight against GBV in many articles does not take into account what research indicates about the nature of abusive relationships (Muñoz-Rivas et al., 2021; Smythe, 2015; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2014; Whiting, 2016). The sensationalism present in the data set aligns with previous research on the media which indicates that the media tends to only report on the most violent cases of GBV, while simultaneously erasing the subjectivity of victims and survivors in their reporting(Isaacs, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2015). On the contrary, the media has also succeeded in putting survivors' potential struggles in the lockdown under the spotlight through their discussions of the difficulties the pandemic creates for survivors, and this constitutes an important step in the right direction.

5. Coddling Men: Discourses Which Protect Men and Masculinity in GBV

Thus far, we have seen how discourses in the media portrays women in terms of hegemonic, colonial forms of femininity i.e., they are vulnerable, and their behaviour ought to policed and judged by the terms of femininity. Women are portrayed as financially dependent, persistently at risk of abuse, helpless and defenseless. In these many ways victimhood is enmeshed with femininity (Isaacs, 2016). It is no surprise then, that the data set demonstrates engagements with masculinity in a similarly hegemonic, and colonial way which is enmeshed with perpetration. From the outset it must be stated that masculinity is much less represented in the data set than femininity. The media's focus tends to be on the vulnerability of women, but there is some engagement with men, masculinity and perpetrators in the media.

It is useful in this section, to frame who constitutes the "man" in GBV as well as the perpetrator. Langa et al. (2018) argue that in the post-apartheid and post-colonial South Africa, the black man is the imaginary perpetrator of violence. This aligns with previous work on colonial concepts of black communities which locates issues of GBV in these communities (Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier, 2017; Isaacs, 2016; Jones, 2011 ; Langa et al., 2018). Historically, particularly in the time of apartheid, media reporting on black communities focused on violence and crime with little empathy, while reporting on white communities revolved around culture, sporting and social affairs (Duncan, 2003; Isaacs, 2016). Given this, we must understand the media's discourse in the context whereby it is predominantly black men who are being addressed and/or constructed and this persists often when the media remains silent on race, relying on the historical assumptions to fill the gaps.

Across the dataset, men are persistently positioned as providers. See two examples below:

> "One would argue that removing an abusive man (who is most likely the breadwinner) from his home would leave his family without anyone to provide for them."(Ncube, 2020, p. 20)

> "She said men must use their hands to put food on the table and not to bring harm to women and children" paraphrasing minister Nkoana-Mashabane (Mahlokwane, 2020, p. 3)

These quotes demonstrate both assumptions and expectations placed on men and the forms of masculinity that pervade. The implication is that a good man is a provider. While this speaks directly to hegemonic colonial ideals of masculinity, it does not seem to grasp the power that comes with being the provider (Jones, 2011 ; Morrell et al., 2012). In a world where men are providers and women are dependent, women will always be disempowered (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Morrell et al., 2012; Nadar, 2009). This is a foundational aspect of patriarchy which puts men in a position where they have access to means directly and women must disseminate their means through men (Jones, 2011 ; Morrell et al., 2012). In many of the limited instances in which men are constructed in the dataset, authors tend to uphold these gendered ideals. This can function to uphold patriarchy and fails to challenge masculinity in ways that break down this power dynamic (Nadar, 2009).

While media reporting focuses on vulnerable women, it must be noted that there is not complete silence on the role of men in GBV. This constitutes a strong feminist leaning discourse which places responsibility on men for GBV. While the media's engagement with men as subjects does little to describe what exactly it is men need to do, the fact that there is a call for men to change, is positive. See the example below:

> "#NoExcuse has a holistic approach to ending abuse through various programs aimed at men who are seeking mentorship and assistance in becoming better men and to provide victims of abuse with help. "This WhatsApp line gives victims of abuse a way to get counselling silently. It also puts men who are struggling to be their inner champion in touch with a mentor, someone to talk to so that they can start on the journey to be champion men." said Rust" (Staff-Reporter, 2020b, p. 3)

However, it must be noted that the ways in which men are called upon, reflect a kind of fragile masculinity. Usually, men are said to have fragile masculinity when they are deemed unable to access or demonstrate hegemonic masculinity (Myketiak, 2016; Rubin et al., 2020). This often results in a sort of compensation for this in resultant violent behaviour (Myketiak, 2016; Rubin et al., 2020). In the context of the present research, the fragile masculinity is not referring to one man but the state of masculinity as it is addressed in the data set regarding GBV. Above, we see an example of the ways in which masculinity is pandered to so that even when men are called to change, it is done so in ways that do not threaten their position of power. We see in the quote, an attempt at engaging a more positive masculinity which posits men as champions. This quote strikingly resembles the way we speak to children e.g. "eat your spinach

so you can be strong like Popeye!". It represents an obvious example of the many not so obvious ways in which the media panders to masculinity, and it is this pandering and excessive gentleness which I argue points to the underlying awareness of a fragile masculinity. It is as if the media itself reflects on a macro level, the walking on eggshells and smoothing over that often occurs on a micro level when women like myself face a violent man. It also aligns with previous research which suggests that the media is more compassionate toward male victims of rape, even if they are under-represented in the media (Jamel, 2014). The struggle for more positive constructions of masculinity may be a valuable one, however without challenging masculinity in ways that dissemble patriarchy, the media simply reinforces the power dynamics that uphold GBV. When I consider that this quote refers to a program for men aimed at ending GBV, it becomes clear that not being their "inner champion" may in fact be a euphemism for being abusive, this pandering and paternalism becomes sickening.

The heightened compassion for men, even implied abusers, can be seen again in the example below:

> "Men are most likely stressed and anxious because of economic uncertainty and women find themselves at the receiving end of these heightened emotions and violence… the social backlash faced by some men with competing notions of masculinity pushes them to assert an assumed lost power through committing violence against women." (Ncube, 2020, p. 20).

This article is an example of how the articles in the data set engage with the nuance and complexity of men's experiences and what leads them to be violent, thus demonstrating

compassion for them that is often not demonstrated for survivors, as indicated earlier in this study. This finding is contrary to that of Boshoff and Prinsloo (2014) who argued that in their data set from the Daily Sun, and more broadly in the media, there is a lack of understanding for the struggles of post- colonial, young black men who are in economic distress. While this may simply be a difference in data sets, I believe it's important to argue that to focus on explanations of violence which rely on the post-colonial realities of black men is to continue to locate the problem of GBV in poor black communities, and continue to ignore the role of whiteness (Bonnes, 2013; Moffet, 2006). In this vein, returning to quotes like the one above we see that the explanatory nature of these quotes speaks to the underlying assumptions that media buys into around men's tendency to violence (Ndlovu, 2008). It contributes to misconceptions about GBV which positions it as a reaction to poverty and struggle further entrenching notions that this is a problem of poor black communities in SA, while remaining notably silent on the role of white masculinity in GBV (Bonnes, 2013; Buiten & Naidoo, 2013; Buiten & Salo, 2007; Jones, 2011 ; Moffet, 2006).

The imbalance in the representations of race, and empathy toward men versus survivors and women, represents the maintenance of power that is ongoing in these articles. It further constitutes the 'sugar-coating' that the media often engages in when engaging men in GBV. Many articles refer to 'men' in their articles rather than 'abusers' or 'men who are abusive', when this is in fact who they are referring to. Thus, there is an overlap between the representations of men and the representations of perpetrators. When these abusers are referred to as 'men' the tone includes the compassion mentioned above but when they are referred to as 'rapists', 'murderers', 'perpetrators' and even 'defendant', the tone changes to one that is much harsher. The media is tolerant of men and masculinity which is inherently violent, yet it is intolerant of perpetrators

despite the perfect congruency between masculinity and the perpetration of GBV (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Morrell et al., 2012).

Some authors, however, are attempting to break through the 'sugar-coating' and call men out more directly:

> "It is a problem of men and their attitudes toward women. No amount of gender, religious and cultural apologia can mask this fact." (Parker, 2021, p. 4)

While these discourses which directly and without apology challenge men are limited in the data, set, they are present, and this indicates positive step in South African media.

It has thus been argued that while there is evidence in the data set that members of the media are beginning to bring men into the spotlight where GBV is concerned, this is limited and largely panders to masculinity in ways that ultimately uphold colonial gendered power. Hegemonic constructions of masculinity are evident in the media's accounts of positive masculinity(Jones, 2011 ; Morrell et al., 2012). The media engages with masculinity in ways that reflect much academic work done on fragile masculinities (Myketiak, 2016; Rubin et al., 2020). Articles tend to demonstrate compassion toward men and an understanding of them as likely to be violent in certain circumstances which is consistent with previous research (Bonnes, 2013; Buiten & Naidoo, 2013; Moffet, 2006). There is a notable difference in the compassion directed at men as compared to survivors, and while the media positions itself as intolerant of perpetrators, when these perpetrators of GBV are constructed as men, the media demonstrates a great deal of compassion toward them. In these ways men are protected, race and gendered

power are silenced and women survivors continue to be oppressed by the media's construction of them.

6. Redistributing Fear: Discourses Which Uphold and Resist Perpetration

It is argued that the data both resists the perpetration of GBV by drawing attention to the severe negative consequences of perpetration while simultaneously upholding some forms of perpetration by only representing the most heinous forms of GBV. While the media is beginning to acknowledge that men and masculinities play a role in perpetration, the handling of perpetration in the data set was distinct from that of masculinity. The portrayal of perpetrators has none of the 'sugar-coating' as I've referred to it, that is directed at men. The media, through reporting on outcomes of court cases and expressing outrage at perpetrators, has begun to form part of a new "fear factory"(Gqola, 2015, p. 78) aimed at perpetrators of GBV. This is positive, as it contributes to the social consequences of GBV, and has the power to deter GBV in ways that appeal to perpetrators self- preservation, not just their obviously lacking respect for and entitlement towards women and their lives. However, the persistent presence of victim-blaming and the continued highlighting of only the most brutal perpetrators perpetuates rape myths and fails to represent the more complex and nuanced ways GBV is expressed in our society.

Arguably, the media plays a role in providing 'social consequences' as Pumla Gqola (2015) calls them, for men. Increasingly there is documentation in the media of 'heavy' sentences passed down to men who rape and murder women. In one article titled "Cele welcomes heavy GBV jail sentences" (Gift Tlou, The star, 22 February 2021), Six different incidents of life sentences given to perpetrators of GBV and sexual violence are described. Absent from this article is the number of cases left untried, those where perpetrators are given a

slap on the wrist and those where perpetrators are not found guilty (Smythe, 2015). This ratio of representation serves to create a perceived reality in which perpetrators of GBV face horrid and hefty consequences, and while this reality is yet to fully form in the world, such a discourse functions to place weight in the law, the wrongfulness of GBV and the danger of being found a perpetrator of GBV. This is a step in the right direction as the fear is being shifted from victim in this article to perpetrator.

Another article named “long way to go with ending GBV.” begins with much of the “female fear factory” (Gqola, 2015, p. 78) discourse where it paints a grim picture of GBV and the state of women in SA, however it ends the article with reference to ‘heavy’ sentences which had been given to perpetrators, ominously remarking “let us hope that these heavy sentences will serve as a deterrent” (Editorial, 2021, p. 6). This is an example of how articles are engaging in inspiring fear in both perpetrators and women simultaneously. It is evidence of a positive shift that articles like these seem to be aware of their role in creating the “deterrent” spoken of, however the focus on women victimisation continues the oppression of women and thus the domination that gender-based-violence is. Furthermore, the fear mongering for men relies heavily on the effectiveness of the law. Where women fear for their lives and bodily autonomy and dignity, men fear possibly being caught and being imprisoned. There is still an injustice in these threats, particularly when we consider the many ways in which the law often fails women (Smythe, 2015). It is important to point out, that even in cases where the court procedures are mentioned, it is still the horrific details of victim’s deaths that take up the bulk of writing space e.g.

"It was believed the mother was stabbed multiple times and her child drowned in the bathroom on Friday. Her boyfriend is expected to appear in court today charged with their murders." (Hlati, 2020, p. 1)

The issue of fear mongering brings to the fore the question of referring to the life sentences as "heavy" for cases of brutal rape, murder and abuse. Across many articles this term is used to describe the sentences given to perpetrators. 'Heavy' is a relative term suggesting that there are other lighter sentences that such crimes could receive and given that the crimes referred to are examples of some of the most heinous crimes imaginable, are these sentences truly 'heavy'? And in relation to what? As a reader and researcher of my unique identity and positionality, I would call these sentences "apt" or "just" or perhaps even "the best we can do considering people only live one lifetime". In constructing these consequences as 'heavy' the media further protects perpetrators by allowing for the possibility, or even likelihood, of lighter sentences. Conversely, one may argue that referring to the sentences as 'heavy' is done to bring attention to the severity of the consequences, so that this is not missed. In this way it is again about the fear mongering for perpetrators in a way that is intended to be constructive. While the word succeeds in bringing attention to the severity of the consequences, I argue it also frames these consequences in a way which undermines that they are apt and just consequences. If the media were to comment that these 'heavy' sentences are closer to justice or are more apt than the unjust lighter sentences that have been given in the past, this would fit, but in this data set, such comments are lacking. Furthermore, the media also documents the way in which the justice system fails victims, and while this works to make visible some of the issues that survivors face, it also mitigates the fear garnered from heavy jail sentences.

It must be noted that the nature of the crimes for which the media documents 'heavy' sentences fit very specific types of perpetrations. Most of the cases involved brutal stranger rape. This speaks to the ways in which only the most brutal of cases tend to acquire "newsworthiness" in the media, and that stranger rape is still considered the most believable form of rape (Isaacs, 2016; Ndlovu, 2008; O'Hara, 2012; Van Niekerk, 2015). As has been argued extensively in previous research, the present data set also demonstrates that GBV tends to be deemed newsworthy only when it is extremely brutal and this indicates that more subtle, less violent forms of GBV are deemed "normal" and thus uninteresting in public opinion (Gilchrist, 2010; Gillespie et al., 2013; Isaacs, 2016; Van Niekerk, 2015; Wilcox, 2008). This can marginalize those cases which are less physically brutal but are psychological or emotional in nature and which women have reported to be sometimes more traumatic than physical abuse (Boonzaier, 2008; Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003). Thus, the media often does not serve, represent, or inform the majority of victims. Arguably, this could lead to public misconceptions about GBV which may include believing GBV is always physical and brutal (Isaacs, 2016). It can also make a spectacle of GBV, leaving silent the more pervasive and subtle ways it exists and in so doing excusing those perpetrators of other forms of GBV from the fear the media is directing. Furthermore, this perpetual silence on the prevalent less obvious forms of domestic violence continues the historical practice of the media, which is to see domestic violence as a private affair that is not of public interest (Isaacs, 2016; Ndlovu, 2008). There is a lack of connection between these important subtle forms of abuse, violence and power present in data set, which is found to be the case in other studies on the media in SA (Isaacs, 2016; Spies, 2020). This also supports previous studies which found that sexual abuse and murder were most reported in the media on while domestic abuse and physical assault were the least reported on when it came to

GBV (Ndlovu, 2008). While the media in the data set is acknowledging the pervasiveness of GBV, it is not acknowledging the ways in which that pervasiveness is made possible by the gendered power and subtle forms of GBV (Spies, 2020).

A notable issue in relation to the representations of the perpetration of GBV is the issue of agency i.e. perpetrators choose to enact violence. In Boonzaier et al. (2019) we argue that when institutions, in the case of that research a university, communicate about sexual violence without directly addressing the perpetrator and making them the agent of violence, we create a sense in which GBV is seen an inevitable and external force, rather than locating the issue in real people. This lack of addressing perpetrators, and lack of representing the agency perpetrators have in GBV is evident in the data set. Many studies on the media and other outlets have argued that the passive voice masks the agency involved in GBV and thus protects the perpetrator (Boonzaier et al., 2019; Isaacs, 2016; Prego-Meleiro et al., 2021; Thusi, 2016). The persistent focus on the victim in the current data set aligns with this previous research. For example, an article which is titled "outcry over slain woman" discusses the outrage expressed in protests against the killing of women, yet there is little indication as to whom this outrage is directed at. In the article, the Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities Maite Nkoana-Mashabane is quoted as saying "To our girl children, the first slap to your face is a good enough sign for you to start walking because we think we are going to have to deal with this matter through prevention." (The Citizen, 17 June 2020, page 4) There is no critique of this statement or any address mentioned to men, boy children or perpetrators. The article follows this with descriptions of many cases of femicide, in which the perpetrator is not mentioned. This example is representative of the general data, in which perpetrators are rarely mentioned, and visibility as well as responsibility is persistently placed on women, victims and survivors. It must be noted

that the data collection process did exclude a number of articles on court proceedings, in which perpetrators may have been made more visible.

The data set is consistent with what other research has found in that perpetration is focused on less by the media than victimisation (Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier et al., 2019; Isaacs, 2016). The tone in articles which discuss perpetrators is often cold, formal and harsh, focusing on the negative lawful consequences of such perpetration (Boshoff & Prinsloo, 2014). Furthermore, perpetration tends only to be focused on in the most severe and brutal cases of GBV (Isaacs, 2016; O'Hara, 2012). The media does engage in actively deterring the perpetration of GBV through its documentation of 'heavy' consequences for perpetrators. The media does not engage with the agency involved in perpetration, nor its colonial history (Boonzaier et al., 2019; Gqola, 2015). Thus, the way perpetration is negotiated in this dataset is complex. There are discourses which threaten and inspire fear, but there are also discourses which protect perpetration. The reporting of 'heavy' sentences may make some perpetrators in SA feel unsafe, as we do have many perpetrators of stranger and serial rape, and this is an important way in which the media can positively contribute to the fight against GBV. However, it is argued that many men who are guilty of domestic abuse, or sexual violence at work, or on the streets, those men who do not brutally murder but control, manipulate, harass, assault, and rape the women they know, are left safe in this discourse. The avoidance around the agency of perpetration in the media continues to place the focus on women, rather than men, and on the avoidance of GBV rather than the destruction of it through transformation in social power structures in our communities.

7. The Co-Option of GBV

The discourses discussed previously cover what was found to be dominant in the data set. From here, the study points out some less prolific but still identifiable discourses in the data set. In this section we will be discussing what I have called the co-option of GBV. It is argued that as GBV has been deemed a 'hot topic', the term has been used to grab attention and draw in readers, where the article is not truly concerned with GBV. While this points to something positive i.e. GBV is considered an important and attention grabbing concept in our public discourse, it also hints at the danger the media is facing: the conversation about GBV will be derailed and possibly watered down by other interests. It argued that the data set presents evidence that GBV is beginning to be co-opted by other agendas in the media

A bold heading states "Ngidi Takes up fight against GBV"(Naik, 2021, p. 3) and what follows is a long and heartfelt article about the cricketer Lungi Ngidi. Is GBV mentioned at all? Toward the beginning of the article the author mentions that Ngidi is "helping women and children." This is followed by a quote where Ngidi states that he would like to "make a difference in any way possible", potentially (although it is not clear) implying that he is working on a project currently that aims at dealing with GBV. The rest of the fairly long article says absolutely nothing about GBV. What it mentions is Ngidi's passion for the youth, his childhood, his heartwarming gift to his mother and some of his achievements. This is one way in GBV is being "buzz"ified into a "buzz- word" that is used to draw attention to other issues or agenda's, in this case the publicity of a young cricketer. This was a particularly stark case of the co-option of "GBV" in the sense that GBV was in the title and not in the article, however in this case there is no product or organization being mentioned alongside this, instead it is a public figure who is being positioned alongside the struggle. Nonetheless, this positioning is occurring despite no concrete reason grounded in material work or feminist theory.

In an article about women's cricket, Momentum's head of events, Carel Bosman is quoted as saying:

"As a headline sponsor of the momentum Proteas women, and a champion of women empowerment who strives to be here for every women on her journey to success, we are gravely concerned about these kind of statistics and we want to be part of the call for immediate change." (Ndaliso, 2021, p. 1).

The statistics referred to are:

"One in three South African women were affected by GBV…about 99% of GBV cases also included economic abuse." (Ndaliso, 2021, p. 1)

The regular mention of Momentum in such a favourable light throughout the article as well as the emphasis on the economic aspects of GBV are examples of how the agenda to shed light on GBV is enmeshed and co-opted by the publicity agenda of Momentum. While these examples serve to vilify GBV and raise some surface level awareness to the issue, they also risk creating a culture of lip service and surface level engagement with GBV which does not translate into real world changes (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2017; Rutherford, 2018). The co-option of GBV is thus a double-edged sword as it raises awareness and confirms the import of GBV in our society but it also detracts from the seriousness and depth of the problem in GBV in favour of other agenda's. In this co-option GBV is, by definition, second to the agenda which co-opts it.

While I have argued that GBV is being co-opted by other agendas, the idea that feminism broadly is commodified is not a new argument (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2017; Goldman et al., 1991). Goldman et al. (1991) coined the term "Commodity feminism" to describe the ways in which corporates have aligned their brands with feminist slogans and symbols. For almost a decade, social media has increased popular feminism and with this, a great deal of feminist "branded" paraphernalia has become profitable business (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2017; Repo, 2020). While this indicates that feminism is being enthusiastically embraced, at least in theory, the reality seems to be that despite this popularity, patriarchy seems largely unaffected (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2017).Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer (2017) argue that the commodification of feminism in this way celebrates feminist ideals while falling short of doing feminist work, resulting in a sort of false post-feminism i.e. people believe and act as if the world is postfeminist, because of the popularity of feminism, however the material changes needed for post feminism have not come to be. A similar thing can be argued for the above cases, where GBV and women empowerment seem to be issues that are being dealt with in the article, however they are not. It creates the sense that GBV is a prolific concern in the media, yet these articles are doing nothing in terms of the decolonial feminist work that needs to be done to end GBV. While this study remains a critique of the media, one could argue that the actual programs discussed in these articles, such as the one mentioned above driven by Momentum, will always be primarily driven by the agenda of the corporate and not the material circumstances of GBV (Rutherford, 2018). Rutherford (2018) argues that neoliberal ideology propagates through this sort of co-option of social issues such as feminism by making consumption a viable primary mode of engagement and by centering neoliberal ideas of choice

and freedom as central to the feminist agenda. Thus, corporates align their businesses with these struggles on these principles, which give them a platform in a struggle like feminism.

The co-option of GBV by corporates is increasing. Carling Black Label, an alcohol brand which is located in an industry which has historically advertised in ways that are demeaning to women, launched an initiative called #NoExcuses. In the short Article titled "whatsapp line at hand to help victims of gender-based abuse,"(Staff-Reporter, 2020b, p. 4) the brand is mentioned twice in relation to this initiative, which is talked about in a celebratory way. However, the person speaking about the initiative is Carling Black label's brand ambassador. Is this a person who has the kind of knowledge we need in the realm of GBV? The article suggests that the initiative is for both men and women. Women are given support to speak out, while "put[ting] men who are struggling to be their inner champion in touch with a mentor, someone to talk to so that they can start on the journey to being champion men." (Staff-Reporter, 2020b, p. 4). There is a second article which talks about this initiative and also mentions black label twice (Metsing, 2020, p. 4) . The issues with referring to men in these ways have been discussed in previous discourses, here it useful to consider who has the platform to speak on GBV and how that platform is being used by a member of male dominated industry that is historically tied to the oppression and abuse of women in complex ways, to promote their brand. It is also important to point out the lack of critique or obvious questioning by the authors in these articles e.g. who are the mentors and what qualifies them to be mentors to these men? How has this program been developed? What experts have been consulted with regards to its development and implementation? While critiques have been made of all products which engage in feminist commodification, there seems to be something particularly concerning about alcohol waving the feminist banner, given its unique history. Repo (2020) argues that through this kind

commodification, the need for collective feminist work falls away in favour of individualistic consumption as a mode of participation in feminist struggle and in this case, men could feel that they are meaningfully engaging in the struggle against GBV by consuming black label as opposed to other beers. On the other hand, the alcohol industry has a great deal of economic power and some may argue, as an industry which has historically been problematic for women, it has a role to play in the solution to GBV. I believe we need to think critically about what it means for institutions like these to be truly supportive of feminism and/or the end of GBV.

A more insidious co-option may be seen when political issues co-opt GBV. In an article titled "educated boys do not rape" (Moatshe, 2021, p. 2) the author spends the first quarter of the article briefly outlining the controversy surrounding Minister Motshekga's comments on rape. For context, Minister Motshekga was quoted as saying that "educated boys do not rape" in a speech to school children, which sparked a great deal of controversy in the public domain (Moatshe, 2021). The article in question outlines this controversy dryly with reference to both sides of the argument, ending the point on the minister's released statement which suggests the comment is taken out of context. Following this, the rest of the article details the experience of grade 1 learners waiting to register for school and how this was easy for most. The article seems to be using the GBV issues related to the minister of education's comments to draw attention to the completely unrelated successes of this department (Moatshe, 2021). By reporting in this way, the article minimizes the import of the minister's comments, and shifts the reader's attention from GBV to the importance of young children attending school. The statement 'educated boys do not rape' in the media is problematic in numerous ways. It is incorrect, it contributes to the colonial stigma that suggests that poorer uneducated men are rapists, and it protects powerful,

educated predators and abusers. All of this is served by the media when articles like this one fail to condemn and point out these issues.

While the above focuses on one example, there are others where GBV is used to protect political motives. Articles question the validity of claims of GBV against ministers, suggesting that victims have a political agenda or articles critique government officials using GBV as a form of critique. While politics around GBV are important, reporting on GBV in this way demonstrates the ways in which GBV becomes co-opted by other political agenda's most often at the expense of the victim. This type of co-option has been identified in right wing politics and femonationalism, whereby feminist ideals are used to promote conservative politics and xenophobia (Farris, 2012; Schuster, 2021).

By Using GBV in these ways, the media risks throwing GBV into the realm of cliches, desensitizing readers and essentially sidelining the issue. Furthermore, this discourse indicates the neoliberal co-option of GBV in SA by corporates (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2017; Goldman et al., 1991; Repo, 2020; Rutherford, 2018). The media functions to endorse these initiatives and the corporations or politics behind them when they uncritically represent them. The endorsement of the co-option of social issues by capitalist enterprises is another example of the colonial legacy that the media is enmeshed in, as it allows for social ills to be used to the advantage of companies whose interests truly lie elsewhere. The spread of this co-option to the political discourses may represent a further danger to feminism(Farris, 2012; Schuster, 2021). South Africa already suffers from extreme xenophobia and thus the threat femonationalism, and the co-option of feminist ideals by patriarchal conservative or radical political activists is real.

8. GBV as a Systemic Issue of Patriarchy

For years, researchers have called for the media to locate GBV in the context of patriarchy (see: Bonnes, 2013; Buiten, 2013; Buiten & Salo, 2007; Isaacs, 2016; Spies, 2020). In the mass of GBV media, we are beginning to see discourses which dance with the complexity of GBV in feminist leaning ways. While this approach is not dominant, it does exist across newspapers in the present data set. The media has often been found to explicitly condemn GBV, yet this condemnation has not translated into anti-GBV writing that resists rape mythology, racist tropes and gendered ideals (Bonnes, 2013; Boshoff, 2022; Spies, 2020). In this section I argue that there is a notable presence of articles which go beyond condemning GBV to locating GBV in the context of patriarchy and while this is good, articles still lack congruency in the way they report on GBV. It is argued that in the same article, GBV is often condemned, contextualized, and then upheld through discourses employed.

As mentioned, this discourse is not dominant, so there are some examples from a narrow set of articles which do position GBV as a historical issue of power. One article titled “Violence against women is the worst form of oppression” locates GBV firmly as a patriarchal issue of power. It states that GBV “coalesces power, manipulation, coercion, control, fear, physical, emotional and mental harm into a weapon of destruction against women- a process nurtured on entrenched patriarchy, paternalism, entitlement and misogyny going back to time immemorial.” (Parker, 2021, p. 4). Such an approach suggests a broader understanding of GBV and a willingness to engage in a contextualized manner which is progress and helpful to the feminist agenda, even if it fails to acknowledge the coloniality of the issue. However, a few lines later the same article reads “Not all men, of course, are violent. Just as not all women are non-violent.” While nuance is important, these statements seem to do more than nuance the issue. They seem to play on the presupposed assumptions of the reader, and surprisingly, it plays into the rape

mythology whereby a victim of GBV must be completely innocent i.e. devoid of any violence, to be believable as a victim. Its comments on men seem to contravene the understanding of historical patriarchy that the first mentioned quote suggests. It seems at the very least, that this discourse, which attempts to engage with GBV in a contextualized and broadly feminist manner, does so hesitantly. It must cover itself by ensuring its reader does not think it means 'all men' or 'all women'. This indicates resistance to this discourse even in the article which puts it forward. The complex and nuanced ways in which the media simultaneously advocates for the end of GBV while upholding those dynamics which enable GBV has been noted elsewhere. Bonnes (2013) found in her research on the Grocott's Mail that the newspaper was often explicitly against GBV and rape mythology while perpetuating rape myths in other areas of its reporting. They argue that there is an uncomfortable tension between these issues which I believe to be another example of what I am putting forward here. However here, I am arguing that it occurs, even in the same article.

A similar tension is seen in another example: An article which emphatically advocates for the end of GBV. It attributes Deputy President Mabuza for stating that "patriarchy should not be used to oppress women." (Mahlati, 2020, p. 4) Later in the article it states that "patriarchy should not be used as an excuse for the oppression of women." And again in the article the deputy president is quoted as saying "patriarchy cannot be used as a cultural basis for the oppression of women"(Mahlati, 2020, p. 4) . These repeated mentions of the same concept illustrate its centrality in the article which purports to be anti-GBV. What is glaringly contradictory in these quotes is the idea that patriarchy can exist without the oppression of women. When it is suggested that patriarchy is used as an "excuse", and when it is suggested that it could not be used as the basis for GBV or the oppression of women, this suggests that it can exist

independently of these things. This suggestion could be evidence of a misunderstanding of the concept of patriarchy which, by definition, includes the oppression of women. It could also suggest an attempt to protect patriarchy. By suggesting that patriarchy can exist without the oppression of women, we do not need to dissemble patriarchy in our cultures and country. Additionally, it may constitute an attempt to pull punches and pander to the needs of fragile masculinity which cannot fathom releasing patriarchy. This is occurring in an article which is titled "call to put an end to women abuse" and so again we see that even in articles which use feminist language and have feminist aims there is hesitancy and resistance to that language and those aims.

Some articles detail the demands of protestors who include anti- GBV activists, NGOs and victims of abuse. In doing so these articles put forward those discourses which empower those groups who are arguably the most important stakeholders in the issue of GBV.

For example, in an article titled "Make public list of sex offenders." (Hendricks, 2020, p. 7) The demands of a protest hosted by a number of anti-gbv groups are mentioned:

> "harsher sentences were needed… mandatory workshops on consent, sexual harassment, assault and abuse in institutions, free sanitary products, the abolishment of bail for sexual offences and the national register for sex offenders be made public."
> (Hendricks, 2020, p. 7).

While sharing these demands in the media is one of the best ways for the media to support these protests, doing so in an apolitical, none commentary way illustrates another way in which the media does not wish to fully engage with feminist, anti-GBV discourse (Thusi, 2016).

In the article mentioned, important information about these protests is shared including the stories of some victims, the protest posters and chants and the demands of the protestors but all is simply documented rather than endorsed. The media is not apolitical in most other cases where it slams politicians and celebrates sportsmen and yet on these human rights issues it is hesitant to take a strong stance. This is another illustration of the resistance to those feminist discourses and positions which aim to end GBV.

There are exceptions. There are beginning to be articles which delve more deeply, and with congruence, into GBV. An article which discusses Minister Motshekga's statements on rape aimed at school children is an example. It states, "It is therefore, problematic that the minister theorised that "educated men do not rape" in an era where we are inundated daily with cases of educated men in all spheres of life who rape women" (Maubane, 2021, p. 8). The article goes on to cite the views of Call-to-Action Collective, a group of organizations who are actively working on GBV in SA, which supports the above statement. While the article diverts to discussing the importance of clear communication from ministers and suggests that perhaps Minister Motshekga's views were not as problematic in context as they have been depicted, the article stays relatively fast on its position that educated men can and do rape and suggesting otherwise is problematic. In this way it does not pull its punches or strive for legitimacy, in the ways mentioned above.

Another article asserts firmly that "every single person should be uncomfortable with and have an unwavering intolerance toward femicide or gender-based violence." (Editorial, 2020c, p. 6). The article asserts this is the context of discussing the lukewarm reaction to the increasing horror stories of sexual violence, assault, and murder of women. Another editorial titled "abusive men don't want to be outdone by virus"(Editorial, 2020b, p. 6) states that "for a long time

alcohol has been cited as one of the factors for the incidents of domestic violence. With the country in lockdown, outlets that sell liquor are closed, few people have access to alcohol. This paints a clear picture that men are abusive whether they are sober or drunk."(Editorial, 2020b, p. 6). This article places the responsibility firmly in the hands of men for the abuse of women. This is a big departure from those articles which are silent about men and or masculinity and even those articles which tentatively engage with notions of patriarchy and gendered power dynamics only to sugar coat all that they say. In these articles, while there may not be a deep engagement with the social ills that are toxic masculinity, perpetration and sexual violence as domination and oppression, there is a clear shift in rhetoric which shifts the focus from women to men and patriarchy. This is hopeful and forms a resistant discourse to those pervasive historical discourses which shine the spotlight on women as victims and silence the agency behind perpetration.

As has been found in other studies, the present study found that even when articles positioned themselves as anti-GBV, they simultaneously engaged in discourses which resist feminist framings of GBV (Bonnes, 2013). Furthermore, through the lack of comment, and often objective factual tone, members of the media shy away from supporting feminist anti-GBV agendas (Thusi, 2016). However, through some engagement with the gendered power imbued in GBV, this discourse demonstrates that media positions itself as aligned with the fight against GBV. Words that may once have remained in small circles, now find themselves splashed on newspapers like "patriarchy" and "femicide". This may be indicative of a time in our public discourse where feminism is popular and acceptable (Goldman et al., 1991; Repo, 2020). GBV may be beginning to be understood with depth in public discourse and this is a positive development. However, the resistance and incongruency that this discourse meets in most of its expressions in the data, highlight that these changes are not yet deep rooted (Bonnes, 2013). In

some ways, feminist framings of GBV constitute a superficial face-lift on the old ideals identified in previous discourses.

Throughout this chapter, I have applied a decolonial feminist lens to the discourses present in the media. One of the notable silences this has indicated in the media is the lack of engagement on race across discourses when discussing GBV. Such a silence results in discourse that does nothing to resist the colonial racialized power that is the legacy of South Africa's unique history (Presser, 2019).The ways in which race enmesh with gender in the lived experience of many of South Africa's women are untold in the media (Presser, 2019). In many ways, through upholding colonial ideals of masculinity and femininity, as well as colonial notions of black communities, violence and the role of the law, the media maintains many colonial discourses both implicitly and explicitly. Where race is concerned, the racialized power structures are implicit due to the media's avoidance of race. Where gender is concerned, colonial ideals are as often explicit as they are implicit. The impact of COVID-19 on these discourses has been to prop them up on a bigger platform and lend them importance from the pandemic rhetoric. The ways in which women, men, victims, and perpetrators are represented in the media's discourses on GBV have been discussed to demonstrate much congruency with previous research. While the focus in GBV remains largely on the vulnerability of women, men and perpetration are beginning to take up some space in many articles' representations of GBV. These discourses have answered those questions set out at the beginning of this study which centred around understanding how colonial discourses show up in the media regarding GBV, at the time of the pandemic as well as representations of victims and perpetrators. In addition to this the study identified that there are some sparse but present discourses which aim to locate GBV as an issue of gendered power, and that there is evidence that GBV is being co-opted by other agendas. In the concluding chapter,

some of the broader implications of these findings will be discussed, along with recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Studying the media's discourses regarding GBV at the time of the pandemic has been illuminating. In each discourse, it is clear that the legacy of colonialism still reigns. This is most evident in the silence around race, the colonial ideals of femininity and masculinity and the ways in which the media seeks to make GBV about anything but colonial, racialized gendered power. The amount of engagement with GBV by the media, as well as the presence of some articles which resist the dominant discourses of GBV as genderless by locating violence against women as a historical issue of power, constitutes a positive finding in the study. In this chapter, I summarize the findings of this study. I argue for some broader implications of these findings as well as some recommendations for the media, limitations of the study and future research.

Summary of Findings and Contributions

We must commend those authors who have kept GBV, and the impact of COVID-19 on GBV, front and centre in their reporting. The initial search for articles for this study returned approximately 1700 articles containing the word GBV over the first year of the COVID-19 emergency. The fact that the issue of GBV, which has been silenced historically, is so demonstratively present in South African media at the time of a global pandemic, is invaluable. However, as COVID-19 fades, GBV needs to maintain the momentum it has gained in the media. I will echo many authors when I say that the racial, gendered and historical power structures present in GBV need to be actively confronted in the media (Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier, 2017; Isaacs, 2016; Morrissey, 2013). The analysis in this thesis has pointed out that the The "pandemic" discourse can leave out the historical, racial, and social aspects to GBV.

In the discourse ‘GBV as genderless’ the analysis demonstrated the many ways in which authors in the media resist including social structures of power, through masking these issues with stories of alcohol, economics and location which position GBV as inevitable. This discourse masks the role of men, the agency of perpetrators as well as the embedded history in South Africa of violence against women which finds its deep roots in colonialism (Boonzaier, 2017; Boonzaier et al., 2019; Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006; Gqola, 2015; Thusi, 2016). This masking serves to uphold colonialism, as it does not expose its continued legacy.

Perhaps one of the starkest observations to be made is the complete absence of racial information or narrative in media reporting of GBV. Even in the discourses which attempt to engage with GBV as an issue of patriarchal power, there is a heavy silence on race. In her chapter “What’s race got to do with rape?” Gqola (2015) writes:

> “There is a very simple answer to the question posed in the title of this chapter. And there is also a longer way to demonstrate that answer. The simple answer is: everything. The idea of race as a way of seeing, defining, experiencing and ordering the world is a fairly recent one in human history, and it draws extensively on the creation of sexual difference and sexual violence. Race as an idea becomes first, a form of knowledge and ordering system, which is then institutionalised thus gaining legitimacy through the extensive use of sexual violence. The history of race is the history of slavery, colonialism, and race science. The various disciplines in the academy that rescue race from an idea and elevate it to a valid ordering and meaning-making system rely on sexual violence, sexual cataloguing and measuring the bodies of the enslaved and colonised.”(Gqola, 2015, p. 37)

This analysis has shown that the media does not represent any part of this racial history when it discusses GBV. In the silence, the experience of women of colour whose daily struggles against violence are enforced by long standing colonial traditions are stifled (Presser, 2019).Through focusing its attention on vulnerability of women and factors associated with GBV including alcohol, economics and locations, the media plays into the hands of colonialism which wishes for us to look anywhere but at white patriarchal power (Hook, 2005; Jones, 2011 ; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018)

The discourse of "coddling men" was perhaps one of the most interesting for me to engage with as a researcher. Much previous research on GBV in the media discuss representations of perpetrators when discussing GBV, but discussing representations of men both inside and outside of the perpetrator subject position is fairly limited in the research to date (Bonnes, 2013; Boonzaier, 2017; Boshoff & Prinsloo, 2014; Buiten & Salo, 2007; Chaudhuri et al., 2020; Gillespie et al., 2013; Hindes & Fileborn, 2019; Isaacs, 2016; Lykke, 2015; O'Hara, 2012; Spies, 2020; Van Niekerk, 2015; Wilcox, 2008). While the fact that colonial ideals of masculinity pervaded, was expected, the gentleness with which men are engaged in the media was surprising to me. It is as if the media treats men with the same fear, deference, and place of pride that women who are abused are forced to. This recalled to me my family home where women cook to serve men as they arrive home, waiting for them to finish eating before sitting to eat themselves, so that they can serve the men what they need while they eat. This gentleness marries well with the resistance in the media to call out and deconstruct patriarchal power.

The gentleness in the discourses around men was in stark contrast to the cold and harsh ways the media reported on perpetrators, as discussed in the discourse "redistributing fear: discourses which resist and uphold perpetration". It seems that the difference between men and

perpetrators is extensive in the eye of the media. Furthermore, only the most horrific cases of GBV tend to be reported on, meaning that the perpetrators that are reported on are perpetrators of the most heinous forms of GBV. This creates two, largely distinct categories whereby masculinity and perpetration exist separately. In some cases, articles are beginning to bridge the gap by bringing men into the spotlight where GBV is concerned. By placing its focus primarily on the most brutal and sensational forms of GBV, while the more common and less physical forms of GBV remain largely silenced, the media contributes to misinformed ideas about what GBV looks like and who constitutes perpetrators. It also fails to challenge the ways in which perpetration is supported by our colonial notions of masculinity. It leaves many perpetrators, whose crimes may not be as brutal but are extensive, protected by the silence which never calls them into question.

Representations of women on the other hand were not interesting in so much as they were infuriating. The most pervasive discourse in the media is, by far, the discourse of 'women as vulnerable'. This discourse is present in many of the other discourses, and it was obviously present in the discourse "marginalizing survivors" in the media. In the discourse of 'GBV as genderless', the representations of economics, alcohol and location are often presented in terms of women's vulnerability, rather than in terms of men's power or violence. Alcohol may be the one exception to this, as although it is sometimes positioned as a threat to women, it is often framed as an instigator of violence in men. In the discourses which talk about men and perpetrators, the vulnerability of women is ever present in what makes the crime of GBV so abhorrent. Underlying this discourse seems to be the belief that goes something like "GBV is terrible because it involves enacting violence against someone defenceless: a woman". It's a similar belief to that which underpins the horror of child abuse or violence against animals. Thus,

men should choose not to beat women because it is wrong to beat someone who is not in a fair fight with you i.e. its chivalrous to be a man who does not beat a woman. Thus, the media tends to address GBV with men through engaging more positive forms of masculinity, which celebrate this chivalry. All of this is based on the foundational concept of women as vulnerable. There is an alternative way to construct the resistance to violence by men toward women which this thesis argues for. That is "men should not be able to beat women in our society". In other words, our society should be such that women are not defenceless (not vulnerable) and thus choosing not to beat a woman is not chivalrous but is the obvious way to be. It should be dangerous for men to enact GBV rather than it being dangerous for women to be in the presence of men. As long as we discursively construct women as vulnerable, the threat of violence remains ever present, yet when we construct women as powerful, then violence against them becomes as risky for the aggressor as it is for the woman. This opens the door for the media to begin to engage with bigger societal ways in which to address GBV that speak to both the individual and the community.

The discourse of women as vulnerable not only limits our engagement with men's role in GBV, it is limiting to women. While the media positions women as inherently vulnerable and defenceless, this is not the case (Boonzaier, 2008; Boonzaier, 2018; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2014). The notion of women as passive recipients of violence sets the groundwork for rape myths which challenge the believability of survivors who do not fit these conceptions (Isaacs, 2016; Kelly & Payton, 2019; O'Hara, 2012). The recent trial of Amber Heard and Johnny Depp highlight the ways in which women who are not passive recipients of violence are demonized in the media as Amber Heard faces much scrutiny based on the fact that she appears to be aggressive toward Johnny. In contrast Johnny's vile text messages, name calling and voice recording of Amber are

seen as an eccentricity and his drug addiction, an acceptable character flaw. This demonstrates how rendering women as helpless recipients of violence does nothing to resist their oppression in public discourse or to give voice to their strength and triumph (Morrissey, 2013).

In many ways this inherent vulnerability of women, aligns with colonial ideals of femininity which position women as passive (Coetzee & du Toit, 2018; Jones, 2011). Furthermore the policing of victims behaviour, that the analysis discusses in the "marginalizing victims" discourse aligns with the paternalism colonialism propagates (Jones, 2011). Thus, colonial ideals of femininity and masculinity pervade across these discourses.

One of the least pervasive discourses was that of the "co-option of GBV". While this discourse was not prolific in the data set, its presence is concerning if it is a signal of what is to come. This analysis points out how the co-option of GBV is erosive to the fight against GBV as it allows for the conversation around GBV to be derailed by other political and economic agendas. At a time where the fight against GBV has garnered much needed, and much overdue public awareness and support, this type of erosion must be guarded against by those have the power to resist it, and the media has this power.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

It has been mentioned that the media is particularly silent on race when discussing GBV issues. While the present study has acknowledged this silence and included it in its analysis, it is a limitation of this study that it could not engage more deeply with the ways in which the media engages with race. Future research is needed into the media's engagement with race more broadly, and also more specifically when reporting on racialized crimes including GBV. This

could provide insights into the ways media can resist the racial power which persist in our society.

An additional silence in the media involves the LGBQI+ community. While the community is mentioned in relation to GBV in very few articles, this engagement is incredibly limited. There are countless articles which do not mention the community at all. It is a further limitation of this study that it does not analyse this engagement beyond silence. There is a need to engage in the ways the media positions GBV in terms of heterosexuality, and how the colonial ideals of masculinity and femininity which the media uphold, form part of the conceptual framework that excludes the LGBTQI+ community. It would be useful to conduct reviews of the media in terms of the representation of members of this community generally as well as in terms of GBV.

A few discourses identified in this study indicate some interesting areas for future research. The discourse "coddling men" indicate an interesting gentleness in the media toward men, and much research on the media looks at how women are portrayed in the media, however I believe analysis into men's representations in the media could provide useful insights into South Africa's gendered ideals. There is research to be done on the ways in which major institutions and knowledge producers uphold patriarchy through their treatment of men. It would be useful to look at men's representation in the academic literature, for example.

The discourse "the co-option of GBV" also arises some interesting questions. It would be useful for future media analysis to identify the extent of this discourse, to indicate the extent to which the public discourse on GBV is motivated by other agendas. It would also be useful to research the impact of corporate social investment on GBV alleviation programs, their

sustainability and impact. This can help to indicate whether media outlets should resist the co-option of GBV by corporates which aim to support the end of GBV for publicity.

The study is of course contextualized by the COVID-19 pandemic. Further research on the prevalence of GBV at the time of this emergency as well as before and after will serve to add to this research.

Overall Significance and Implications of the work

Historically, the South African media has constituted important political and national agents in pushing agenda's which are, arguably, in the national interest (Buiten, 2013). The media's role in post-apartheid transformation has been influential, and generally the media has been found to have a significant impact on public opinion (Buiten, 2013; Jungherr et al., 2019). Thus when the media upholds and reproduces discourses, it is powerful (Jungherr et al., 2019). It is for this reason that media analysis is valuable, and that the media be held to high standards where issues of major public concern are involved such as GBV. It is in support of this that this research exists, aiming to critique the media in ways that point toward a new reality, one where GBV is not tolerated by our society and thus does not exist.

Perhaps the clearest directive for authors on GBV this work can offer, is in relation to how the media portrays women in GBV. Nuanced representations of intersections of identity, race, gender and gendered ideals are needed in the media if the media is going to begin to shift the discourse around women in ways that correct the power imbalance, which upholds GBV. If there is a question in the media outlets about how to report on GBV, or for academics on how to write or speak about GBV in ways that support its fall, then this is a powerful answer: By framing violence against women as a consequence of women's resistance and strength rather

than as a consequence of men's inherent violence and women's vulnerability. Where are the stories about women who are beaten *because* they earn, *because* they are financially independent and *because* they live their lives freely (Morrissey, 2013)? When we start to understand that it is not women who are complicit in their oppression who are beaten but women who resist their oppression who are beaten and raped into submission, then the media will begin to represent GBV in a way that understands it as a weapon of war, and gendered power (Morrissey, 2013; Ndlovu, 2008). While I cannot and will not suggest that if a woman is successfully complicit in her oppression she won't face violence, what I am suggesting is that when a woman comes up against men's power, in which ever way she does, that is one of the times in which men exert their violence over women (Morrissey, 2013). These ideas are not new. They align strongly with theories regarding fragile masculinity and research on gendered violence against the LGBTQI+ community, both of which argue that men exert violence to reestablish power when that power is threatened, although this is not the only time that men exert violence (Morrissey, 2013; Myketiak, 2016; Rubin et al., 2020). Again, this is not said to suggest that women can avoid men's violence, as it would be impossible to do this. It is about constructing women as powerful and men as reactive to that power. As the media continues to present women in ways that align with colonial ideals, and ways that do not celebrate and acknowledge their inherent strength and power, it thus continues the notion that empowered and free women are the exception and not the norm. In normalizing strong women, the media has the opportunity to make GBV senseless.

There is a need for the media to go beyond the sensationalism and the brutality that we often see when GBV is represented. More stories of perpetration which is less physical, less brutal, but still terrible need to be represented in the media. This will also assist to broaden our understanding of perpetration. While the study indicated that men are being addressed directly

where GBV is concerned, this is fairly limited. Continued engagement with men and masculinity is needed in the media.

In this chapter I have attempted to stretch this thesis beyond critique into construction. I have attempted to write about the ways the media can engage differently around GBV to support the people affected by it. I have argued for representations of women that embody their power. I have argued for engagement with the racial aspects of GBV. I have argued for representations of men and masculinity which acknowledge their real role in GBV. Most of all, I have argued for a contextual representation of GBV which locates its roots in colonialism. Throughout many of the discourses, colonial ideals of masculinity and femininity are upheld. Race is silenced throughout the media, allowing the racialized power structure rooted in colonialism to persist. This orientates the way in which the media engages men in GBV, survivors and what it advocates in terms of change. It is these colonial discourses which function as a foundation for GBV. When the media persists in upholding these notions, it forms part of the social scaffolding that allows for patriarchy and GBV to continue. The same can be said for many other forms of writing on GBV. Despite the powerhouse that the media is, I believe the significance of work such as this goes further than the media. Media is analyzed as an instance of public discourse as well as a producer of public discourse, and thus it is public discourse which this research truly aims to address. As academic writers, as academic readers, and as humans in our everyday lives, we have an opportunity to critically engage our own discourse. The recommendations of the present study can be applied far beyond media, to writing on GBV generally as well as general teaching and communications regarding GBV

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