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The construction of selected diversity issues in the reporting of three rape incidents: a discourse analysis of two Gauteng newspapers

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The construction of selected diversity issues in the reporting of three rape incidents: A discourse analysis of two Gauteng newspapers.

By

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A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.A. (Diversity Studies), in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, February 2015

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Abstract

This research project aimed to explore how the way in which rape is reported in two Gauteng daily newspapers is indicative of underlying social assumptions about broader diversity issues in South Africa.

The reason that this research was undertaken was linked to the public uproar about rape which was witnessed in India in 2012 and the subsequent social issues that were brought to the fore. The manner in which the newspapers in India reported on incidents of rape shifted as well after this incident. This was the point of departure for the discussion which took place in this research project.

The newspapers which were used in the research project were The Star and The Sowetan. Newspapers which, according to their readership data, although not exclusively, are read by either a middle to upper-class black or white population group.

The methodology which was used in this project was thematic analysis within the social constructionist framework. The reason for this choice of methodology is because it allows the researcher to determine the themes that are used in the analysis process. The framework of this methodology is not fixed. This allows for meaning to be derived from the context in which the data is analysed. The news stories which were analysed were the rape of Baby Tshepang and the rape and murder of both Anene Booysen and Eudy Simelane.

The most telling aspect that arose in this research was the racialised lens through which themes emerged in the analysis and the meaning that this then fixed on these themes. From within this lens, the intersectionalities of class, gender and sexuality derived meaning.

This research concluded that through the manner in which newspapers report on stories of rape underlying social assumption about broader diversity issues are perpetuated.

Keywords: rape, media, sexuality, race and diversity issues.

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